

**HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY IN REVIEW OF
THE DEFENSE ACQUISITION REQUEST FOR
FISCAL YEAR 2010 AND THE FUTURE YEARS
DEFENSE PROGRAM**

TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2009

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC,

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:36 a.m., in room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Carl Levin (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Levin, Lieberman, Reed, Akaka, Webb, Udall, Hagan, Begich, McCain, Inhofe, Sessions, Chambliss, Thune, Burr, and Collins.

Committee staff member present: Leah C. Brewer, nominations and hearings clerk.

Majority staff members present: Jonathan D. Clark, counsel; Michael J. Kuiken, professional staff member; Gerald J. Leeling, counsel; Michael J. Noblet, professional staff member; John H. Quirk V, professional staff member; and William K. Sutey, professional staff member.

Minority staff members present: Joseph W. Bowah, Republican staff director; Adam J. Barker, research assistant; Paul C. Hutton IV, professional staff member; Michael V. Kostiw, professional staff member; David M. Morriss, minority counsel; and Richard F. Walsh, minority counsel.

Staff assistants present: Jessica L. Kingston, Christine G. Lang, and Breon N. Wells.

Committee members' assistants present: Christopher Griffin, assistant to Senator Lieberman; Christopher Caple, assistant to Senator Bill Nelson; Jon Davey, assistant to Senator Bayh; Jennifer Barrett, assistant to Senator Udall; Roger Pena, assistant to Senator Hagan; Anthony J. Lazarski, assistant to Senator Inhofe; Lenwood Landrum and Sandra Luff, assistants to Senator Sessions; Clyde A. Taylor IV, assistant to Senator Chambliss; Brian W. Walsh, assistant to Senator Martinez; Erskine W. Wells III, assistant to Senator Wicker; Kevin Kane, assistant to Senator Burr; and Rob Epplin, assistant to Senator Collins.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman LEVIN. Good morning, everybody. Today Secretary Geren and General Casey will testify before the committee on the

plans and programs of the United States Army as part of our review of the fiscal 2010 annual budget and overseas contingency operations request.

Gentlemen, we—

General CASEY. I just broke my chair.

Chairman LEVIN. We are sorry for that.

Gentlemen, we are thankful to you for your dedicated service to our country. We are grateful to your families for their support of your service. The committee deeply appreciates the service of the men and women of the Army and their families who have given so much of themselves to this Nation and for this Nation and particularly in a time of war. And please, convey that to the men and women in the Army, if you would, for us.

We also note the presence of several noncommissioned officers behind our witnesses, and we look forward to your introducing them.

I am going to put the balance of my statement in the record because we have votes at 10 o'clock this morning. So that means that we have even less time than usual.

[The prepared statement of Senator Levin follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman LEVIN. Now I will call on Senator McCain.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will also ask that my statement be made a part of the record in the interest of time.

I would just like to say, Secretary Geren, I commend you for your long and distinguished career and your service to the country.

And General Casey, you and I have had policy differences on occasion. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize your years of devoted service and sacrifices made by your family.

I know we are going to discuss a list of failed development programs that have delayed modernization efforts and cost taxpayers billions of dollars. I hope our witnesses will discuss the lessons learned from the aborted acquisition programs like the armed reconnaissance helicopter and future combat systems.

I look forward to addressing on the personnel side that the Army is facing a budgetary shortfall of some \$2 billion, having met authorized recruiting and retention targets years ahead of schedule, which is, by the way, a great success story.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would ask that my complete statement be made part of the record.

[The prepared statement of Senator McCain follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator McCain.
Secretary Geren?

STATEMENT OF HON. PRESTON M. "PETE" GEREN III, SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

Mr. GEREN. Mr. Chairman, Senator McCain, and members of the committee, it is truly a privilege for General Casey and me to appear before you and discuss our United States Army.

The partnership between the Army and the Congress goes back to actually a year before our country even began, and it is a part-

nership that has certainly served our soldiers and their families well.

We have provided the committee the full posture statement, and I ask that it be included in the record.

Chairman LEVIN. It will be.

Mr. GEREN. Mr. Chairman, the President's budget for fiscal year 2010 is before the Congress and it recommends \$142 billion for the Army.

The Army budget is mostly about people and the operations and maintenance to support them. Our personnel and O&M accounts make up two-thirds of the Army budget, reflecting General Abrams' axiom that people are not in the Army, people are the Army. Our Army, our soldiers, families, and civilians, is stretched by this long war, but remains the best led, best trained, best equipped force we have ever fielded, and this committee's ongoing support has a lot to do with that.

The noncommissioned officers are the backbone of this great Army, and we have designated 2009 as the Year of the Noncommissioned Officer. At the front of every Army mission, you will find a noncommissioned officer. NCOs lead the way in education, training, discipline, and they are empowered and entrusted like no other noncommissioned officer in any army in the world today. We have three great Army NCOs here with us today, and I would like to introduce them to the committee.

Sergeant Aaron Aus from northern Minnesota. Sergeant Aus is a light-wheeled vehicle mechanic and has deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, and he is currently assigned to the Old Guard.

Sergeant Joe Dulashanti from Cincinnati, Ohio. He is an infantryman who graduated top of his class at AIT in sniper school and was serving as a sniper in Afghanistan when he was shot through both knees and his stomach. He is an above-the-knee amputee. He is still on active duty, and he is eager to continue to serve our country in the United States Army.

Sergeant 1st Class Sherman Wiles of Crockett Mills, Tennessee. He is a decorated infantryman in the Old Guard with tours to the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

Mr. Chairman, I would also like to recognize a former NCO who serves on this committee, Senator Akaka. This year we honor all NCOs past and present, and this afternoon at 5 o'clock we are going to have a parade at Fort Myer at Whipple Field at 5 o'clock in which we are honoring all Members of Congress who are former NCOs, and we once again extend an invitation to all members of this committee to join us there. It is going to be a great occasion. We are going to recognize their great service.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Secretary. Gentlemen, you honor us by your presence, and thank you for your fabulous service to this country. We will pass along to Senator Akaka your greetings as well, but I think we will just give you all a round of applause for everything that you do.

[Applause.]

Mr. GEREN. Mr. Chairman, currently the Army has over 710,000 soldiers serving on active duty, with 243,000 deployed in 80 countries around the world. We have 258,000 Army civilians working at home and abroad to support them.

Our National Guards and Reserves continue to shoulder a heavy load for our Nation. Since September 11, we have activated over 400,000 reservists and guardsmen in support of OIF and OEF. And our citizen soldiers continue to answer the call here at home for domestic emergencies.

We are truly one Army. Our Army National Guard and Reserves are transitioning from a strategic Reserve to an operational force, and I would like to talk about some of the progress we have made in that regard.

In 2001, we spent \$1 billion on National Guard equipment. We are now spending \$4 billion a year and that continues under this budget. As a result, we anticipate that the last Huey helicopter, the venerable workhorse from the Vietnam era, will leave Guard service by the end of this year. At that time, the Guard will have 40 light utility helicopters and over 800 Blackhawks. The famous deuce and a half truck will soon follow the Huey out of the Guard.

I am pleased to report that this hurricane season will be the first since 2004 in which the Guard has the equipment to meet its mission and will not have to borrow from the active or Reserve components to meet those needs.

We also have made good progress in implementing the recommendations of the Commission on National Guard and Reserves. Of the 19 Army-led implementation plans, 14 are completed, among them and most importantly, ensuring that units are provided with notice of selection for mobilization 2 years out and with orders in hand no later than 6 months out. Furthermore, we are working with OSD to improve the transparency of procurement funding for the Guard and Reserves. Soldiers are our most valuable assets. The strength of our soldiers depends upon the strength of their families, and that support is a top priority in this budget.

From fiscal year '07 to '09, with your support, we have more than doubled support for our family programs. In this fiscal year '10 budget, we have \$1.7 billion in family support in the base budget. Responding to the direction we received from Army families, we provided full-time personnel to family readiness groups down to the battalion level, lending a helping hand to our volunteer spouses who carry such a heavy load during this era of multiple deployments. We are providing reduced and no-cost child care for families of deployed soldiers and families with special needs children.

The budget maintains SRM at a level that will ensure that we provide our soldiers and their families a quality of life equal to the quality of their service. This budget continues improvement in the care of our wounded, ill, and injured soldiers, including additional medical personnel and infrastructure and support for family members. And we thank this committee for its leadership in that regard.

We initiated programs to better diagnose and treat the invisible wounds of this war, post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury. With congressional leadership, we are investing unprecedented amounts in brain injury research.

The '10 budget also will help us move towards a seamless transition from the Department of Defense to the Veterans Affairs for those wounded, ill, and injured soldiers who choose to return to private life.

After 7-plus years of war with an all-volunteer force, we are in uncharted waters. Our soldiers and families are carrying a heavy burden for our Nation. We are working to reverse the tragic rise in soldier suicides. It is a top priority throughout our Army, with the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army leading our efforts. We have partnered with the National Institute of Mental Health on a 5-year, \$50 million study to incorporate their world-renowned expertise in mental health research into our suicide prevention efforts, and we are educating literally every soldier in our Army about suicide risk, identification, and intervention. Every NCO knows how to recognize the symptoms of heat stroke and knows what to do about it. Our goal is for every soldier to be able to identify the signs of a possible suicide and know what to do about it as well.

We have also launched new initiatives to attack the problem of sexual assault and harassment. As we work to prevent sexual assault and harassment, we are working to become the Nation's best in the investigation and prosecution of this crime. We have used the HQE authority you have given us to hire national experts to work with our investigators and our prosecutors. We want to be the Nation's model for the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of sexual assault.

To meet the health care needs of a growing force, MEDCOM has increased behavioral health care providers by 40 percent since 2007, and we will continue to grow that under this budget. In theater, we have increased the number of behavioral health providers at fixed sites and we are providing support to disburse troops with mobile teams. However, even with these increases, we do not have the mental health providers that we need, reflecting the shortage in the country as a whole, and we continue to work with the Congress to address this shortage.

But whether the problem is post-traumatic stress, suicidal ideation, the trauma of sexual assault, or any mental or emotional health issue, the perception of stigma remains a barrier to care in our Army, and we are working to eliminate that barrier.

We have instituted major reforms in our contracting and acquisition processes while continuing to provide equipment and support to our soldiers. We have stood up a two-star Army contracting command with enhanced training and career opportunities for contracting officers. Last year you authorized five new contracting general officer positions. We thank you for that. It provides us the opportunity to grow the bench in that regard. We are adding this year 600-plus military billets and over 1,000 civilian billets to our contracting workforce so that we can provide the oversight that our contracting requires.

Being a good steward is more than just money. Our goal is to lead the Department and the entire Federal Government in protecting the environment and saving energy. Our energy security strategy reduces energy consumption in carbon dioxide emissions by using innovative technologies. Currently we generate over 19,000 kilowatts of energy from nonfossil fuel sources. We have solar projects at 29 locations on installations. We are planning for a 500 megawatt solar project at Fort Erwin, which would be the largest in the country compared to what exists today. Over at Fort Myer, you can see in operation some of the 4,000 electric cars we

are in the process of acquiring, cars and light trucks. We plan to invest over \$54 billion in green buildings by 2012, and I am pleased to report that we are on track to finish BRAC in 2011.

In 2008, nearly 300,000 men and women either joined or reenlisted in the United States Army. They are volunteer soldiers with volunteer families. They are proud of what they do and they are proud of who they are.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, we are a busy, stretched, and stressed Army with soldiers, civilians, and Army families doing the extraordinary as ordinary every day. For the past 7 and a half years, I have watched soldiers go off to war and I have watched families stand with them, and I watched this Congress stand with the Army every step of the way. Mr. Chairman and members of this committee, thank you for your support of soldiers and their families and for the resources and support that you provide every year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Geren and General Casey follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Mr. Secretary, thank you for that wonderful statement. Thank you for your great service.

General?

STATEMENT OF GENERAL GEORGE W. CASEY, JR., USA, CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMY

General CASEY. Mr. Chairman, thank you. Senator McCain and members of the committee, nice to be here with you today.

Before I talk about the 2010 budget and the progress we have made in the last year, I would like to introduce someone who represents another important group of our Army family. Seated directly behind me is Kristen Fenti. Her husband, Joe Fenti, was killed in Afghanistan 3 years ago. Since then, she has served on an advisory panel for me so that we can improve our services to our surviving spouses. She has done that while managing her 3-year-old daughter, Lauren, who is quite a handful. So, Kristen, thank you very much for what you do.

Chairman LEVIN. We join you in your admiration. Thank you for being with us.

[Applause.]

Chairman LEVIN. While we are making introductions, Senator Akaka has joined us. We paid tribute to NCOs, current and former, and you came just about 2 minutes late to hear the applause. But there was a lot of applause for you. Thank you, Danny.

Mr. GEREN. There is a great picture of Sergeant Akaka with his hat rakishly placed on the back of his head back in Hawaii a long time ago.

Chairman LEVIN. He is still rakish.

[Laughter.]

General CASEY. Chairman, last year, I think you will recall, in my testimony I said that the Army was out of balance, that we were so weighed down by our current commitments that we could not do the things we know we need to do to sustain this all-volunteer force and to provide the strategic flexibility to do other things. I can tell you that we have made progress over the last year in putting ourselves back in balance, but we are not out of the woods yet.

I also told you last year that we centered our plan to put ourselves back in balance on four imperatives. We felt we had to sustain our soldiers and families, the most critical part of our force. We had to continue to prepare soldiers for success in the current conflict. We had to reset them effectively when they returned, and we had to continue to transform for an uncertain future.

Now, let me just give you some data points here on our six major objectives to give you some indication of how we are doing to get back in balance.

Our first objective was to finish our growth, and the administration directed in January of 2007 that we increase the size of the Army by 74,000. Originally we were going to do that by 2012, and with the Secretary of Defense's help, we advanced that to 2010. As of this month, all of our components, active, guard, and Reserve, have met the end strength targets that were originally set for 2012. So that gives us a big lift.

One of the reasons it gives us a lift is because it allows us to begin coming off of stop-loss this year, and several months ago, the Secretary of Defense announced the plan where the Reserve component will begin deploying units without stop-loss in August, the National Guard in September, and the active force in January of 2010. Now, this puts us on track to achieve our goal of being able to deploy our modular formations without stop-loss by 2011.

Now, the second key objective was to increase the time our soldiers spend at home. I will tell you after 2 years in this job, I am more and more convinced that this is the single most important element of putting ourselves back in balance. It is important from several perspectives.

One is so that the soldiers have time to recover from these repeated combat deployments. What we are seeing across the force are the cumulative effects of repeated deployments.

Second, it gives them a more stable preparation time for their next mission. When you are only home for a year, you barely have time to take your leave before you are preparing to go back again.

Third, it gives soldiers time to begin training for other things, to do things beyond the regular warfare training that they are doing for Iraq and Afghanistan.

Now, I will tell you that back in 2007, I did not think we would quite get to 1 year out/2 years back by 2011. With the President's drawdown plan, if it is executed as has been laid out, we will actually do a little better than that. So I am quite hopeful that if we execute that plan, we will make a big difference here in putting ourselves back in balance.

The third element of balance is moving away from our Cold War formations. We are 85 percent finished converting all of the brigades in the Army to modular formations, and that will be some 300 brigades that will be converted by 2011.

The other element of moving away from Cold War formations is we are balancing, and we have moved almost 90,000 soldiers from skills that were more relevant in the Cold War to skills more needed today. For example, since 2003, we have stood down about 200 tank companies, artillery batteries and air defense batteries, and we have stood up a corresponding number of military police compa-

nies, engineer companies, civil affairs companies, and special forces companies. That has been a huge transformation for us.

Fourth, we are moving to put the whole Army on a rotational cycle, much like the Navy and the Marine Corps have been on for some time. We are doing this so that we can provide a sustained flow of trained and ready forces to combatant commanders and to do that on a predictable cycle for soldiers and families. We will be in that position by 2011.

Fifth, as the Secretary said, we are about halfway through our rebasing effort, and between BRAC, global reposturing, and the growth of our new formations, we will move about 380,000 soldiers, families, and civilians between now and the end of 2011. With the funding that we have been provided, we are on track to do that, and the construction on our installations will greatly improve the quality of life for our soldiers and families.

Lastly, Mr. Chairman, is our goal to restore strategic flexibility, and as we increase the time that our soldiers spend at home, we can increase the time that they devote to training for other things. And we will gradually rekindle the conventional skills that have atrophied here over the past several years.

So bottom line, we have made progress, but we are not out of the woods yet. The next 12 to 18 months will continue to be difficult because we will actually increase the total number of forces we have deployed before we start coming down as we start moving forces out of Iraq. So progress; not out of the woods yet.

Now, if I could just say a few words about each of the imperatives and how the budgets help here.

First of all, sustaining our people. This budget contains money for housing, barracks, child care and youth centers, warrior transition units, and operational facilities. Critically important to providing our soldiers and families an adequate quality of life.

It also includes more than \$1.7 billion for soldier and family programs, and that is very important to us because I can tell you, just having returned from visits to installations in the United States over the last 6 or 7 weeks, that the families remain the most stretched part of the force. I mean, God bless them. They are driving on with a stiff upper lip, but it is very raw under the surface. And we are asking them to do an awful lot, and so we are paying an awful lot of attention to our family programs.

On the prepare side, probably the most significant element that we have done in the last year was the fielding of about 10,000 MRAPs into Iraq and Afghanistan, and these systems have made a difference. When you talk to the soldiers, they will tell you, well, they are a little hard to drive sometimes offroad, but anyone who has been in one when an IED blew up and has survived is a huge supporter of them.

Third, on reset, there is \$11 billion in the base in the OCO parts of this budget for reset. It is critical because we are consuming our readiness as fast as we build it. That money is essential to our ability to continue to deploy ready forces.

Lastly, Mr. Chairman, transform. We believe that we are in and will continue to be in an era of persistent conflict, and I believe that in that era we need land forces that can, one, prevail in a protracted global counter-insurgency; two, to engage with others to

build capacity for them to deny their countries to terrorists; three, to provide support to civil authorities at both home and abroad; and four, to deter and defeat hybrid threats and hostile state actors. And we are building an Army to do that. It is an Army that is based on a versatile mix of tailorable organizations, and it is organized on a rotational cycle so we can provide a steady stream of trained and ready forces to combatant commanders and hedge against the unexpected. And the budget before you today has put us on a path to do that.

Now, I would like to close with a story about a noncommissioned officer because, as the Secretary said, our noncommissioned officers are providing the glue that is holding this force together at a difficult period, and we are recognizing them over the course of this year.

But in April of 2007 in Baghdad, Staff Sergeant Christopher Waiders was riding in a Stryker and he was on a patrol when the Bradley in front of him was struck by an improvised explosive device and the Bradley burst into flame. Sergeant Waiders realized that there were soldiers still on the Bradley, and he fought his way across 100 yards to the Bradley, pulled out two of the soldiers, took them back to his Stryker, and gave them medical care. They told him that there was another soldier still on the Bradley.

He went back across the open area to the Bradley, went inside, as the ammunition was beginning to cook off, found the soldier, but the soldier was already dead. He went back to his Stryker, grabbed a body bag, and returned and recovered the fallen soldier. That is the type of noncommissioned officers we have in our Army today, Senators, and it is an Army that you can be very proud of.

So thank you very much for your attention, and we look forward to taking your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Casey follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. We are truly proud of them. Thank you for that reminiscence.

Let us try 6-minute rounds because we have got, again, a couple of votes coming up, we expect.

First, I want to talk to you, Mr. Secretary, about the planning assumptions for future force requirements in Afghanistan because we have got such serious challenges there. We have got lack of clarity about future allied contributions. We have got uncertainties about the pace and success of further development of the Afghan National Security Forces. What are the current planning assumptions for the future requirements of U.S. forces in Afghanistan?

Mr. GEREN. Mr. Chairman, I would like also to ask General Casey to join me in this response.

The planning assumptions—based on the drawdown that is projected in Iraq and based on the growth of forces in Afghanistan, we believe that from the Army perspective, we will be able to continue to meet the demand from theater. We will see over the course of the next several months the actual number of soldiers who will be deployed will go up, not go down. It will not be until several months from now where we will actually start seeing any reduction in the demand on our forces. But with our current mix of soldiers and with this 1 to 1.3 ratio of deployment to dwell, we can provide

about 19 BCTs on a steady-state basis going forward. That is the max that we are able to deliver under these circumstances.

I would like General Casey to add to that.

Chairman LEVIN. And what is the total number of personnel in 19—

Mr. GEREN. 19 BCTs?

Chairman LEVIN. Approximately.

Mr. GEREN. About 3,500 soldiers per BCT, a little more for a Stryker brigade.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

General, do you want to add anything to that?

General CASEY. No. Senator, the administration has laid out the strategy there, and I think we have provided sufficient forces to accomplish that strategy and train the Afghan Security Forces to gradually assume the mission, and it is just going to take some time.

Chairman LEVIN. At the posture hearing last week here, Admiral Mullen said that he wants to get more access to helicopters for the fight in Afghanistan. He has indicated that buying more helicopters was not the solution. Secretary Gates pointed out that the challenge with respect to the availability of more helicopters is related to personnel, more pilots, more mechanics.

General, what is the problem of getting more helicopter support for operations in Afghanistan?

General CASEY. I think you know that as a part of the troop buildup there in Afghanistan now, we have added a second combat aviation brigade. It is already on the ground there and begun flying missions. So they needed another combat aviation brigade.

Chairman LEVIN. So all the requirements for helicopters are going to be met?

General CASEY. Now they will be with the new combat aviation brigade.

Chairman LEVIN. All right.

Now, General, I want to ask you about the future combat systems and Army modernization, but specifically about the future combat systems program, including the cancellation of a manned ground vehicle. Secretary Gates made this decision, he said, because he concluded that the design of FCS ground vehicles would be inadequate in light of the vehicle survivability lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan.

He acknowledged that the modernization program is essential. He intends to reevaluate the Army's requirements and is committed to protect the resources that are needed and that will be protected or fenced in some way.

I also note that the fiscal year 2010 Army budget request includes \$100 million for a new start manned ground vehicle program but not under the future combat systems structure.

First of all, General, did you support the Secretary of Defense's decision on this matter?

General CASEY. Chairman, I support it. I did not agree with it.

Chairman LEVIN. And why did you not agree with it?

General CASEY. The fundamental point of disagreement between the Secretary of Defense and myself was that as you just said. He believed that we had not sufficiently accommodated the lessons of

the current fight into a redesign of the manned ground vehicle. I believe we have.

One of the points that we talked with the Secretary about was the original design of the vehicle. And we need to be up front with this. When we started designing the future combat systems program, it was designed to fight conventional wars. We thought conventional war would be fought in the 21st century. That has clearly changed. But the original design was a flat-bottom vehicle that was 18 inches off the ground, and that was clearly not survivable in this environment.

So we built a V-shaped hull kit, and we added onto the vehicle the capability to raise it and lower it so that you could get it on an airplane, but still, if you needed to get some space off the ground, you could raise it and operate in an IED environment. There were several things like that that we had incorporated into the system.

But when it came down to the end of it, I could not convince the Secretary that we had done enough. So he directed that we halt the future combat systems program, cancel the manned ground vehicle program, and develop from a blank sheet of paper a new design.

We have already begun building a new design, and we have directed that the vehicle should be fielded in 5 to 7 years, which tells us, one, we are certainly going to learn from what we got out of the current fight, but we are also going to learn from the technologies that we have developed as part of the future combat systems program because we know where vehicle technology is because we pushed that envelope to get it there. So the combination of those things I believe will allow us to meet that objective.

Chairman LEVIN. Is it your understanding that there is a commitment to protect the resources which are necessary for a new competitively based program?

General CASEY. The Secretary has said that publicly several times.

Chairman LEVIN. And to you personally.

General CASEY. And to me personally.

Chairman LEVIN. Secretary, did you want to add anything to that?

Mr. GEREN. Yesterday the new Under Secretary for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, Dr. Carter, reemphasized the commitment to the Army modernization program. Dr. Gates has emphasized inside the Department and outside of the Department that it will remain one of his top priorities.

Chairman LEVIN. Including the ground vehicle portion?

Mr. GEREN. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Senator McCain?

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the witnesses.

Just to follow up what Senator Levin was asking, General Casey, what became of great concern to many of us was the cost overruns associated with the future combat systems. General, I mean, as I recall, it went from like \$90 billion to \$120 billion. As important, it was a 45 percent cost overrun before we got the first piece of equipment. Now, it may be the best and it may needed to be lifted

up, but with those kinds of cost overruns, we will not be buying many of them.

Did that not concern you at some point in this acquisition process that you have a 45 percent cost overrun?

General CASEY. It absolutely did, Senator. In fact, over the last 6 or 8 months, we went through a complete relook of every part of the program, and the cost overruns that you speak about were largely generated by us increasing the requirements.

Senator MCCAIN. And in all due respect, General, if we keep generating changes that result in 45 percent cost overruns, one, it is either bad planning or, two, bad management of the program and, three, at some point, becomes not affordable.

General CASEY. I agree with you.

And the third thing it could be, Senator, is that we are adapting to what we are learning in the current fight, and that is the challenge. Frankly, we had a program that had been drawn out over a decade, and technology is changing so fast. We have been at war for 7 years. We had to learn things from what we were doing.

So we are treating this, Senator, as an opportunity to clean up the management aspects of the program as well. As I said, we are focusing on a 5- to 7-year production of this manned ground vehicle, and I think that will cause us to be more efficient in our management of the program.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, again, I do not mean to be too repetitive, but hopefully with legislation we are passing and with new leadership in the Pentagon, certainly at the acquisition level, and both at Secretary Geren's level and the Secretary of Defense's level, we have got to get these costs under control particularly in light of—as I read the base budget, it is a 4 percent increase over 2009. But obviously, personnel is a 12 percent increase, but other Army accounts actually decrease from 2009 levels. I think you have pointed that out. Procurement decreases by almost 5 percent. RDT&E decreases by almost 13 percent; MILCON by 15 percent.

I guess my point is if you have got a decrease in procurement and an increase in costs of 45 percent, somewhere along the line you are on a collision course, which is either going to make it unaffordable or not in sufficient numbers that you deem necessary to start with.

I would be glad to listen to both General Casey and Secretary Geren.

Mr. GEREN. I would like to just make one point. We recognized a few years ago that we did not have the personnel, either military or civilian, in the contracting and acquisition workforce within the Army. If you look at what we did in the '90s, when we shrunk the Army about 40 percent, we shrunk the contracting and acquisition force more than that. When we started seeing our acquisition and contracting budgets going up, both the logistical support contracts, as well as modernization, we did not have the personnel within the Army to adequately support that. We lost many of our outstanding officers, as well as civilians, to the private sector. We did not offer the career opportunities that we needed, and a couple of years ago, we did the Gansler Commission, and he did an in-depth look at our acquisition and contracting.

With the help of this committee, we have added five contracting general officers. We are adding literally thousands of people in our contracting and acquisition, and we are enhancing the training. We are trying to provide career opportunities to keep the people in the Army and do not have them go outside. So we are rebuilding a depleted acquisition and contracting workforce. We are going to be in a better position going forward to properly oversee it and manage these programs, and we look forward to working within the new legislation that I understand you likely will—

Senator MCCAIN. Well, again, I want to emphasize if you decrease procurement funding by 5 percent and you continue to have cost overruns, then we are on an unsustainable course. I hope that we can work together to address that.

General CASEY, the—

General CASEY. Senator, I just—

Senator MCCAIN. Go ahead.

General CASEY. I agree with you and we have to do better in managing our acquisition programs, and we are committed to doing that.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you. And I am sorry to belabor the point, but I really believe that if you look at the submitted budgets, there are going to be decreases in actual procurement over a period of time. It makes these cost overruns, which are bad, even worse.

General CASEY, press reports last month indicate that units arriving in Iraq were diverted to Afghanistan after only a few weeks. I think we are very aware of the different conditions that prevail in Afghanistan as opposed to Iraq. Are the units that are deploying to Afghanistan receiving the training that is tailored to the mission there? Does it concern you?

General CASEY. By and large, yes, Senator, and there are two groups. This is the vast preponderance of the soldiers going to Afghanistan. They find out they are going before they leave the United States, and so they have time to train on Afghanistan skills before they go.

There is a much smaller group—and this is in the low thousands, around 1,000 or 2,000 I believe—that have actually been in Iraq and have had to move to Afghanistan. Those have been primarily engineer units, units that are not necessarily out conducting counter-insurgency operations. They are more in a supporting role.

So I am comfortable that we are giving our soldiers the training that they need to make the transition from Iraq to Afghanistan.

Senator MCCAIN. So the ones that are experiencing this rapid transition, given the nature of their mission, it is not a big problem.

General CASEY. I do not see it as a big problem, Senator.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator McCain.

The votes are now expected to begin at 10:30. By the way, the acquisition reform legislation that Senator McCain referred to we are actually now scheduling a conference for, as Senator McCain and I hope all the members of the committee know, for 4:30 this afternoon. We hope to get a bill approved before the Senate and the House in the next 2 days. Thank you.

Senator Lieberman?

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary, General, thanks for your continuing service.

Secretary Geren, you said today that the Army is busy, stretched, and stressed, and I agree with you. I know you and I both agree that the Army is doing an extraordinary job for our country in two active wars and a lot more.

General Casey, you said this morning that the Army is still out of balance. We made some progress in the last year, but it remains out of balance. And that dwell time, which is increasing dwell time, you said is the single most important element in putting ourselves back in balance. And I agree with you on that too.

Am I right, General Casey, that on several occasions over the last several months, you have said that you could not foresee a significant increase in dwell time, that is, the time that our Army soldiers can be home at base retraining, et cetera, because of the increased call for deployments over that period of time?

General CASEY. That is true. What I say is that dwell is a function of supply and demand.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

General CASEY. We have to finish our growth, and the demand has to come down.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

And your goal for the Army for dwell time would be what?

General CASEY. My short-term goal for '11 is 1 year out/2 years back. I would like to ultimately get the Army to a point where it was 1 year out/3 years back for the active force and 1 year out/5 years back for the Guard and Reserve.

Senator LIEBERMAN. So by the fiscal year beginning October 1st, 2010, which would be fiscal year '11, you would like to see us get to 1 year out/2 years back. Is that right?

General CASEY. That is correct, Senator.

Senator LIEBERMAN. What are the numbers now, just to have it on the record? What is the dwell time now?

General CASEY. Right now, for the active force, we are sitting right between 1 to 1.5 and a little less.

Senator LIEBERMAN. So we are well below.

Am I correct that we expect for the first of this year to have to increase deployments? In other words, the path we are on in Iraq and Afghanistan together—the net effect will be an increase in deployments for the remainder of this year.

General CASEY. Correct, Senator, by about 10,000 before we start to come down.

Senator LIEBERMAN. And that is a significant number. So in that sense, there will be more pressure on dwell time from now until the end of the year just because of the supply and demand that you talked about.

As I understand it—incidentally, to say something very briefly, I think you are so right when you see dwell time as the key because it is so clear that you and we are trying our best, and I think doing better at the quality of life of the people in our Army and their families, housing, benefits, et cetera. But if the supply of the Army is less than the demand for the Army, then this critical factor of how long our soldiers are going to be home—it simply cannot

go up from the military point of view of retraining, et cetera, rest, and of course, for the human element of being with their families.

Now, I understand that we are in a very unusual moment here, which is that because recruitment is going so well and reenlistments are so high, that the authorized end strength of the Army is 547,000-plus. We actually have an Army now that is about 549,000. Is that correct?

General CASEY. It is, and actually, Senator, for this year, '09, that we are in for a few more months, it is actually 532,000.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Yes. It is 532,000 authorized, plus the waiver of about 3 percent. So it takes us up to 547,000. But we have got more than that now. If I understand it correctly, unless we do something about that in the supplemental, you are going to be under very odd pressure where, as the demand goes up, because of the increasing deployments, you are actually going to have to come back to the 547,000 and therefore attrite so that the supply is even less. Am I understanding that correctly?

General CASEY. You are, Senator, but that is a fairly natural function that goes on all year long as people come and go across the Army.

Senator LIEBERMAN. So I am working with some members of the committee. We have got a bipartisan group on offering an amendment which would basically bring the authorized end strength up to 547,000, but then leaving the 2 percent waiver that the Secretary has to basically enable from now until the end of September, this fiscal year—this costs about \$400 billion—for the Secretary to give you some latitude not to have to attrite people in that period of time. In your personal military judgment, would that be of assistance to the Army?

General CASEY. It would be, Senator. We actually have the authorities. We just need the money.

Senator LIEBERMAN. The money, exactly right, and that is what I am going to try to do.

Let me take it to the next step, which is the fiscal year 2010 budget. I noticed that your Vice Chief, General Chiarelli, testified at a hearing, I believe, at Senator Bayh's subcommittee, that in fact the Army is actually 30,000 below the numbers we have been talking about because of wounded warriors and all the rest. And he felt the Army needed 30,000 more during the coming fiscal year to fulfill its responsibilities and hopefully take some pressure off of the dwell time. Do you agree?

General CASEY. It certainly would be easier if we had a temporary increase in end strength that was funded to get us through the next 12 to 18 months that I have said is a critical period.

What I am not ready to sign up for just yet is whether we need to increase the active Army beyond 547,000 because with an active Army that size, plus the Guard and Reserve, that is 1.1 million folks. If the demand comes down, we should be able to provide the country a sustainable capability at appropriate deployment ratios at 1.1 million.

Senator LIEBERMAN. So let me just understand, and then my time is up. You are saying you could use 30,000 extra, but you would see it as temporary.

General CASEY. It would have to be temporary, and I would tell you I have discussed this with the Secretary of Defense over the past months, and we have decided not to go forward with that. But as we continue to watch how our units are manned as they go out the door, if I feel the need to readdress that with him, I will.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Well, I hope that we will give you that authority and that flexibility in our Department of Defense authorization bill for fiscal year 2010.

Thanks, General.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Lieberman.

We are going to try to work through these votes somehow or other.

Senator Inhofe?

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to go back. We spent quite a bit of time on FCS. There are some differing opinions sitting at this table. I would like to pursue another line of questioning on it.

First of all, I have the map of the United States showing the States that would be economically impacted by terminating the FCS, and Oklahoma is way down. So there is nothing parochial about my concern.

There is this concern, though. I have been on here for quite some time on both the Senate and the House Armed Services Committee. General Shinseki said back in 2000—I am going to read this quote. Talking about the FCS, he said, “This is the most significant effort to change the Army in 100 years. Our aim is not a single platform swap-out, but a systemic change and full integration of multi-dimensional capabilities, space, air, sea, land. Not since the beginning of the last century has such a comprehensive transformation been attempted.”

Then General Schumacher said—and this is 5 years later. He was talking about one specific element of the FCS and non-line-of-sight cannon, the NLOS cannon. He said, “The NLOS cannon is the lead element of our platforms with the FCS, the non-line-of-sight cannon that we can bring forward because we know we need to help and shape the future.”

And we were talking about the older—in fact, if there is time, I am going to go back and talk a little bit about the Bradley and the Abrams too.

But the Paladin is probably the oldest relic that we have of all the systems that are in there. For that reason, there has been a lot of effort to try to get that upgraded. The Paladin was, I think, 1963. There have been several PIMs since then. It has been upgraded and needs to be upgraded.

But in the meantime, there has to come a time when the studying is over and we actually get into a new system, and that is what the two generals were talking about. It just seems to me that when we go along, we make decisions, we finally are going to upgrade, and then we want to go back and study longer, there has to be a time when all this fun is over.

I think that is one of the reasons that in the last defense authorization bill, we have some language in there that says that we are going to pursue the FCS. And then specifically, it says that in the

event that—on the NLOS cannon—to terminate that would require legislative language change. So what would be your intent if we were to meet, the House Armed Services Committee and the Senate Armed Services Committee? What is going to happen if they do not change the law?

General CASEY. Senator, you are exactly right. We are quite cognizant of section 216 of the 2003 NDA, and we are working with the Department of Defense and intend to come to Congress and basically figure out a way through this.

I will tell you—and for all the members—the FCS program was not terminated. It was the manned ground vehicle portion of the program that was terminated. Everything else continues to go forward, and so there is an impression that we have “wasted a lot of money,” but the technology that we have developed is going to empower all of the Army brigade combat teams and not just the original 15 that we had gone out there. So the rest of the program is going to continue to go forward. It will be restructured.

We fully recognize that we need to come to you here with a proposal to figure out how we get past the law on the non-line-of-sight cannon.

Senator INHOFE. I understand that, but the restructuring and the changing around—at some point, we have to get to the point where we are going to go forward with something, get it done, and have these kids in the field out there with something that is better than prospective opponents might have. I mean, as we all know, right now there are five countries that make a better non-line-of-sight cannon, including South Africa, than we have.

So I am just saying that in this process, of course, the President makes the recommendation on the budget. The Secretary of Defense decides where this should go, and then it gets down you guys trying to make this happen.

But the other process is we have a committee here. There is a committee over in the House, and they may disagree with some of the things that are said.

Let me quickly mention one other thing. When we had Secretary Gates before this committee last week, we talked about there had been, so-called, a gag order at one point, and then he made it very clear that he was accepting the fact that the chiefs would come forward with a list of unfunded mandates—I am sorry—a list of unfunded priorities. So we are waiting for those unfunded priorities right now. Do you have those yet for the United States Army, the unfunded priorities?

General CASEY. I do, and I have signed the letter back to Congressman McHugh, and I will be happy to provide you a copy of that.

Senator INHOFE. Okay, that is good. Thank you.

Secretary Geren, you and I served together in the House. When did you leave the House?

Mr. GEREN. 1997.

Senator INHOFE. Well, you were there in 1994 when you and I sat on the House Armed Services Committee and heard some testimony that in 10 more years we would not need to have ground troops anymore. I think none of us took that too seriously.

But the point is still there, that we try to anticipate what our needs are going to be in the future, and we try to do a good job. No matter how many smart generals and advisors we have, we are going to guess wrong. So we do not really know 10 years from now. When you start preparing right now for something in the future, it is 10 years before it becomes a reality.

Have you thought about that, either one of you? Have you pretty much fixed in your own mind what our needs are going to be 10 years in the future?

Mr. GEREN. In the period of time that I have either been involved in or watching public policy carefully, I have learned that the most important lesson is a lesson of humility as far as our ability to predict the future. We have consistently not gotten it right. When we look at the Army and try to figure out how we properly position the Army going forward, we need to be humble about our ability to predict the future, and we have got many examples in recent history to remind us of how bad we are at predicting the future.

That is why we believe that this full spectrum capability is our goal. The term is thrown around loosely, I think, misunderstood by some. Some people here, when we say full spectrum, they think we are talking about concentrating on the high end of the conflict spectrum. Our new policy commits us to being able to do offensive operations and defensive operations and stability operations. We want to truly be in a position to operate across the full spectrum. I think that is the only way that we can be properly prepared for whatever.

Senator INHOFE. My time has expired, but I would say this is not just the Army. All services have the same problem. I know the attitude with what is happening right now with the F-22 and some of the other things of concern. It just seems to me that at some point we are going to have to look into the future and say that perhaps it is going to require a larger percentage of our budget. We are going to be down close to 3 percent at the end of this budget cycle.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Lieberman [presiding]: Thank you, Senator Inhofe.

Senator Reed?

Senator REED. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

First, Secretary Geren, let me commend you for your extraordinary service to the Army. I think you have set the standard as far as service Secretary in terms of your integrity and your commitment and your devotion to the men and women of the Army. So thank you very, very much, sir. Thank you.

Mr. GEREN. Thank you, Senator.

Senator REED. General Casey, you have significant responsibilities to provide the appropriate manpower for the COCOM, combat commanders. One of the issues is particularly the shortage of—and you alluded to it before—combat engineer units for road clearing operations, both in Iraq and Afghanistan, particularly as we build up. What do you and General Dempsey and others doing to transform units that may be not technically engineering units into those that are capable of doing these missions because they become sort of the critical enablers?

General CASEY. You are exactly right, Senator. In fact, when I spoke earlier, I talked of tank companies converting to engineer companies. We have had a concerted effort to increase the number of these enablers that are particularly effective in the stability operations aspects of our doctrine. Just for example, in 2003, we had 171 construction companies. By 2011, we will have 212, and you have similar increases in military police, civil affairs, psychological operations. So we are very attentive to making sure that we have the capabilities to execute the doctrine and not just having the doctrine.

Senator REED. Are you confident at the pace—from your statistics you have begun to make this transformation. Is it fast enough? We have traveled. Many of my colleagues have traveled recently out to both Iraq and Afghanistan. These are the critical assets that both commanders need, one to go down, one to go up. We have a window in Afghanistan of perhaps 18 months to 2 years to turn this tactical operational situation around. Do you think you are at the fastest possible pace to get these units in the field?

General CASEY. I think we all would like to go faster, but with the conversions of the units, the conversions to modular organizations, the rebasing, and the continued deployment of 140,000–150,000 folks every year, I do not see how we could do it much faster than we are doing it now. I do believe that to the best of my knowledge, we have covered the engineer requirements in Afghanistan with the forces we have now.

Senator REED. Let me ask you another aspect of this whole issue of personnel, which you are responsible for. Again, given the changing missions in both theaters, Iraq and Afghanistan, there is going to be the requirement for individual small training teams, not BCTs, but small groups of trainers. Are you preparing for this increased demand, particularly in Iraq? Two, selecting individuals, men and women, who are well qualified, not just technically but also in terms of operating in the culture in small units—is there going to be a problem effectively supplying these trainers? Because that becomes the great force multiplier for us as we get the Iraqi forces and the Afghani forces truly in the fight.

General CASEY. I have seen an interesting change here over time. When we first started the transition team mission back in late 2004 or early 2005, we, the conventional forces, were not really skilled in operating with indigenous forces. So we have grown in that knowledge over time.

Now what we are seeing in both Iraq and Afghanistan is the desire by the commanders to use brigade combat teams as the nucleus of the training effort. We are augmenting them with additional trainers so that that brigade commander can partner with military police and border forces in their sector and provide trainers with each of them. This allows them to provide the security and the logistic support for the teams. So it is a transition that is going on right now.

I just visited the 4th of the 82nd who was down in Fort Polk doing their training. They are the brigade that is going to Afghanistan to take on the training mission in the south. With the commanders there, I asked them is there something additional we should be doing to help you learn how to train these indigenous

forces, and one of the battalion commanders raised his hand and looked at me and said, General, that is what we have been doing for the last 3 years. So the skills are up in the conventional force, and I think that is extremely positive.

Senator REED. How does this work in Iraq? As you pull out brigade combat teams, you no longer have that brigade structure. You will have embedded training teams that will not be operating with their brigade. They will be with the Iraqi brigades. That is a different sort of species.

General CASEY. You are right, Senator. As the drawdown comes, there will be a mix of units that have external teams and then units that have their own teams. Then that will gradually evolve down to the six advise and assist brigades that will be remaining in 2010, and they will be organized, as I said—

Senator REED. One other question. This is just reflecting decades ago. The incentive structures for the very best people to go into these training billets versus a BCT, a battalion. You and the Secretary have to make sure that you are properly incentivizing, properly recognizing, properly rewarding. That was not done, I think, in the mid to late 1960s when the advisors, particularly in Vietnam, were sort of not given the credit nor the support which was necessary to get the very best people in there.

General CASEY. We very much agree. Last year, I allowed key developmental credit for officers serving on transition teams. This year we began selecting people from the battalion command lists to command transition teams. So we are committed to making sure the quality gets there.

Senator REED. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN [presiding]. Thank you, Senator Reed.

Senator Chambliss?

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, as always, thanks for your service. Pete, I mentioned to you before the hearing—I do not know whether this may be your last hearing or not, but I hope we have an opportunity to brag on you even more. But I just cannot overstate the value of the service that you have rendered to your country during your years in Congress, as well as at the Pentagon. You and I were good friends in our House days, and I have always admired and respected you, but never more so than now because you have made great sacrifices. Your family has made great sacrifices to serve your country, and we thank you for that.

Mr. GEREN. Thank you, Senator.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Gentlemen, as I understand it, you have come to an agreement with the Air Force concerning the joint cargo aircraft program to reduce the overall quantity of aircraft from 78 to 38. This decision also makes it a single-service mission, as opposed to a joint program.

As I understand it, there is still a strong need for an aircraft that can close that last tactical mile. So I am concerned about this decision. As I understand it, the Sherpa is an aging aircraft that lacks the capabilities required to operate in Afghanistan, and additionally, we are still utilizing private contractors in Afghanistan to fly our troops from forward-operating base to forward-operating base.

These facts seem to be at odds with the decision, and I wonder if you can explain what led to this decision and how the Army will be supported by this new course of action with respect to this decrease in numbers.

Mr. GEREN. Let me speak to the numbers and the Chief can talk to the roles and missions issue.

When the Secretary made the decision to go to 38 aircraft of the joint cargo aircraft, he explained that what he was attempting to do there is replace the Shermans. He has told us since then that the right number is somewhere—or he is open to consider whether the right number is somewhere between 38 and 78, and he wants to have the Air Force look at the proper mix of C-130s and joint cargo aircraft going forward and see if there is a way to better utilize the inventory of C-130s in this mission, recognizing that there will be parts of this mission, subsets of this mission that the C-130 cannot meet because of their ability to access certain runways. So the number is 38 at this point, but the Secretary has left open the door to reconsider that issue after we have done a better job of looking at the potential contribution of the C-130 to that mission.

As far as the roles and the mission, I would ask the Chief to speak to that.

General CASEY. Senator, I have been working with the last two Chiefs of Staff of the Air Force, and basically what I have told them is it is not my core competency to fly fixed-wing cargo aircraft. I needed the capability. I needed the last tactical mile that you talked about in your opening statement. So I said, when you are ready, take this program. It makes more sense for the Air Force to have this than it does for the Army. General Schwartz and I reached an agreement in principle a couple of months ago. So we agreed to go forward.

Now, we have not worked out the modalities of how that will happen, and we have a team that involves Craig McKinley, the Director of the Guard Bureau. They are helping us work through the details of this. We have been directed in the budget to have a report back to the Department by the end of this month, and we will do that.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Well, I am told the Army aviation assets are being used at about five times their peacetime operational tempo and that we have flown nearly 3 million flight hours since the beginning of OIF and OEF. We have done that by putting a lot of pressure on our rotary wing assets, particularly the CH-47. That is very expensive and probably not nearly as efficient as that joint cargo aircraft would be. So as you go through this, we look forward to working with both you, as well as the SECDEF on that particular issue.

Secretary Geren, you talked about the issue of suicide in your opening statement, and this is, rightfully so, a number one issue on the minds of folks in your position and others. Are you seeing any common thread or causal relationship between the rise in suicides in the Army today?

Mr. GEREN. We are looking for patterns in the increasing numbers of suicides. What we are finding, as far as the immediately contributing factors to the decision to commit suicide, the factors that lead to that tend to be the same factors you see outside of the

military. The number one factor is a shattered personal relationship, loss of spouse, loss of loved one, divorce, and then the second is some type of workplace humiliation, disappointment, serious financial problem. Then you have the occasional medical problem. But by and large, the precipitating event we find is the same inside the military as outside of the military.

We have seen the group that commits suicide more than any other is younger than 25. It is male. It is white. The majority use a weapon, a rifle or a pistol. We are working with the National Institute of Mental Health to see if there are some patterns there that we have not been able to spot.

But I think it is unquestionably true that the stress that the force is under puts relationships under a stress, leads to increased divorce rates. The studies that are produced for the Chief and me every month—we look at the divorce rates. We look at other indicators of stress on the families. So we have got families under stress, soldiers under stress. The pressure that everybody in the Army is under certainly contributes to that stress.

We have found that as far as the deployment history, about one-third of the people that commit suicide have never deployed. One-third commit suicide during a deployment, and then one-third commit suicide who are back from a deployment. We have found that the soldiers who deployed more often—the suicide rate actually goes down. It appears that they develop a resiliency, and multiple deployments, as some might suspect, are not a direct contributor to higher incidence of suicide.

We are also looking at all the different waiver categories to see if there is any sort of trends of patterns there.

But General Chiarelli is leading this effort. We are looking across the many different people in our Army that are part of the suicide prevention efforts, the chaplains. It is mental health providers. It is psychiatrists, as well as the individual soldiers and the small group leaders.

Our big focus on suicide prevention is to try to take it down to the grassroots, and we have undertaken a chain-teach. We had a stand-down in February and March, and we are doing a chain-teach over the course of the summer. Literally every single soldier in the Army has to participate—it is required—in this suicide prevention training.

But your first question. There are patterns there, but there are no patterns that we have seen that have led to any breakthrough. We are hopeful that this partnership with NIMH will allow us to see some patterns there and discover something about suicide prevention that has escaped us so far.

Senator CHAMBLISS. I know both of you are going to continue to work hard on this issue. As you know, we have developed a great working relationship on other health care issues in Augusta at Fort Gordon with Eisenhower, the VA, and the Medical College of Georgia. This may be another way that you can use that model to try to incorporate some private sector physicians in helping us deal with this issue too.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Chambliss.

We now have a quorum, so we are going to be able to consider a list of 2,425 pending military nominations. All of these nominations have been before the committee the required length of time.

Is there a motion to favorably report these 2,425 military nominations?

Senator CHAMBLISS. So moved.

Chairman LEVIN. Is there a second?

Senator REED. Second.

Chairman LEVIN. All in favor, say aye?

[A chorus of ayes.]

Chairman LEVIN. Any opposed, nay?

[No response.]

Chairman LEVIN. The motion carries. Thank you all.

Senator Udall?

Senator UDALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, gentlemen. Thank you for service to the country, and I also wanted to note to Ms. Bennett her work is an inspiration. Thank you for what you do.

I have a number of Colorado-specific questions that I would like to ask, but first I would like to make a comment. You are both aware that Colorado Springs has been counting on another BCT at Fort Carson as a part of the Grow the Army Initiative. I know the stationing plan the stationing plan has not been finalized yet, but I want to note for the record that costs have been incurred in anticipation of the new BCT both on the part of the community and Fort Carson itself. I do not have the precise dollar figures just yet, but it seems to me that for a community that has been in support of the Army, we need to give some thought to those investments already made. I just wanted to note that for the record.

If I might, I would like to move to my first question.

You both are familiar with the Pinon Canyon maneuver site, which is an important training asset for Fort Carson, other installations, and Guard and Reserve units from service branches across the country. Secretary Geren, I know you took time to come out to Fort Carson recently.

As you both know, when expansion of the existing site was first revealed in 2006 and then formally proposed in 2007, the plan was quickly rejected by the ranchers and land owners in the area. Opposition has only grown over the intervening years. I think, as you know, the Governor has agreed to sign legislation restricting State lands for any expansion use, and the Army has also scaled back its original proposal and also agreed that eminent domain authority will not be used. Moreover, for 2 years running, the Congress has prohibited the use of funds for Pinon Canyon expansion in the military construction appropriations bill, and while that has not closed the book on the potential expansion, it has limited the Army's ability to conduct an environmental impact statement in furtherance of the acquisition plan.

So given all these developments, gentlemen, I have a series of questions, and then I will let you answer them. What is the purpose of an EIS in the case of Pinon Canyon? What would you expect an EIS to uncover that we do not already know about the underlying purpose for potential expansion, particularly on the question whether this particular acreage offers unique advantages for

training that are already not met at Fort Carson and other facilities around the country? And can you also reconfirm that the Army only intends to proceed on the basis of willing sellers or lease arrangements and will not use eminent domain? That is a series of questions, Mr. Secretary.

Mr. GEREN. Let me start with the last one first. We have committed that we only want to work with willing sellers. We will not use eminent domain.

You did make a number of points. I know the Governor is considering signing legislation that would block the use of any State lands. I would hope that would not happen. That would be unfortunate.

We got off on the wrong foot with the landowners in the Pinon Canyon area, and I acknowledge that. I would like us to be able to punch the reset button and start over. The expansion of Pinon Canyon is important to us long-term. The original number of in excess of 400,000 acres—I think we no longer consider that as a goal or even desirable, and we are talking about a number considerably less than that. The GAO has recently looked at our methodology in assessing what are our training needs. They have, at least preliminarily, validated that. But Pinon Canyon long-term, we would like to grow it. The exact number of acres still remains to be determined, heavily influenced by the number of willing sellers or lessors that would be willing to forward.

But the Army has a great, long, rich history with the State of Colorado, worked together. You all have been full partners in the growth at Fort Carson. And the points you made for the record about the BCT issue, I am very cognizant of the investment that the community is making there. I am very mindful of that.

I would like to see us take a pause and do a better job of listening to the landowners and see if we cannot figure out a way to move ahead in a win-win fashion.

The development of Pinon Canyon, properly done, could bring some economic development to a part of the State that is economically depressed. We see an opportunity make a contribution in that regard.

Fort Carson, when you look at the training range available to it, does not meet our doctrinal requirements. Now, there are many other installations that fall in that same category. But that means that brigades at Fort Carson often have to travel elsewhere. That is expensive in order to accomplish that training.

We have decided to hold off on doing an EIS. We use O&M money for EIS, not MILCON money, but in an effort to just demonstrate our commitment to cooperate with the spirit of the congressional interests, as well as the landowners, we are holding off on moving ahead on an EIS.

We want to work together with the State on this. We would like to work together with the State government, most importantly, respect the wishes of the landowners. Mr. Easton, who recently left, who was our assistant Secretary, had devoted considerable time in there to try to repair some of the damage that was done I think the way we started out. But it is part of our long-term plan, but we want to be a good neighbor. We want to have this willingly embraced by the landowners. That is the only way it works long-term.

Senator, we would like to continue to work with you. I appreciate the leadership you have shown on it, as have many other members of your delegation. I think we can make this work, but it is going to require some time and we are going to have to do some good listening in order to bring it off.

Senator UDALL. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

If I might, General, move to another question about Fort Carson. As you know, the 4th ID is in the process of moving up to Colorado. We are really excited about that opportunity. We have seen over the past several decades the critical role that the Army aviation function plays in military operations. It provides a range of combat multipliers, everything from airborne attacks to aeromedical evacuation.

The 4th ID already has an Apache battalion, but the remainder of their aviation brigade is not slotted to join the rest of the division at Fort Carson. So I have a few questions about that situation I would like to direct to you.

Are there plans to add an aviation brigade to the 4th ID in the near future? In the interim, what are the Army's plans for providing the 4th ID with aviation assets for training and combat operations? And will the lack of an aviation brigade interfere with the 4th ID's ability to rapidly deploy with aircraft and crew that have trained with the division?

General CASEY. Senator, a couple things. First of all, we have designed—I mentioned modular organizations in my opening statement, and our aviation brigades are assigned to support three to five brigades. While there will not likely be an aviation brigade moved to Fort Carson, if the division deploys and the mission called for it, they would have an aviation brigade to provide them the support they needed.

With respect to training, the battalion that has just arrived back there from Korea will provide some training support for their rotations, and then for additional needs, particularly at the combat training centers, they will be supported by aircraft from other aviation units around the country. So their aviation needs will be met, but probably not an aviation brigade at Fort Carson.

Senator UDALL. I see my time has expired, but I would also make a final note on the Hatch facility which is up in the mountains in Colorado. We will continue to work with you to see if we cannot get some birds permanently assigned to that site. The training opportunities there are so similar to what we face in Afghanistan, in particular, that we would like to be able to even do more there. So thank you for your attention to that opportunity as well.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Udall.

Senator COLLINS?

Senator COLLINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Geren, first let me join in the praise of my colleagues for your service. We do appreciate your outstanding service as Secretary of the Army. I fear this may be your last time before our committee, and I want you to know that I join my colleagues in saluting your service.

Mr. GEREN. Thank you very much, Senator.

Senator COLLINS. General Casey, I want to associate myself with the line of questioning of Senator Lieberman. It is my under-

standing that there are currently about 20,000 troops that are unavailable due to injuries and wounds for combat operations. And very troubling, it is my understanding that that is a record number of troops since the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq began.

First of all, is my number correct, that it is approximately 20,000 troops?

General CASEY. Your number is correct.

Senator COLLINS. Furthermore, we are ramping up deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, as Senator Lieberman has pointed out, before we begin the drawdowns. That puts a great deal of pressure on our troops for the next 10 months. I am particularly concerned about whether we are going to be able to increase dwell time, which is of great concern to all of us.

I am also concerned that the situation in Iraq may not go as well as we hope, and thus the schedule for moving troops out of Iraq, which is key to our ability to deploy more troops to Afghanistan, may not be realized.

What would be the impact on the National Guard, in particular, if we continue to have a large number of troops sidelined because of wounds and injuries, plus we see setbacks in Iraq that make it less likely that we can redeploy troops as quickly as hoped?

General CASEY. Senator, I will come at a couple of the questions there.

The impact on the National Guard directly of a large number of nondeployable soldiers is not significant and not direct. There will be individuals who will not be able to go to their units, but it is not a significant impact.

If the Iraq drawdown is not executed, as it has been programmed, we would not get to the level of dwell which I feel is both necessary and appropriate for a force that will, at that time, have been at war for 8 years. So we would not meet our targets of 1 year out/2 years back for the active force, 1 year out/4 years back for the Guard and Reserve if we did not execute that plan.

I would say that Secretary Gates has left the door open to go back and reconsider building those three brigades that we will not build now if the situation in the future looks like that was not a good decision. So the door is open for us to go back and to do that.

As I mentioned in response to Senator Lieberman's question, we watch the deploying units all the time. We watch the strengths and everything that they go out at. And I will tell you, because of the nondeployables, we are having difficulty getting all of our units out at a minimum of 90 percent, which is where we want to be. We have had a handful that have gone out less than that over the last several years. So that is not a good position to be in and it is the personnel situation you are highlighting.

Senator COLLINS. That is my concern. Thank you.

General Casey, are you involved in establishing the metrics for measuring the effectiveness of the administration's new policy for Afghanistan?

General CASEY. I am not directly involved in developing them. We will review them as they are prepared in the tank with the Joint Chiefs.

Senator COLLINS. Do you know who is involved in establishing those? This is an issue I have raised at previous hearings and we are still waiting for a response from the administration's policy.

General CASEY. I do not know which Department of the Government has been charged to develop those.

Senator COLLINS. What do you think would be valuable metrics for measuring the success of the administration's new approach in Afghanistan?

General CASEY. It is interesting. Having been involved in this in another job, there are two approaches. One is to pick a handful, five to seven really big things that need to happen.

Senator COLLINS. Such as a decrease in violence—

General CASEY. Decrease in violence, elections, growth of the army, growth of the police, those kinds of things.

But it is the political side that is very difficult to measure, and that is where the progress has to be made for both Iraq and Afghanistan to succeed. So finding the right political metrics has always been something that we wrestled with. Elections, reconciliation agreements, those kinds of things I think are big-ticket items that we should pay attention to.

The other approach is to develop a laundry list of 100 things. I found that is not necessarily as useful as focusing on a few big things.

Senator COLLINS. Secretary Geren, do you have any guidance for us on what we should look for to evaluate the effectiveness of the new strategy for Afghanistan?

Mr. GEREN. Senator, I really do not have anything to add to what General Casey has said.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Collins.

Senator Webb?

Senator WEBB. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Geren, I would also like to add my thanks to you for the job that you have done and wish you well.

I would like to particularly express my appreciation for the answer you gave earlier about the indicators on suicides. I spent a good bit of time as a committee counsel on the House side on the Veterans Committee early on when we were examining issues of post-traumatic stress with respect to the Vietnam War. I would submit that whatever patterns we are seeing in this issue, they do boil down to stress and personal stress is accentuated by the stress of the force and that suicides are only one part of this examination. The long-term emotional well-being of people who have served is a critical factor in how we are using our people. Those are in many cases situations that you are not going to see manifested in the present-day time, but we saw them very clearly when we were doing the early work on post-traumatic stress. I have a great deal of concern about that, as you know, and General Casey, as you know, from the conversations that you and I have had over the past couple of years.

Your comments about dwell time being of your utmost concern. I recall the conversation that you and I had more than 2 years ago when you called me to tell me that the Army was going to go to 15-month deployments with 12 months at home, which I think is

a .75 dwell time ratio. And you will recall that I expressed my strongest concern about that, as someone who had grown up in the military, as did you, and watched my father go through multiple deployments, someone who had served in Vietnam when the Marine Corps tour was 13 months and someone who had had a son and a son-in-law deployed as enlisted Marines in extended tours in Iraq.

On the one hand—and I said this to the Secretary of Defense last week and Admiral Mullen, I am very encouraged about programs that are in place to treat those who are experiencing emotional difficulties and the removal of stigma in the active forces and that sort of thing. But I am still concerned about measures that should be taken and could be taken to prevent these sorts of situations, which was the basis really of my conversation with you 2 years ago.

It was the reason that I introduced the dwell time amendment twice in 2007. If we are going to put greater discipline into, say, the procurement process, as has become a big focus, maybe we should be putting the same sort of discipline in our combatant commanders' request for troops.

Certainly one of the parameters in terms of troop availability or in terms of how we use troops is the stewardship that we all should feel about length of deployments versus time back here, all these things that you were talking about at the beginning, which I was talking about on the Senate floor a couple of years ago.

So what do you think about that?

General CASEY. Senator, I could not agree more. In fact, one of the points of discussion that I hope to have in the Quadrennial Defense Review is whether or not we need to move toward a capabilities-based strategy vice a war plan-based strategy because, as I said, we are organizing the Army on a rotational cycle so that we can provide a sustained level of capabilities to combatant commanders but at a sustainable deployment cycle.

Senator WEBB. Well, certainly the rotational cycles should be on the table when we are talking about the number of troops that should be deployed. It is something that you and I were discussing 2 years ago. In your defense, I will say that you were saying you have to feed the strategy when you went to the 15-month. You had to feed the strategy. It was your obligation to find the troops to feed the strategy.

General Petraeus comes and testifies, and I asked him about the dwell time thing, and he said, well, I just state my requirements. There was sort of a disconnect in the middle.

And it would seem to me that, particularly in this transitional period, we ought to be taking a pretty tough look at the well-being of the force as a component in terms of how we are using them to deploy in Afghanistan.

General CASEY. I agree with you, and I am not articulating it well I do not think. But once you have arranged the force into bins for the rotational cycle, that is what is available to the country. And it is available at a sustainable deployment cycle for the families and the soldiers. It is a strategy that is constrained by means which all strategies should be, rather than strategy driving requirements.

Senator WEBB. I think we are rushing to agree on this. At the same time, the difficulty really is that there seems to be such a deference to a combat commander, and there should be something of a deference, but there seems to be such a deference when they say, I need 30,000 troops, rather than where this decision is now being made, saying, wait a minute. This is going to be going on for a long time, and how are we going to protect the health and our long-term sustainability in terms of feeding these troops?

General CASEY. And we are beginning to have those kinds of discussions in the tank.

Senator WEBB. I am very glad to hear that.

I want to give you the opportunity to clarify one statistic, since it was a question that you were responding to with Senator Lieberman. I think he cut you off in mid-sentence when you said you have a lot of units that are 1.5 to 1 dwell time ratio. Right now, Army-wide with the troops actually deployed, what is the ratio and dwell time right now?

General CASEY. We are between 1.3 and 1.5 is the average.

Senator WEBB. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Webb.

Senator Akaka?

Senator AKAKA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to add my welcome to Secretary Geren and General Casey and again would want to add my thank you to you for your great service to our country and distinguished service to our country.

I also want to thank all of our men and women in the service for their service to our country and their sacrifices and also their families which is so important to their quality of service.

I would also like to send my aloha to all the present, as well as the past, NCOs as we celebrate the NCO Year of 2009.

I am particularly interested in mental health care in DOD and in the service. Last week in his testimony before this committee, Secretary Gates discussed the shortage of mental health care providers across the DOD and particularly for DOD facilities in rural areas like we have in the State of Hawaii. To address this issue, he recommended expanding the DOD medical education program to include mental health care providers who can provide front-line mental health care support.

Secretary Geren and General Casey, how would you assess the current level of health care providers in the Army personnel, and can you offer what plans may be in any expansion?

Mr. GEREN. Dr. Gates has talked about innovative programs to try to bring more mental health professionals into the services, and I wholeheartedly endorse that. We see in the Army what you see in the private sector. It is generally an under-resourced capability. It is made more acute for the Army because so many of our installations are in rural areas, as you note. When you look at the mental health support for soldiers and families, you have the active duty Army. You have got Army civilians, but then we also rely very heavily on the TRICARE network in order to provide support around our installations. Most Army installations are in areas that are a good distance from any large metropolitan area. Exceptions around here are at Fort Belvoir. But you look in Hawaii, you look

at Fort Sill, you look at Fort Bragg, you look across the Army, Fort Erwin, Barstow, California, generally areas that are underserved by mental health professionals as far as the TRICARE network.

So we have got to expand our vision on how we bring mental health professionals into the Army. We are using the capabilities that you all have given us, the critical skills retention bonus, loan forgiveness for mental health education. We are using the tools that we currently have in the tool kit, but I think Dr. Gates is very much on the right track. We are going to have to look at innovative ways to provide incentives for people to pursue extended education in the mental health area, along with incentives for them to provide those capabilities to the Army either in uniform or as Army civilians.

But every year I have been in the Army, we have laid out what our goals are in that regard. We have put resources against it. We have used all the different programs, including a new pilot that we started to try to bring non-citizens, legal aliens that are non-citizens that are health care providers, bring them into the Army as well. So we have got some work to do in order to come up with an approach that meets the needs. We are not there yet, and I think Dr. Gates' approach is excellent.

General CASEY. Can I tell you about something we are doing internally, Senator, that I think is going to help us here? This summer we will kick off what we call the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program. It is a program designed to build resilience into all of our soldiers and to bring mental fitness to the level that we now give to physical fitness. As a part of that program, we will train master resilience trainers. We have had for years master fitness trainers who teach you how to do pushups. But these resilience trainers will be in our units and they will be able to help the soldiers and the leaders craft programs to deal with mental fitness. I am actually going tomorrow to the University of Pennsylvania where we have our first group of sergeants going through the training to become resilience trainers.

The other aspect of the program is we will have a self-diagnostic test that a soldier will take at different times in his career, and it will give them some preliminary feedback on how they are doing and then it will link them to self-help modules that they can use to enhance their performance. We already have what we call battle mind training that we give at varying times in the deployment cycle, and we will be introducing the comprehensive mental fitness into all of our professional development schools. So we are trying to combat this from a preventive approach, not just trying to fix things after they go awry.

Senator AKAKA. Mr. Chairman, let me finish with this. Last week I met with General Ray Mason who is the commanding general of U.S. Army Hawaii. Among things, we discussed was a suicide intervention program called ACE, A-C-E. I was very encouraged to hear what he had to say about the program where soldiers—and ACE is for “ask”—ask their fellow soldiers how they are doing; C, “care” about the soldier and “escort” the soldier to a source of additional help if needed. And he said every soldier has this to do with his buddies. He said that the “escort the soldier to a source of additional help” was the most difficult part of the ACE

program. He said in some cases it was to take his buddy to a place where he can get help. They have found that this has been working well. And this sounds like a great buddy system to use as part of a broader suicide prevention program. I just want to mention this is a program that they are using in Hawaii.

Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Akaka.
Senator Hagan?

Senator HAGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Following up on Senator Akaka's question and Senator Webb's on suicide, I know that I believe it was just last week in Baghdad when we lost a number of soldiers in a horrific incident at Camp Liberty. One man killed was Commander Charles Springall from Wilmington, North Carolina, who was actually, I believe, a clinical social worker there, 52 years old. Obviously, we have got concerns on the soldiers and the stress level and whatever is happening in their daily lives and back home.

But what about the actual mental health professionals that you need to have staffed overseas in theater? Is that an area that you feel comfortable about? I mean, I cannot imagine that you have enough psychiatrists or mental health professionals.

Mr. GEREN. We are increasing the numbers of mental health professionals in theater, both at fixed locations and also mobile teams that can go out to dispersed soldiers. The divisions now all have a psychiatrist. Every brigade has a behavioral health care professional that works with the commander of those brigades. Over the last 2 years, we have increased mental health professionals close to 40 percent, but delivering those services in theater obviously has some operational challenges. But we are pushing more and more of those services forward.

The Chief could offer a personal perspective on what he—

General CASEY. The only other thing I would add to that, Senator, is that as part of an ongoing investigation, the commander has asked the question, do we have enough? So as part of his overall investigation into this incident that you referred to, he is looking at whether we actually need to put more over there, and if we need to put more over there, we will.

Senator HAGAN. What are you doing to be sure a situation like that does not happen again?

General CASEY. That is being studied and the lessons learned from that will be distributed widely throughout the Army. There are several ongoing investigations that will inform us about what happened. It was a tragic incident.

Senator HAGAN. Tragic.

I know that Brigadier General Gary Cheek, as Director of the Warrior Care and Transition for the Department of the Army, has done an admirable job in overseeing our wounded warrior programs throughout the Army. Being from North Carolina, I do want to point out that at Fort Bragg 35 percent of our wounded warriors will not be reintegrated into their combatant units.

I noticed in your presentation you were talking about the warrior care and transition. Obviously, the goal is to provide world-class care for our wounded, ill, and injured warriors through properly resourced warrior transition units, enabling these soldiers to re-

main in our Army or transition to meaningful civilian employment consistent with their desires and abilities.

My question is, do you think that the comprehensive transition units or plans in place within the warrior transition units are doing an effective job in instructing and equipping our wounded warriors with additional skills necessary either to reclassify their active duty status or to transition into civilian life?

Mr. GEREN. Well, our comprehensive transition plan is an area of heavy emphasis for us. It is an initiative that builds around the goals and aspirations of the individual soldier. It is our intent to assess that soldier's needs, identify where that soldier wants to go, and provide the type of training and preparation for moving through the VA to the private sector that will enable that soldier to accomplish his or her goals.

This is a fairly new program for us. When we first stood up the warrior transition units, we really did not have a comprehensive approach to that type of future planning for the soldier, and I feel good about it. I travel around to the posts. I always meet with the WTU soldiers without any cadre present, and I always ask them about that. I ask them how are we doing as far as helping you with your professional development and providing you opportunities for meaningful job training in the service and educational opportunities as you move out.

I have gotten some suggestions that perhaps we need to look at the tuition assistance. The caps on tuition assistance in some cases limit their ability to take the kind of courses that they feel they need in order to transition out. So we are looking at that. But it is a work in progress.

Again, I tell those warriors in transition, you got two jobs. One is to meet your own needs to heal and move on, but the other is to help us make these warrior transition units, which is a relatively new undertaking for the Army—it is a little more than 2 years old—work for soldiers. They continue to provide us feedback that has helped us to modify our approach.

We have got the cadre of over 3,000 soldiers that work in those warrior transition units. We are working to provide them the right kind of training. It is a new mission for them. This is not something that was extant in the Army before we developed this approach to outpatient care.

So it is a work in progress. We continue to get feedback to see how we modify it to make it better, but I think, by and large, we are making progress in that regard.

We are also working as hard as we can to provide those soldiers also an opportunity to continue on active duty and working to make accommodations to enable them to continue on active duty in spite of whatever type of disability that has come from either their illness or their wound.

Senator HAGAN. I had an opportunity to meet with several soldiers from Fort Bragg about 2 weeks ago. All four of them had been wounded severely but they had all remained on active duty. That is exactly what they wanted to do.

A follow-up question on that is, what do you think accounts for the varying discipline rates in the warrior transition units?

Mr. GEREN. I beg your pardon?

Senator HAGAN. The discipline rates. There has been a lot of publicity recently on the high rates of discipline within those units.

Mr. GEREN. We have looked at that issue, and as you know, there were some soldiers at Fort Bragg that expressed concern that they felt that the discipline was being used inappropriately, perhaps unreasonably. I went down there right after we learned of that and met with those soldiers. I have asked General Cheek and General Schumacher to look across the entire warrior transition system to see if we felt that there was a problem in that regard. And our assessment at this stage is that the leadership in those warrior transition units are exercising their authorities appropriately and taking into consideration the medical condition of the soldiers. It is a question of a commander exercising judgment in every case, but anytime we have a situation arise where someone feels that they have been treated unfairly, we look into that. But at the present time, we have not found a pattern there that would suggest that we have a problem.

Commanders exercise their discretion in discipline both inside and outside the warrior transition units, and we give considerable deference to commanders to make those type of decisions. We have not been able to find any indication that there has been an abuse of that discretion that would suggest that we need to change the way we are currently doing it, but we watch it very closely and it is part of the education process for our soldiers that assume leadership positions in those warrior transition units.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you. I too want to thank both of you for your commitment and service, and I certainly do appreciate it. Thanks.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Hagan.

Thank you. Somehow or other, we avoided the two votes. We are not sure what is going on on the floor, but it worked out better for us in any event. We thank you both. We thank the troops behind you, their families, and the troops that we will stand behind wherever they are in this world. Thank you both.

[Whereupon, at 11:25 a.m., the committee adjourned.]