

Gen. Richard Meyers, head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, talks about key issues facing the force.



A Few Words From the Chairman



Gen. Richard B. Myers, USAF, is the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and is the top military advisor to the President. On Jan. 22, he met with members of the Defense Writers Group in Washington, D.C. What follows are excerpts from that discussion.

Shift Guard and Reserve Missions Back to Active Force?

“I think it is fair to look at [that]. You are always going to need the reserve component for a major conflict. It is just a fact of life. There are some specialties and we need to look at that mix very carefully and see if we put, in some cases, 100 percent of our capability in the reserve component, and so you can’t even do some of the things you need to do, day to day, without going into the reserves. That mix is being looked at right now. As you know, there is a study going on to see if we have got the mix about right.”

Equipping and Training the Guard and Reserve

“In terms of Total Force policy, in terms of making sure the reserves are trained and equipped as the active duty force is, that goal needs to stay pre-eminent in this whole thing. Our reserves need to be as good as our active duty [force]. ... Maybe some of the units don’t need to be as ready as other units and so forth, but, no, ... in terms of having very competent forces in the reserve component, [that] needs to stay at the forefront.”

Overuse of the Guard and Reserve?

“For those called up inside CONUS for ... Operation Noble Eagle, which is defense of continental United States, there [are] somewhere in the area of 56,000 called up. [The size went to] close to 80,000 and went as low as below 50,000. It is back up to about 56,000. [Now] we are building up forces in the Gulf, clearly, and there are reserves as pieces of that. That continues. The facts are that there is a

lot of our combat capability [and] combat support and service support capability in the reserve components that, you know, if you want to have a credible force, you’ve got to call up the reserves along with it. So that is continuing.”

The Question of Service End Strength

“The [Defense] Department has said that there are a couple hundred thousand positions that could be converted to civilian or contractor positions, freeing up military to do [other tasks]. And I think [Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld] is just trying to put discipline into the system, rather than considering manpower a free good and all we need is to have more and more of it. He is trying to say, ‘OK, what do we really need in terms of those who need to wear the uniform and those ... [who] can be either DOD civilians or contracted out.’

“In my view, he is right. There are career fields that are chronically short in every service; all the services have their career fields that are short, and there are issues there, but the other thing you have to realize is ... it probably wouldn’t be until ’05 or ’06 before you actually see people being recruited, trained, and online. There have to be some internal realignments within the services to meet some of those gaps.”

Most Serious Personnel Gaps

“In the Army, I think of military police, given force protection needs around the world and here in the continental United States. [For example,] we have totally changed the force protection situation at Ft. Myer [Va.], where I live.

And it requires a lot of military police. Over time, they have changed that composition, and probably even total numbers to make it a little bit more efficient, but those sorts of things are going to have to be worked—probably internally—in some of these positions that can be converted, then they can convert some of the people to the shortages.”

The Problem of Fratricide

“I don’t think you can ever be satisfied that we’ve solved that dilemma, that fratricide issue fully. Clearly, in the last decade and a half, two decades, where we’ve been engaged, fratricide is a lot less than it has been in previous major conflicts. We know that. ... In Afghanistan, of course, we unfortunately had some fratricide incidents. ... There have been some organizations, some doctrine, some tactics, techniques and procedures, some technological changes. ...

“Are we there yet? No. We are going to have to continue to work that because war is not a science. It is an art. It is very inefficient. Things on a battlefield get very confusing and we need to try to, as best we can, erase that confusion so we have good situational understanding and awareness by all the players in the battlespace.”

Improvements in Fighting Fratricide

“I think we will be much better in the next ... conflict than we were in Afghanistan. We’ve gone to school on that. And I think if you look at the command and control and communications that we have, it is all part of helping avoid fratricide, that we are much better postured today in terms of those capabilities than we were in Afghanistan. In fact, we are better postured today in Afghanistan than when we started in Afghanistan. I don’t think you can ever be satisfied. I think this is an area that needs to be continuously worked, because it is an outcome that is so tragic. We just don’t want it.”

Reshaping the Military to Fight Terrorists

“We are trying to shape ourselves to be better prepared to take that kind of action. Some of the things we’ve done with [US] Special Operations Command, which you’ve seen, some of the [changes at US Strategic Command were] all meant to give us a [global] perspective. If you think about Strategic Command for a minute, from their perspective, we want to be global, so we gave them missions that might be global in scope. Clearly, their old mission of nuclear war planning tended to have a global nature. But then you go into global strike, which is not necessarily nuclear, but [there could be other] ways to have an effect on the battlefield—information operations, the C⁴ISR piece. [DOD is] trying to posture us to be able to deal with a threat that is global and not a threat that is regional, as we’ve been organized in the past.”

Blending Ops and Intelligence

“If you want to be as quick and agile as you need to be against an enemy that is adaptive—for instance, al Qaeda—you can’t have an intel part, [then] throw it over a transom to an operator and say, ‘Here’s what we know.’ This has got to be [a] continuous, 24/7 sort of relationship and synergistic to the point where operations helps with intel and vice versa. I think the new undersecretary [of defense for intelligence] can help with that piece of it. I think they’ll have a huge impact on rationalizing the resources

that go into the intelligence business, and that is something that has [been] needed, in my view. [We need] some better coordination than we’ve had in the past. And this office ought to help do that. I think [Director of Central Intelligence] George Tenet out at CIA believes that as well.”

Dealing With States That Sponsor Terrorism

“There will be times when military action will be required. If you asked me to be specific, I probably couldn’t be very specific right now. But I think as a general case, there is going to be a requirement for military action. ... Sure, I think the military instrument will be used in the future on this war on terrorism. There is no question in my mind. But I also think [that], to be effective, it has got to be across an entire front of instruments of national power.”

US Joint Forces Command and System Development

“I don’t think there is any intention to make Joint Forces Command an acquisition agency. If you look at how we fight, as we bring the service capabilities together, the glue that holds this together—the glue that enables us to fight well—is the command, control, communications, [and] ISR piece. That is the glue. And the problem is, there is no one entity that is responsible for developing that glue. You can’t say, ‘Well, *they* are the ones that do that.’

“A unified command like Joint Forces Command, that works the experimentation and the training and so forth, [needs] to have the oversight responsibility to ensure that, as the services bring systems on board and as we fund systems in the C⁴ISR business that are essentially ‘born joint,’ ... that those are appropriately resourced and that they carry through to the end. ... The attempt here is to ensure [that] somebody who is linked very closely to the Joint Staff and to the Secretary—as the unified commander —[is] going to watch over this and ensure it is executed in a way that gets through to the warfighter.”

North Korean Threat

“We know pretty clearly what capabilities North Korea has. With regard to nuclear weapons, there is speculation that they have a couple. If they start reprocessing their plutonium, they could have more fairly quickly. We also know—and what they’ve shown in the last 50 years—they haven’t attacked their neighbor. There have been some small incidents on the DMZ and some of those things, but they have not attacked their neighbor. They have been accused of proliferating missile technology but not the chemical, biological, or nuclear pieces of that.

“If you look at Iraq, we know they have chemical and biological [weapons] and intent for nuclear capabilities. They also have shown the intent to use them. So they not only have the capability, but I think you could say, they have the intent to use them and have in the past. That intent ... piece, is missing in North Korea right now.”

US Deterred by One or Two Nuclear Weapons?

“That is a dangerous assumption. ... I think it is a very bad assumption—to assume that a [nation] power, by having one nuke or two nukes, [can make the United States take] force off the table. Nothing, in my mind, could be further from the truth.” ■