



WASHINGTON UPDATE



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Schultz tapped to direct Army Guard.

Maj. Gen. Roger Schultz has been chosen as director of the Army National Guard. He has been the deputy adjutant general of the Iowa National Guard since March 1995.

He has also been serving as the deputy director for military support at the Department of Defense for the past seven months. In that capacity he has been involved in training reserve component forces to respond to terrorist attacks involving weapons of mass destruction.

“When we begin discussing threats in our own country, it’s difficult for people to think in those terms because they have been exposed to it,” Schultz said in a recent interview with Armed Forces Information Service.

Schultz enlisted in the Iowa Army National Guard in 1963 as a track-vehicle mechanic. He was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1967. Schultz’ unit was sent to Vietnam in 1968.

Plewes nominated to head U.S. Army Reserve.

Maj. Gen. Thomas J. Plewes has been nominated for assignment as the chief, Army Reserve, and commanding general, U.S. Army Reserve Command.

He is currently the deputy commanding general of the U.S. Army Reserve Command (USARC) in Atlanta, a position he has held since December 1996.

Maj. Gen. Plewes has over 31 years of service in the Army. A native of Zeeland, Michigan, he received his commission through Officer Candidate School in 1967, and subsequently served as a platoon leader in an active component engineer battalion in Germany. His service in the United States Army Reserve began in 1969, as the commander of the 328th Engineer Detachment, Fort Meade, Md.

The chief, Army Reserve also serves as the Deputy Commanding General for Reserve Affairs, U.S. Army Forces Command, Fort McPherson, Ga.

Congress names its own commission to study gender integration in the armed forces.

The day after the secretary of defense told the services to act on a host of issues related to gender-integrated training, the chairman of the House subcommittee overseeing Pentagon personnel policy reminded the armed forces that Congress had appointed its own commission to look at male-female relations in uniform.

And the chairman of Defense Secretary William Cohen’s own panel that looked at gender issues told the House National Security’s subcommittee on personnel that the steps the secretary announced March 16 did not go far enough.

Those steps included increasing the number of female recruiters and trainers, putting more emphasis in recruit advertising on patriotism and challenge and developing more consistent training standards.

He also tasked the services to report to him by mid-April on what they are doing to emphasize the value of being a trainer, how they are toughening physical fitness standards and how they are ensuring that men and women live in separate areas, if not separate buildings.

Congress could legislate return to separate training.

One possibility for the Army would be Congress legislating a return to separate male and female basic training. Rep. Roscoe Bartlett, R-Md., is considering such a bill for all the services. “What we were seeing at (congressional visits to) Great Lakes (Naval Training Center, Ill.) wasn’t integrated training but proximity training,” he said during the March 17 hearing.

Earlier the Army, Navy and Air Force reported to Cohen they did not agree with those recommendations or a return to separating the genders in basic training. Gen. William W. Crouch, Army vice chief of staff, said, “We strongly believe that teamwork and cohesion must begin at the earliest level.”

Marine resourcing of recruit training is praised.

Lt. Gen. Robert Forman, USA, Ret., and a panel member, testified he found much to admire in how the Marine Corps conducts its basic training and how valued drill instructors are in the Marine Corps. "We have to have a system to bring inexperienced leaders to recruit training," he said, noting that marines volunteer to return to basic training units. "The Marine Corps has resourced its recruit training mission."

This contrasted sharply with the Army, former Sen. Nancy Kassebaum Baker, who chaired a defense Department panel examining gender-integrated training, said. "The drill instructors were distracted. Their concern was that one of their major jobs was baby-sitting. They wanted more teamwork, but there was this feeling that they cannot win under this system."

Gen. William Crouch, Army vice chief of staff, said drill instructors "had not been adequately prepared to deal with gender-integrating units" and added the Army has taken steps to correct that problem.

In the wake of the reports of sexual misconduct, harassment and abuse that first surfaced at Aberdeen, Buyer and two members of his subcommittee conducted field interviews in which "we heard complaints about soft training, shortages of drill sergeants and cadre. What we found was rather disconcerting."

Kassebaum Baker said her panel found "problems generated by confusion at the organization level" over what was allowed and what was not in contact between recruits and trainers and recruits and recruits, or even whether there were curfews or not in advanced training units. "It isn't a question of teaching us how to behave. ... The bottom line is leadership, set standards and take the responsibility to meet those standards."

She used an example of a fire fighting drill at the Navy's Great Lakes Training Center in which men and women did not work together in holding a hose to contain the blaze because it violated a "no talk-notouch" rule. She added that discipline needed to be tough at advanced training centers, as well as in basic training.

Rudy de Leon, undersecretary of defense for personnel, said that rule and others were eliminated by Cohen.

Army takes steps to provide safe environment for trainees.

Gen. William Crouch, "The Army wants safe and secure conditions for all recruits 24 hours a day." That means physical barriers are being added to barracks where men and women occupy the same building, the Army's vice chief of staff told the House National Security subcommittee on personnel.

Lt. Gen. Frederick Vollrath, deputy chief of staff for personnel, told the Senate Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee March 18 of steps the Army was taking — three steps to ensure "safe and secure living accommodations" for recruits.

He said men and women would be assigned rooms on separate floors, that secure doors would be installed between floors and on latrines and that leadership attention is being enhanced.

He said basic training barracks are assigned a drill sergeant as charge of quarters to conduct hourly bed checks. Also, nightly checks are made by commanders, either from the company or battalion level. "We now have a structure in place, from the drill sergeant to the battalion commander," Vollrath said.

Toughening basic training is emphasized.

Rep. Steve Buyer, R-Ind. and chairman of the House National Security subcommittee on personnel, said, "We've got a very short time to train a young civilian who may not have anything more rigorous physically than being on a basketball court and turn them into soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines."

Ginger Lee Simpson, a member of the Kassebaum Baker panel and a retired Navy master chief, agreed, saying, recruits "did not feel they were physically challenged. ... Overall it was just a little bit more than they had in their high school years."

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High operating tempo raises questions of burn-out. Sen. Max Cleland, D-Ga., asked if the high operating tempo was “burning out soldiers.”

Lt. Gen. John Hendrix, commander of V Corps, said he didn't see burnout at the soldier level, but “I have a higher concern about our leaders - major, lieutenant colonel and colonel on up. ... We do hope there will be an even state somewhere down the road.”

Col. Thomas Matthews, commander of the 101st Aviation Brigade, said his unit has not reported higher divorce rates, but “what you're seeing is the departure of mid-grade officers.” He used the example of an aviator with seven years of service possibly facing a third unaccompanied tour to Korea. “It has an impact on the quality of life. ... That separation weighs heavily on their minds.” About two-thirds of service members are married.

What does a recruit expect when entering the armed forces? The quality and expectations of recruits once they enter military service drew congressional attention in mid-March as the House National Security subcommittee on personnel focused on the integration of men and women in the armed forces.

Nancy Kassebaum Baker, a former senator and the chairwoman of a defense panel that examined gender integration in the armed forces, said, “We believe that the recruiter should follow the recruit through basic training” before being credited with an accession. “Recruits coming in today come from a much more open environment, often without any sense of structure.”

Lt. Gen. Robert Forman, USA, Ret., and a member of the panel, said, “The Congressional Budget Office estimates that \$390 million is spent on recruits who don't complete basic training.” The Army loses about one-third of its total accessions before they complete their first enlistment. Half of those leave during basic training.

“We felt that a recruiting program would better serve recruits with publicizing what our services do,” he said. The field interviews and focus groups the panel conducted found that the two major reasons young men and women join the armed forces is to receive the Montgomery G.I. Bill and repay college loans. Those reasons coincide with Defense Department survey results of recent enlistees.

WASHINGTON UPDATE

Pentagon will soon send Congress a definition of fraternization. Adultery? Fraternization?

Rudy de Leon, undersecretary of defense for personnel, told the House National Security Personnel Subcommittee that the Pentagon would be sending definitions of those terms to Capitol Hill this month.

“Not even a highly trained lawyer could explain them without sitting down with the service JAGs (judge advocate generals) to understand them,” he said March 17.

The Pentagon has three goals, de Leon told the Senate Armed Services subcommittee the next day. They are: developing regulations that can be read and understood by the average person, determining when an offense comes under the Uniform Code of Military Justice and when it can be handled administratively, and determining how the culture of each service alters the significance of relationships between men and women in uniform.

Panel warns of ‘storm clouds’ over readiness. A critically important Senate panel is seeing “the storm clouds” affecting military readiness fast approaching. Sen. Max Cleland, D-Ga., of the Senate Armed Services Committee warned the services' vice chiefs recently that he didn't want to see problems such as aging equipment, high operating tempo and extended deployments “balanced on the backs of soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines.”

Cleland was echoing Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., chairman of the readiness subcommittee, who convened two days of hearings in late February to gauge the state of today's armed forces.

Inhofe said, “It appears to me that these units and the personnel within them are being overused and underfunded to the point that they are on the verge of returning to the days of the hollow force,” a reference to the undermanned, poorly trained units in the 1970s.

Adding, “the Pentagon now admits that there is anecdotal evidence of readiness problems at the tactical level, but maintains that at the strategic level all is well. I am far less optimistic.... I have witnessed too many problems, and heard the concerns of too many commanders, to believe that they are not systemic to the entire force structure.”

Vice chief tells senators of tension between training and quality of life. Gen. William Crouch, Army vice chief of staff, said, "There's a tension between training and maintaining quality of life at the unit level. At the Department of Defense level, there is a tension between modernization and near-term readiness."

While the defense budget request of \$251 billion for fiscal year 1999 shows growth in spending to modernize equipment, Crouch said, "the balance is so finely tuned it's left little flexibility for commanders - at the unit level and the theater level. ... We gave you our best shot with this '99 budget."

Asked whether the regional warfighting commanders in chief agreed with the defense budget as submitted, Crouch said, "The CINCs say it is acceptable risk" to spend more money now on modernization rather than near-term readiness. All the service chiefs assessed the shift in budget priorities as being a "medium risk" to national security.

Lt. Gen. John Hendrix, commander of V Corps in Europe, said, "You've got to get to the future. There's a need for modernization to improve readiness" in the long run. He added, "on balance readiness is about as good as it can be" for forces such as his.

Complicating budget matters this year is the balanced budget agreement between Congress and the Clinton administration. In the recent past, when Congress felt a defense or other program was underfunded, it "plused it up," that is, added more money. This year any "program plus-ups" have to be offset by cuts within the defense budget.

Because of the need for offsets, Crouch warned the Senate subcommittee about the dangers of "well-intentioned changes" to the budget request.

He also said "if presumed efficiencies, such as a restructured heavy division, and better business practices don't come through as anticipated, we'll have to go back and rework" future defense spending plans.

Speaking on the cost of the most recent deployment to Kuwait, Crouch asked and answered his own question: "Can I absorb this now? Not a chance ... We need help."

What defines readiness is question Senate is asking. Trying to get its arms around the state of the nation's armed forces today - from the age of its equipment to the kind of person wearing the uniform to the credibility of field reports going up the chain of command - was the focus of a key Senate committee.

Col. Thomas E. Matthews, commander of the 101st Aviation Brigade at Fort Campbell, Ky., said in late February readiness "is a balancing act at all levels in the tensions between training, operations and maintenance and quality of life."

Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., chairman of the readiness panel of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said, "What we're finding across the board is you have to work harder to accomplish the mission." Using the example of the Army's aging truck fleet, he said the service was spending about \$8,000 per year to maintain each vehicle, on average. Yet if that money was spent on procuring new vehicles, soldiers would be spending less time in motor pools repairing equipment.

Matthews said in addition to aging equipment, units were facing spare parts shortages. "It's a matter of dollars and who should get (the spare parts) first," the deploying unit or one that is remaining behind.

Operational commanders in the Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force described units cannibalizing parts to keep equipment work, unavailable or defective spare parts and personnel shortages caused by the drawdown or deployments among some specialties to Bosnia and the Persian Gulf.

"There's also the question of time having to be spent repairing this equipment when it goes out to the field. That's a real issue," Inhofe said.

Brig. Gen. Dean Cash, commander of the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif., said soldiers coming to the California desert to train have a "lower entry level than in the past." While the last two rotations had fully manned units, Cash said, in the recent past, some brigades have been understrength in critical specialties. He attributed that to both the drawdown and the high operating tempo in the Army. "Personnel shortages are the number one issue among those coming to the National Training Center."