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Sullivan calls for \$300 billion defense budget.

The President of the Association of the United States Army called for a \$300 billion defense budget in the next decade to both modernize the armed forces and improve the pay and living conditions of today's soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines.

Gen. Gordon R. Sullivan, USA, Ret., and president of AUSA, said in an April 28 letter to the Association's regional, state and local chapter leaders, "Experience tells me we are headed for trouble. Scholars have learned from the pathology of military defeats that commanders who hold slavishly to preconceived ideas... often lose with disastrous consequences."

His letter is designed to begin a national debate over future national security needs. Sullivan said, "Our task is to focus the debate on the adequacy of total spending levels.

"Unless the current spending for national security measures is increased, the capabilities of our world-class force will diminish over the next ten years. We will once again be asking our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines to pay the price in lives and blood — because we as a nation were not willing to sustain the force."

Noting that the United States now spends about 3 percent of its Gross Domestic Product on national defense, Sullivan added, "We are under resourced in people and dollars; consequently, we are neither refreshing our troops nor re-capitalizing for the future."

The level of spending now is comparable to what the nation was spending on defense immediately before Pearl Harbor.

As part of the balanced budget agreement and the recommendations of the Quadrennial Defense Review, the Department of Defense's internal top-to-bottom examination of future needs, defense spending would be kept steady at about \$250 billion.

Army will fix computer Year 2000 problems. The Army will spend \$366 million to fix computer problems caused between now and the year 2000, the service's top computer officer said.

Speaking before 100 defense and industry leaders at an AUSA landpower forum in Arlington, Va., Lt. Gen. William H. Campbell, director of information systems for command, control and computers, said "This is a national problem."

He described the scope of the problem with a question asked the Army Corps of Engineers: "Are you guys sure you don't have embedded microprocessors in locks and dams?" that would be affected by change to the year 2000.

In brief, many computer software systems are not established to change over from the 1900s to 2000. They could either revert to a 1900 date or shut down.

In addition to the government, this problem most clearly impacts on bank and other long-term credit-lenders in establishing payment schedules, expiration dates of credit cards, etc.

"There is no new funding to pay for this fix," Campbell said. He is drawing funds from other accounts to work on the problem.

The Army's number one information priority remains digitizing a division by 2000 and a corps by 2004.

He said, "There are 500 programs involved in this effort. It includes everything from Joint STARS (an airborne system) to special radar to the command and control vehicle."

In addition, he said because the Army is now primarily based in the continental United States it was important that computer and communication systems be improved here, including the Pentagon.

Base closures back on front burner. Defense Secretary William Cohen challenged Congress to approve two rounds of base closures, or he would have to begin shutting down key defense modernization programs — including the Comanche armed reconnaissance helicopter and the Crusader field artillery system.

Speaking at a Pentagon press conference, Cohen said, “These two new rounds of closures would provide \$21 billion to the department between 2008 and 2015.” The two rounds of closures would be scheduled for 2001 and 2005, but require congressional authorization to create the commission that would recommend the closures and realignments.

For the Army, closures and realignments would most directly affect “instructional space” (training installations). Cohen said, “While the Army is down 350,000 soldiers in the active force from 1989 or 43 percent of the force, instructional space is down by 7 percent. I have to begin making program decisions starting in 1999,” he said.

The first of those decisions will concern the F-22 fighter. Comanche and Crusader program decisions will be made starting in 2000. “Those are the critical years for those programs.”

Other options to pay for new equipment would include letting “facilities repair slip — move toward mothballing — but that would not be fair to our troops” who would still be living on those installations, Cohen said.

Congress refused to go along with Cohen’s recommendation for closures last year. Key congressional leaders cite the “politicization” of the process that kept two air logistics centers open in California and Texas during the 1996 presidential campaign. The centers had been recommended for closure.

As he had in testimony this year and last, Cohen said, “Congress makes the rules. If they don’t like the rules, they can change them.” He said he worked to change the base closing legislation while he was in the Senate after his home state of Maine had two bases shuttered in earlier rounds.

Instead, Congress ordered Cohen to submit a report detailing the costs of closing bases in the past and actual savings. The press conference was called to announce the results of that report sent to Congress April 2.

Gulf War’s objectives were limited, and those limits let Iraqi regime survive. While the Gulf War demonstrated to the world that the United States will defend its vital interests, the limited objectives of the war left the Ba’ath Party regime of Saddam Hussein still in power. Lt. Gen. John Yeosock, former 3rd Army commander, said, “Now there is very, very little support for any other military operation.”

Former Rep. James Slattery, who was instrumental in winning congressional support for a resolution backing military operations in the Gulf War, said, “It was important to have the vote because remember how close it was, 52-47 in the Senate and 250-183 in the House, then we closed ranks immediately afterwards and the public supported our troops.”

Yeosock said Clinton administration goals in recent confrontations with Saddam were “spongy” and did not lend themselves to strong public support.

John Hillen, Olin fellow at the Council of Foreign Relations, said the problems with Iraq were far larger than Saddam. “You’d have to remove 5,000 people from power — the Ba’ath Party regime — to change Iraq.”

Officer corps is growing increasingly politicized. The senior defense correspondent for the nation’s largest newspaper said there is both a decline in military professionalism and rightward swing of the officer corps that has increased the separation between the armed forces and the larger society.

Thomas Ricks, defense correspondent for the Wall Street Journal, said 15 years ago about one-third of the officers in the armed forces identified themselves as Republicans, but now two-thirds do. Additionally, he cited Duke University statistics that also found 15 years ago 4 to 1 officers were identifying themselves as conservatives now 21 to 1 are identifying themselves as conservatives.

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Ideas offered on how to close the gap between the armed forces and society. A defense correspondent, a political scientist, and two former Defense Department manpower officials were among those offering solutions to an increasing gap between the armed forces and the public it is to serve.

The largest gap is between the civilian elites and the military, but it is a gap that will continue to grow as the military becomes a smaller institution in American society and there is no immediate national security threat.

Thomas Ricks, defense correspondent of the Wall Street Journal and author of "Making the Corps," said junior officers, in particular, need to be taught what it means to be a professional military officer.

He also suggested reviving loyal dissent, expanding ROTC in elite institutions, shorter service requirements for service academy graduates to cycle them back into the larger society, have more persons with military experience run for elective office - particularly Congress, put military students in civilian graduate school programs and close military graduate programs that are duplicated in civilian institutions, quit abusing the reserves with constant callups and then have them do nothing, create reserve units that exploit new technology (an information warfare unit based in Silicon Valley, south of San Francisco) and more preparatory schools for enlisted to transform them into officers.

Would return to the draft close gap between society and armed forces? A former Army senior manpower official said, "I don't know if (returning to the draft) would solve the problem" of a gap between civilian society and the nation's military.

Sara Lister, former assistant secretary of the Army for manpower and reserve affairs, said, "We have a fairly high attrition rate even now. (About 35 percent of soldiers do not complete their first year of enlistment). A return to the draft "would need a huge training base."

She suggested a better use of the National Guard and Reserve. "Go back to the idea of the 'citizen soldiers.' The active duty then would be true professionals."

Chairman said armed forces should reinforce a culture of respect. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said it was important to reinforce a culture of respect in the armed forces and the first task is to "eliminate artificial barriers, so that men and women (leaders and led) should not be afraid to speak to each other."

Speaking at a luncheon in suburban Washington April 24, Gen. Hugh H. Shelton told attendees at the spring meeting of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) that his "second concern is that junior (enlisted and officers) have early opportunities for leadership. If we want them to succeed, we've got to give them early opportunities to experience leadership."

He praised the role 4,500 military women are playing in the peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Operation Southern Watch. The reason for their success is "they just weren't thrown into the briar patch at the last minute."

Shelton added, "My starting point is effectiveness of the force," and he emphasized that women were essential in having an effective force. To build an effective force, it was crucial for male and female leaders to "provide a process for thoughtful advice and counsel to assist in professional growth" that goes beyond the instruction provided in basic training.

"A key element of the learning process is mentoring.... There is no substitute to having access to insights of senior leaders."

Shelton reminded the audience they were close to the 50th anniversary in June of women's integration into the nation's armed forces. "Women in combat is only one component (of their service). The big picture issue is what we can do to allow women to serve their country (with) the same opportunity afforded men.

"What are we doing to create an environment to allow women to have meaningful careers?"

Shelton said he believed that each service knows how to train its force. A recommendation from a Defense Department panel, chaired by former Sen. Nancy Kassebaum-Baker, called for an end to some aspects of gender-integrated basic training to include separate housing and unit level activities. The Army, the Air Force and the Navy disagreed with that recommendation.

Bramlett stresses AC/RC integration. The Army's top general in charge of keeping the force ready stressed the service's efforts to have active, National Guard, Army Reserve and civilians work together rather than publicly bickering among themselves.

Gen. David A. Bramlett, commanding general of the Army's Forces Command, said, "I worry about the friction" that exists, particularly between the Army National Guard. "It does a disservice to soldiers." His command encompasses, 200,000 soldiers in the active Army based here in the United States, 185,000 soldiers in the Army Reserve and 365,000 soldiers in the Army National Guard, as well as 30,000 Department of the Army civilians.

"My number one priority is readiness," he told the 150 attendees at an Institute of Land Warfare breakfast, and outlined steps the total Army is taking to integrate the components.

"The most important step is to have by fiscal year 2000 and integrated training structure" that would apply to the active force and the Army National Guard and Army Reserve. It will replace the four different structures now in place.

In addition, the Army is pushing ahead with programs integrating headquarters staff from the active force with reserve units and developing an integrated corps.

Retirees learn value of 'strength in numbers.' Military retirees have learned in the past three years a few lessons, the co-chairmen of the Chief of Staff of the Army Retiree Council told AUSA; and as Lt. Gen. Ellis D. Parker, USA, Ret., put it: "There's strength in numbers."

And those numbers — now more than 680,000 Army retirees alone — when joined with retirees from the other services — became a potent voice inside the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill in protecting yesterday's and today's soldiers' benefits and correcting injustices.

Parker and former Sgt. Maj. of the Army Richard A. Kidd, USA, Ret., both said, "There's been some degree of jointness to this business" of protecting benefits and correcting injustices, especially in medical care.

Some risk accepted for future modernization. Gen. David A. Bramlett said that for future readiness "we had to accept some risk" now. By changing home station training routines, delaying some facility repairs and introducing better business practices, the Army freed money to modernize equipment.

"It's a delicate balance," he said. The Army's heavy divisions are increasingly using simulation for training to save money. "Again, we're looking for the balance between field training and simulation."

The Senate Armed Services Committee this March held a series of hearings on readiness and the level of readiness of units rotating to the National Training Center was an issue.

Bramlett told the defense and industry leaders that heavy divisions going to the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif., are entering at a lower skill level than in the past. In part, he said that can be attributed to a shortage of noncommissioned officers conducting home station training before the units head to the desert. At the same time, light units heading to the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La., were entering at a higher level.

Medical care tops retiree concerns. Medical issues again dominated the chief of staff's retiree council's report. Similar reports with the same concerns went forward from the other services' retiree councils to their uniformed leadership and the Defense Department.

Speaking at an AUSA-sponsored breakfast before the 38th annual meeting of the retiree council, Lt. Gen. Ellis D. Parker, USA, ret. cited the Medicare subvention test, where the financing arm of Medicare reimburses military hospitals and clinics for treating patients over 65, and the establishment of the Delta Dental Plan for retirees as solid accomplishments. Parker added,

"When we break the code on the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, it will be no different than subvention." AUSA has been a long-time supporter of extending the FEHBP insurance plan to military retirees, particularly those over 65, because most of them do not live within the service areas of Defense Department hospitals or clinics.