

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

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SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY**

BEFORE THE

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AND RELATED AGENCIES**

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Introduction

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for your invitation to represent the 2 million men, women and Family members who make up our Army. This sub-committee has a tremendous responsibility, ensuring we have the correct end strength and policies in place for our Soldiers today and in the foreseeable future.

We are truly appreciative for all the support you've shown to the Army over the last decade. The Post 9-11 GI Bill, increased survivor benefits for the Families of our fallen, and your direct influence on our Wounded Warriors have made all the difference for our Soldiers and our Families. We would not be the Army we are today without your continued support.

Over the past ten years, our Army has been fully committed to combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. SEC McHugh, GEN Odierno, and I are proud of all that our Soldiers and Civilians have accomplished over the last decade. We have proven ourselves in every engagement and continue to display the physical and mental toughness long associated with the word "Soldier."

Even though we are an Army in transition, our mission has not changed... to fight and win our Nation's Wars. In today's uncertain and complex strategic environment, we must do more to ensure the Army is the best manned, best equipped, best trained and best led force in the world.

Last month, GEN Odierno released his *Marching Orders- America's Force of Decisive Action* for the Army, stating his intent to sustain a high-quality All-Volunteer Army that remains the most decisive land force in the world; provides depth and versatility to the Joint Force; is agile, responsive, and effective for Combatant Commanders; and ensures flexibility for national security decision-makers in defense of the Nation at home and abroad.

GEN Odierno highlighted three principal and interconnected roles for the Army as part of Joint Force 2020. First, the Army must prevent conflict by maintaining credibility based on capacity, readiness and modernization. This averts miscalculations by potential adversaries. Second, the Army must shape the environment by sustaining strong relationships with other Armies, building their capacity, and facilitating strategic access. Finally, if prevention fails, the Army must rapidly apply its combined arms capabilities to dominate the environment and win decisively.

Over the last five years, the Army has grown to meet the requirements associated with large-scale operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. With the successful completion of our mission in Iraq and the continued transition to Afghan security force lead and the reduction of U.S. presence in Afghanistan, the time is right to begin reducing our force structure.

Over the next six years, the Army will reduce our active force end strength from 570,000 to 490,000, which include a reduction of at least eight brigade combat teams. We will accomplish these reductions in a controlled and responsible manner. Our priority is to retain the best qualified professionals and successfully transition those who leave the service. Though there are several ways we'll meet the desired end strength, one of the biggest changes will be to the way we retain Active

Component Soldiers. This new plan gives brigade-level commanders the flexibility to retain Soldiers with the greatest potential for future service based on reenlistment objectives.

As we draw down the Army, it is imperative we care for those Soldiers and Families not retained. Through the Army Career and Alumni Program, we will ensure a successful transition out of the service and into the civilian sector. The Army, in coordination with Department of Labor and Department of Veterans Affairs, will conduct assistance training and transition counseling for Army Personnel beginning no later than 12 months from their transition date in order to enable Soldiers successfully transition into civilian society. Also, those who are eligible will be considered for service in the Army National Guard or Army Reserves. This deliberate and dignified approach is in keeping with recognizing the extraordinary sacrifice of the American Soldier over the last ten years.

As we drawdown, it is critically important the Army maintains its peak readiness. Late last month, the Army released the *Army 2020: Generating Health and Discipline in the Force Ahead of the Strategic Reset Report 2012*, also known as the Gold Book. The Gold Book provides critical insight into health and disciplinary issues that impact the Army and provides guidance on ways to improve for the future.

The Gold Book mentions the progress we've made over the last three plus years, especially in the areas of access to healthcare and unit and Soldier discipline. The document also recognizes there is still much work to be done. Challenges such as post traumatic stress, suicide, sexual assault and harassment, hazing, and reckless behavior must be met head on to ensure our Soldiers are receiving the care they need, while at the same time, maintaining good order and discipline.

Though the number of suicides this year is trending slightly downward, we know that one suicide is one too many. Our senior leaders recognize that in order to make progress on this issue, policies and programs must address the larger issues of physical and behavioral health while increasing surveillance and detection of at-risk and high-risk behavior.

Though the Army will never be able to predict whether a particular individual will commit suicide, it can ensure those at the greatest risk receive adequate care and monitoring while bolstering our ability to identify and respond to risk indicators.

Through the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program, the Army is also absolutely committed to eradicating sexual assault and sexual harassment. It degrades mission readiness and negatively impacts on our recruiting and retention goals, but more importantly, we have a moral obligation to sustain the trust of our Soldiers, Families and Civilians.

We are in year three of the I. A.M. (Intervene, Act, and Motivate) Strong Sexual Assault Prevention Campaign that focuses on increasing per-to-peer bystander intervention, offender accountability, expanding prevention program, applying resources, encouraging reporting of incidents and maintaining reporting capability.

The Army also hired additional special investigators, as well as five nationally recognized experts as consultants, to improve the quality of sexual assault investigations. Also, in accordance with the national Defense Authorization act, the Army is in the process of implementing a program to provide one full time Sexual Assault Response Coordinator and one full time Victim Advocate at every brigade or equivalent unit.

Our efforts, along with the efforts of our sister services, will become a

model for the nation in the prevention of sexual assault and harassment.

Hazing also continues to be an issue for our Army. Every Army professional has a personal obligation to prevent hazing and ensure we treat each other with dignity and respect. Those who participate in hazing are not living our Army Values. Army Regulation 600-20 and the Uniform Code of Military Justice specifically prohibit hazing in all forms. Those who participate may be subject to disciplinary action and court martial. We will continue to review our programs and enforce standards.

Resilience

The stress and strain of ten years of persistent conflict has taken its toll on our Soldiers and Families, but because of programs and initiatives like Comprehensive Soldier Fitness and Master Resiliency Training, we are beginning to see signs of progress. Comprehensive Soldier Fitness provides the skills our Soldiers and Families need to overcome hardships and adverse events, bounce back and grow stronger. Comprehensive Soldier Fitness through the Global Assessment Tool, which gives Soldiers, Families and Department of the Army Civilians an overall assessment in the five dimensions of strength: physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and Family. Based on the Global Assessment Tool's feedback, they can take any of the 30 interactive, online modules to help build and maintain resilience.

Skills taught in Comprehensive Soldier Fitness are having a positive effect on Soldier-reported resilience and psychological health. The presence of qualified Comprehensive Soldier Fitness trainers embedded within units positively impacts the psychological health of Soldiers within those units. Right now, approximately 7,000 Master Resiliency Trainers are serving around the globe, acting as the units and Families first line of resiliency efforts.

In support of our Master Resiliency Training, Army Community Service offers Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Resilience Skills Training for Family members on specific mental and physical resilience techniques and incorporates resiliency modules into their instructional courses.

Behavioral Health

Over the last few years, the Army has made vast improvements in understanding and countering the effects of post traumatic stress.

The Army has increased its outpatient behavioral health access and delivery by more than 10% in Fiscal Year 11, with a surge in behavioral healthcare from 253,773 individual Soldiers in Fiscal Year 10 to 280,403 in Fiscal Year 11. This increase demonstrates the Army's expanded capacity for providing behavioral healthcare, while underscoring the importance it places on behavioral health therapy as a critical element of Army medicine.

The Army Medical Command continues to implement the Comprehensive Behavioral Health System of Care Campaign Plan, which identifies, prevents, treats, and tracks behavioral health issues affecting Soldiers and Families.

The Army continues to improve its surveillance, detection and response programs to reduce the effects of Post Traumatic Stress on service and post-service veteran health. Leader emphasis on redeployment reintegration and Soldier-civilian transition is critical to early diagnosis, treatment and follow-up care. Tele-health is also proving to be an effective way to deliver a wide range of behavioral health therapies targeting Post Traumatic Stress among geographically isolated or dispersed Soldiers.

Wounded Warriors

We also continue to make huge strides caring for our more than 10,000 wounded, ill or injured Soldiers. Since 2007, more than 51,000 Soldiers and their Families have been or are being cared for by these dedicated caregivers and support personnel.

However, nationwide shortages of specialized physicians, nurses, and behavioral health professionals impact the ability of both civilian and military systems to recruit and retain clinical experts. While we have been successful in attracting behavioral health experts, more are required as the ranks of those Soldiers requiring such support and care continues to grow.

We continue to have problems, however, with the Integrated Disability Evaluation System. The number of Soldiers enrolled in Integrated Disability Evaluation System has risen from 5,978 in June 07 to 18,691 at the end of 2011, adding almost 50 days to the process.

The Army has taken a number of actions to reduce the time it takes to complete Integrated Disability Evaluation System. Though Integrated Disability Evaluation System has increased the time Soldiers are in the process, it has reduced the time required for Soldiers to begin receiving Veterans Affairs benefits following their transition by eliminating the requirement for Soldiers to complete a second round of disability assessments with the Veterans Affairs following separation.

Army Family Programs

The Army is committed to providing our Families the quality of life programs commensurate with the quality of their service. The Army does this through the Army Family Covenant, which was re-signed by myself, Secretary of the Army John McHugh, and Chief of Staff of the Army Raymond Odierno in October. This covenant represents a commitment to provide quality of life programs to Soldiers and their Families.

We will sustain the Army's commitment to Families while operating under a fiscal reality fundamentally different than what we have known in the recent past. Although our fiscal reality will change, the cumulative effects of a decade of war will continue into the future. We are currently reviewing, consolidating, and reengineering our programs to make them simpler and easier to access while ensuring we deliver the necessary programs in the most efficient, effective manner possible.

Closing

In closing, I want to stress the amazing work being done every day by our Army Team. As the Sergeant Major of the Army, the best part of my job is visiting our Soldiers, Families and Civilians across the world. The professionalism, dedication and sacrifice they display every day is the reason our Army is the envy of every other in the world. Our Soldiers are the best trained, best manned, best equipped and best led force in our history. I appreciate this opportunity to speak before you tell our story and I welcome your questions at this time. Thank you and Army Strong.