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Gender-integrated training is proving to be sticking point in authorization bill talks.

Defense Secretary William Cohen warned Congress that if the House version of the authorization bill calling for gender-separate basic training was approved the measure would likely face a presidential veto.

The Senate version of the defense bill would allow the services to continue their current practices. The Marine Corps is the only service that separates the genders in basic training. The Army has male-only basic training in the combat arms, such as infantry and armor.

The Association of the United States Army has written congressional leaders in support of letting the services decide how they want to conduct basic training.

Negotiations will resume after Labor Day. Congressional observers think it is unlikely work on the bill will be complete before the beginning of the new fiscal year, Oct. 1.

A new QDR is likely in the works. Sens. Dan Coats, R-Ind., and Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn, sponsors of the original legislation that called for the Quadrennial Defense Review and the National Defense Panel, successfully inserted an amendment to the Fiscal Year 1999 Defense appropriations bill to require a defense review every four years.

The QDR, the Defense Department's internal top-to-bottom review of future needs, recommended a cut of 60,000 in the active force and was used in shaping this year's budget request.

Davis is new head of Guard Bureau. Lt. Gen. Russell Davis was sworn in as the new chief of the National Guard Bureau Aug. 4. Davis, a combat pilot with more than 5,000 flying hours, succeeds Lt. Gen. Edward Baca, who retired July 31. Davis began his military career in 1958 as an Air Force pilot trainee and most recently served as vice chief to Baca. He is the third Air Guard officer to head the bureau.

Wilson offers five points to improve human relations in the armed forces.

Gen. Johnnie Wilson, the commanding general of the Army Materiel Command, told the more than 1,000 attendees at the Defense Department's biennial worldwide equal opportunity conference "when dealing with people, we need to listen and we need to listen from the perspective of the shoes the other person has walked in."

Speaking on the 50th anniversary of President Harry Truman's executive orders that ended segregation in the armed forces, Wilson gave these tips to those attending the Birmingham, Ala., conference:

1. "You must make yourselves an integral part of the command team. ... You must make yourself available to all, you must be visible."
2. "I want you to encourage, informal dialogue among all members of your units and I want to design training programs that go beneath the surface issues. ... Let's explain why."
3. "You need to endorse and implement the 'consideration for others' program."
4. "I want you to get a sensing for all soldiers on our mentoring program. ... Through mentoring we help to educate subordinates on our profession and many times one can learn a lot from those that they mentor."
5. "I want you to take care of our soldiers. Do not ever forget your own humble beginnings when dealing with soldier issues. Be firm, be fair, be consistent and have fun."

Sept. 18 is POW/MIA Recognition Day. The POW/MIA flag will fly over the Capitol, the White House and other federal buildings Sept. 18. A section of the Fiscal Year 1998 Defense Authorization Act called for the POW/MIA flag to fly on POW/MIA Recognition Day, as well as Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day and Veterans Day.

Drop Zone Virtual Museum debuts on the Internet. The Drop Zone Virtual Museum is collecting stories from World War II airborne veterans. The stories are verified from unit journals, morning reports and archived information at the National Archives and the Center for Military History, both in Washington. Between five and ten stories are posted weekly.

Educators are being encouraged to use the site, so students can interact directly through E-mail with soldiers. The web site includes a "reunion area" where veterans can post what unit they served with and how to contact them and a "locator service" to search for friends.

Plans include expanding the site to include areas for Korean War and Vietnam War airborne veterans.

The Drop Zone Virtual Museum may be found at: www.thedropzone.org.

Health chief pledges commitment to quality care. The Pentagon's health leader said she is committed to delivering quality care to all 8 million military beneficiaries.

Dr. Sue Bailey, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, said, "Our service members need to be ready and fit to defend the nation, and they need to know that their families at home are taken care of while they're gone. And we have a huge and growing population of retirees who are looking for – and deserve – quality health care from us."

In an interview with Armed Forces Press Service, she praised the TRICARE system for offering more choices than civilian health care programs, but acknowledged difficulties. "We would like to be answering the phone quicker, making the appointment quicker, have people seen quicker." Bailey pledged to work to improve care for those over 65, who are automatically excluded from enrolling in the TRICARE program. For those Medicare-eligible beneficiaries, care in military facilities is provided if space is available.

Congress has included provisions in the Fiscal Year 1999 authorization bill to test a program where military facilities would be reimbursed for treating these patients by the financing arm of Medicare. A second test would gauge the effects of enrolling some over 65 patients in a special Federal Employees Health Benefits Program.

Same story from Saddam Hussein on weapons inspection. The U. N. Security Council Aug. 6 called Iraq's latest refusal to cooperate with weapons inspectors "totally unacceptable." But Secretary General Kofi Annan stopped short of calling for military action to continue the inspections called for at the end of the Persian Gulf War.

The inspectors are searching for weapons of mass destruction and systems capable of delivering them. Until the inspectors verify the weapons and delivery systems have been destroyed, trade sanctions against the regime of Saddam Hussein will remain in place.

At the start of the year, Iraq expelled a team of inspectors led by an American. Then, the United States responded by sending 3,000 soldiers from Fort Hood, Texas, to Kuwait, stationing another carrier battle group in the Persian Gulf and moving air expeditionary units into Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

To break that deadlock, Annan brokered a deal where Iraq pledged full cooperation with the weapons' inspectors.

Henry sworn in as assistant secretary for manpower. Patrick T. Henry was sworn in Aug. 6 as assistant secretary of the Army for manpower and reserve affairs. He is a 1972 graduate of the Naval Academy and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps. Henry served in the Marine Corps for more than 20 years.

Since 1993, Henry served as a staff member with the Senate Armed Services Committee, specializing on manpower, personnel and health issues.

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Air Force reorganization announced. The Air Force announced plans in August to reorganize its forces into 10 Air Expeditionary Forces (AEF) that would rotate responsibility for deployments in Bosnia, Iraq and other potential flashpoints worldwide. The transition, to be made over the next 18 months, represents the Air Force's most significant response to the four-fold jump in the number of foreign operations this decade.

Under the new organization, air crews and support teams will be assigned to one of 10 AEFs, each including roughly 250 aircraft. In addition to combat aircraft such as fighters and bombers, each AEF will include its own dedicated reconnaissance, electronic warfare, refueling, and transport aircraft. Each expeditionary force will be deployed for one 90-day period every 15 months. Two AEFs will be on duty at all times to handle whatever overseas contingencies arise.

Due to the increased operational pace, record numbers of pilots have been cutting short military careers and opting to take more stable, high-paying commercial airline jobs. By spreading the burden of deployments and devising a regular schedule of deployments, Air Force leaders said yesterday their aim was to restore greater stability to the lives of crews and better manage wear and tear on aircraft.

"We hope to reduce the one complaint we hear from our forces — we are deploying them too often, on too little notice, and are working them too hard when they are at home filling in for others who have deployed," acting Air Force Secretary F. Whitten Peters told a Pentagon news conference.

Soldier was among those killed in embassy bombing attacks. Army Sgt. Kenneth R. Hobson II, 27, of Nevada, Mo., was among more than 200 casualties in attacks on U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania Aug. 7.

Hobson had served at least seven years in the Army at the time of his death in Nairobi. A veteran of the Persian Gulf War, Hobson was a talented artist and painter who enjoyed Africa. "He liked going on safaris and things," said his father Kenneth Hobson, a dispatcher with the Barton County, Mo., Sheriff's Department. The Defense Department said Hobson was assigned to the Army defense attaché as an administrative specialist. Hobson and his wife, Deborah, were the parents of a daughter.

Early insights in 'rapid force projection.' As 2,000 soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Ky., are winding up two weeks of intense experimentation of information age warfare for early entry forces, the Army is already gaining some insights into what works and what doesn't work.

Critical among these early insights for light forces is "the deep battle is being fought effectively. The close fight is manageable, but does not go away," Col Tim Bosse, director of the Dismounted Battlespace Battle Laboratory, said. "Digitization does have an effect on the battlefield."

He expected an initial report on the Fort Benning, Ga., exercise in 90 days.

Maj. Gen. Carl Ernst, chief of infantry and Fort Benning commander, said, "The Army needed to see if you put information age system in contingency forces or light forces in forcible entry or early entry, whether you'll get some benefits."

Bosse said that soldiers from the 101st and the XVIII Airborne Corps, Fort Bragg, N.C., had been practicing for up to six months with some of the equipment being used in the Rapid Force Projection Initiative. He added, "For the first time an experiment is using live, virtual and constructive reality to test concepts and equipment."

The experiment, which ran from July 27 to Aug. 11, also provided these additional insights.

- Tendency to become "Red centric" and lose sight of own status.
 - Positive comments from soldiers on all shooting systems
 - UAV remains key to confirming unmanned sensor input.
- One reason for that is that the sensors were good on detecting, but enemy forces were moving so quickly "another set of eyes" was needed to target them.
- Heavy reliance on JSTARS (Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System carried aboard an Air Force jet) to identify enemy equipment movement. Later scenarios will cut JSTARS connection.
 - Light digital tactical command post and tactical operations center were mobile, able to be used in an air assault and reconnected, but they need to come down in weight but retain power.

What's being tested for light forces. Here is some of the equipment being tested at the Rapid Force Projection Initiative at Fort Benning, Ga.:

HIMARS – a Multiple Launch Rocket System on wheels that can be carried in a C-130.

EFOGM – land-launched cruise missile that flies by wire with a range of 15 kilometers.

155mm Howitzer with auto fire control system – provides the howitzer with an on-board ballistic computer that increases speed of fire, accuracy, lethality and survivability.

Hunter Sensor Suite – Heavy HMMWV with 10-foot expandable mast that provides a see-first, shoot-first capability, provides precision targeting for stand-off weapons and can facilitate battle damage assessment.

LDTOC – Light Digital Tactical Operations Center provides C4I digitization for near-real-time Hunter Stand Off Killer targeting for early entry operations, reduced sensor-shooter timelines, target analysis and engagement control. It has a communications processor, its own local area network, large screen situation awareness display systems, digital radios and the Army Tactical Command and Control System.

Why the need for a rapid force test. The Rapid Force Projection Initiative at Fort Benning, Ga., being tested in air assault by more than 2,000 soldiers from Fort Campbell, Ky., Fort Bragg, N.C., and Fort Stewart, Ga., is designed to provide the Army with answers that have persisted since the 82nd Airborne Division went to Saudi Arabia in the summer of 1991.

The 82nd's vulnerability to attack by the same Iraqi forces that had just overrun Kuwait was obvious, but the attack never came. And slowly but surely elements of the 24th Mechanized Division from Fort Stewart, Ga., began arriving as part of Desert Shield.

Lt. Col. Jeffrey Arneson, chief of the Battle Command Division, Dismounted Battlespace Battle Lab, at Fort Benning, said the light infantry early entry forces do not have mechanized weapons, nor the protection of tanks and Bradleys.

The military tops in public confidence. The military topped the June Gallup Poll's ranking of the public's confidence in major American institutions. Sixty-four percent of those surveyed said that they had either a "great deal of confidence" or "quite a lot of confidence" in the armed forces.

Church/organized religion came in second with 59 percent of those surveyed.

Last year, small business topped the confidence list, but finished fourth in 1998.

In the 16 categories of institutions, Congress finished 15th with 28 percent of those surveyed saying they had either a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in it. The criminal justice system was last with 24 percent of those surveyed saying they had had either a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in it.

Guard offers OCS Phase III training at Benning. Army leaders will soon decide whether to continue its year-old program of training National Guard officer candidates on the same installations as officer candidates for the active force.

The Total Army School System used Fort Benning, Ga., and Fort Lewis, Wash., for Phase III Officer Candidate School (OCS) training. Phase III is a two-week program that tests candidates' physical and mental skills as potential Army leaders.

Maj. Walter N. Dyky from the 70th Regiment, and assigned to Fort Benning this summer for Phase III training, said the program, that began in mid-June and ran through Aug. 22, makes sense as the Army continues integrating active and reserve components. The reserve components are taking on more and more operations as a way to save money.

About 650 candidates attended the sessions at Fort Benning, and 15 percent of those were women.

While this year's OCS candidates all have enlisted experience, beginning in October soldiers may enlist for the OCS option. "Most of the candidates had four years experience in active or National Guard service," he said. They came to Fort Benning from as far away as Alaska.