

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

**SERGEANT MAJOR RAYMOND F. CHANDLER III
SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY**

BEFORE THE

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Introduction

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Graham, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the invitation to speak to you on behalf of the more than 2 million members of our Army team: Soldiers, their Family members, and our civilian employees. Representing the Soldiers in the Army that I love has been a humbling experience and I appreciate the support this committee has given our Army team over the past 12-plus years and for recognizing and valuing the sacrifice and service of our remarkable Soldiers. As I near my retirement, this will likely be my last opportunity to appear before you.

I would also like to welcome the new committee members. I appreciate you taking on the tremendous responsibility and I look forward to working with you to support our Soldiers. Your continuing support will enable us to improve the quality of life of Soldiers across the force.

Background

This past year has brought some significant changes to the Army, including the impacts of sequestration, the government shutdown, and the first and second order effects of a drawdown and budget reductions.

After 12-plus years of persistent conflict, SEC McHugh, GEN Odierno, and I are proud of all that our Soldiers, Family members, and Civilians have accomplished. But our Army is not focused on our past success, but rather our future.

The Army stands at a pivotal moment due to daunting fiscal challenges and strategic uncertainty. But even in the midst of these challenges our mission has not changed – to prevent conflict, shape the environment and, when necessary, fight and win our Nation's wars. As GEN Odierno recently stated, it is essential that our Total Army – the Active Army, Army National Guard, and U.S. Army Reserve – be ready to accomplish the range of military operations we are directed to perform. Our leaders and the American people rightly place their confidence in our professional competence and character, and they expect us to succeed. And, we will.

As we transition, we are making changes to our institutions and processes to ensure that we are maximizing the resources available to the Army. So we will focus on these five strategic priorities:

1. Adaptive Army Leaders for a complex world;
2. A globally responsive and regionally engaged Army;
3. A ready and modern Army;
4. Soldiers committed to our Army profession; and
5. Maintain the premier all-volunteer Army.

These also form the basis for the objectives outlined in our 2014 Army Strategic Planning Guidance.

Through these efforts, our All-Volunteer Army will remain the most highly trained and professional land force in the world. It will have the capability and capacity to provide expeditionary, decisive land power to the Joint Force and ready to perform across the range of military operations in support of Combatant Commanders to defend the Nation and its interests at home and abroad, both today and against emerging threats.

Although our Army is looking forward to new challenges, it is important to remember what we have done and continue to do. We are entering the 13th years of the longest war in our Nation's history. Nearly 40,000 Soldiers are serving in Afghanistan and an additional 120,000 are either forward stationed or deployed in nearly 150 countries. More than 1.6 million Soldiers have deployed during the past 12 years and many have deployed multiple times, some as many as six or even ten times. More than 5,000 Soldiers have given their lives on behalf of this Nation. This service and sacrifice cannot be forgotten as we move forward and focus on the challenges on our horizon.

Drawdown

All of us in the Army are grateful for the work Congress did on the FY14 authorization and appropriation bills, which give us the ability to build readiness over time. Our Army had been reduced to only two brigades rated at T-1 level for deployment. Sequestration limited funding to train, equip and, in some cases, care for our Soldiers. During that period, our Army leaders at all levels knew we were accepting some level of risk, so they focused on squad and platoon level training to maintain some level of readiness. This year's budget allows us to increase the number of ready brigades.

However, this fix is only short-term. Next fiscal year we again face sequestration-level funding. Just as last year, that will mean that our Army will lack flexibility and predictability, and our Soldiers, their Families, and our civilians will once again face the anxiety that comes with uncertainty. And we will again face serious readiness challenges.

To address readiness issues, our Army has accelerated the timeline to reduce our active force from 580,000 to 490,000 Soldiers while reducing our budget – even while still engaged in war, unprecedented in our history. This reduction is being done in a controlled and responsible manner over a compressed timeframe to allow the Army to reduce personnel costs. Those savings can then be used to ensure the force is both ready and equipped to the highest levels possible. Achieving the proper balance between readiness, modernization, and end strength is critical to ensuring the Army is ready for any contingency.

As we continue implementing this drawdown, we will make sure to continue providing programs that value the service and sacrifices Soldiers and their Families have made to the military. Unfortunately, natural attrition alone will not achieve the Army's reduced

end strength requirements. However, we are committed to assisting Soldiers and their Families as they transition to civilian life, and we encourage continued service in the Army National Guard or Army Reserve.

As our force reduces in size, our organizations will change. Some of our training posts will see changes in throughput or focus in some of their courses. We will continue to recruit America's best men and women, but those numbers will likely be smaller, and as we focus on new training goals and objectives, some training will expand.

Similarly, we are meeting a directive to reduce the size of our headquarters staffs across our Army commands, including both civilian and military members of those teams. We will likely find that many contracts that have supported our Army over the past 12 years can be reduced or ended. Soldiers who have been engaged in actively defending our nation during that time will return to a garrison environment and traditional support roles. Things like KP, police calls, post security and other duties have been part of my Army for as long as I have served and I firmly believe they help to develop leadership skills, a sense of good order and discipline, responsibility, safety, and pride in taking care of living and working environments.

Quality of Life

The quality of life of our Soldiers and their Families is critically important as the Army goes through this period of transition. Most importantly, the Army must focus on ensuring that we recruit and retain the smartest, most fit, and most resilient of America's youth. It is essential to leverage those actions and incentives that sustain the highest quality All Volunteer Force in the face of continuing fiscal pressures and ongoing assessments of benefits and entitlements.

For example, the Army's Tuition Assistance (TA) program provides financial assistance for voluntary off-duty education programs in support of Soldiers' professional and personal self-development goals. This program helps us to achieve the Army's goal of retaining quality Soldiers, enhancing their career professional progression, increasing the combat readiness of the Army, and eventually assisting Soldiers in their transition from the Army into successful civilian careers. The TA program supports the leader development imperatives of the Army Leader Development Strategy and supports Army Strategic Priorities.

During our comprehensive assessment of TA, we evaluated a number of changes based on their ability to support the intent of the TA program and compared them to other available programs providing education benefits. The changes we ultimately implemented not only are consistent with the purpose of TA but also enhance sustained readiness of the Army and optimize scarce resources.

As the Army draws down, another important quality of life issue is successfully reintegrating those Soldiers and Families separated after 12 years of war. It is important that whatever support we provide has the greatest impact on sustaining

readiness and resilience, so the timing of resource reductions should take into account this goal.

Transition

As we continue to draw down the Army, we understand our duty to treat Soldiers and Families not retained with dignity and respect. Through our Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP), we are fully committed to the VOW to Hire Heroes Act. In coordination with the Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs, we are conducting assistance training and transition counseling for Soldiers beginning no later than 12 months from their transition date to enable Soldiers to successfully transition into civilian society.

ACAP provides transitioning Soldiers with the tools and resources to help make informed career decisions, be competitive in the workforce, and continue to provide positive contributions to their community after completing their active duty service. The transition process is focused on the Soldier and managed by commanders through performance metrics recorded in the automated tracking system of record, ACAP XXI.

To assist Soldiers in making the most of opportunities as they appear during that period of transition, the Army is exploring policy changes that provide opportunities for active component Soldiers to separate if they have secured employment, have been accepted into higher education, or want to transition to a position in the Army National Guard or Army Reserve.

Collectively, these programs and other recent changes have helped the Army reduce the percentage of unemployed Soldiers who are veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom. This lower rate also reduces the Army's cost for annual Unemployment Compensation for Ex-service members (UCX), making those monies available to support personnel, readiness, and modernization needs. Last year, the Army spent more than \$430 million on UCX, and we want to see that amount substantially decreased.

Another recent Army initiative to support Veterans is Soldier For Life. It is designed to enable Soldiers, Veterans, and Families to leave military service "career ready" and connect to an established network to find employment, education, and health resources. We know the value and outstanding capabilities these Soldiers can bring to any organization, and we encourage them to continue to serve our nation by instilling Army values, the Warrior ethos, and leadership in businesses and communities across the Nation.

The Soldier For Life program is a holistic approach to the military life cycle career of a Soldier. The U.S. Army takes care of teammates by ensuring Soldiers start strong, serve strong, and reintegrate strong so they remain Army Strong even after leaving the Army. The U.S. Army's strategic imperative of sustaining the Premier All-Volunteer

Army is directly affected by how well our veterans reintegrate back into their communities.

Soldier for Life works to connect employers to transitioning Soldiers from all Army components: Active Duty, National Guard, and Reserve. We help employers navigate the Army's reintegration network by developing lasting relationships and connecting them to transitioning Army talent.

I've been personally involved with this program over the past year and know its value. In March, I spoke to an audience of national healthcare providers at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor to discuss best practices and gaps in providing behavioral healthcare for Guard and Reserve Soldiers and their Families. The following month, I attended the National Beer Wholesalers Association's legislative conference in Washington, DC. During my visit, they pledged as an organization to hire transitioning Soldiers and their spouses in their businesses across the country. And last week, our Soldier for Life office in Los Angeles laid the groundwork for me to meet with dedicated individuals from the University of Southern California and the Office of the Mayor of Los Angeles who are working two separate but collaborative efforts to help serve the largest population of veterans in the nation find employment, homes, and healthcare. This kind of support occurs across the country - and I want to thank everyone for reaching out to our Army team.

Ready and Resilient

As I stated last year, it is critically important for an Army with less manpower and a smaller budget to maintain peak readiness. The last 12-plus years have challenged our Army. The stress and strain of multiple deployments can manifest in high risk behavior as Soldiers try to cope with issues and problems without the proper help.

Our efforts this past year to address challenges such as post traumatic stress, suicide, sexual assault and harassment, hazing, and reckless behavior are making positive changes in organizational climate and leadership abilities, while at the same time, maintaining good order and discipline.

Even after an extraordinary commitment by the Army of time and money to address suicides, it has been a particularly difficult problem. However, we may be starting to see some signs that our investments are beginning to pay off. Our overall number of suicides across the force has decreased as we continue to work in concert with Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs and cultivate a climate that supports those who responsibly seek help and those who act, intervene and are motivated to stand against behaviors that are contrary to our Army Values. Although we do not have data yet to fully explain this improvement, we are analyzing our efforts to discover and reinforce future efforts.

Let me now turn to sexual assault, an issue I know that is very important to all of you here. Above all else, the Army is an organization built on and bound by values. Sexual

harassment and assault in all its forms goes against every one of those values. Simply put, sexual assault is a crime that will not be tolerated. The overwhelming majority of Soldiers and Civilians serve honorably and capably, but we must recognize that the ill-disciplined few jeopardize the safety of all our people as well as the trust and confidence the American people have in their Army. For that reason, we have made the prevention of sexual offenses a top priority.

The Army's SHARP Program seeks to reduce and ultimately eliminate this crime from our ranks, and to compassionately and rapidly care for the victims, and we have made excellent progress in implementing it throughout the Army over the past year. Through the combined efforts of our military and civilian leaders at all levels, we've implemented numerous program and policy changes to address this insider threat. I believe the initiatives are leading to enhanced reporting, investigating, and prosecution of sexual assault offenses, and increasing the accountability of leaders. The changes includes revised policies that focus on constant assessments of command climates, changes to leader evaluations to ensure their commitment to SHARP goals, the addition of special legal counsel to support victims, and the establishment of more stringent screening criteria and background checks for those serving in positions of trust, including Sexual Assault Response Counselors and Victim Advocates.

Let me add one final, but important, note. Sexual assault is antithetical to competent command, and it is important that Army commanders retain their authority over the disposition of sexual assault cases. Removal of that authority would make it harder to respond to the needs of Soldiers within the command, especially the victims. Many of the Army's most difficult problems were solved by making commanders more accountable, not less. Therefore the Army opposes efforts to remove commanders from the disposition process.

The Army's goal in all of these efforts is to facilitate a culture change that will result in a positive command climate where the behaviors and attitudes that lead to sexual offenses are rare and victims feel free to report without fear of reprisal. Most important in development of trust is our commitment to Soldiers and the accountability of leaders at all levels.

Wounded, Injured and Ill

This past year also saw significant progress in our care for wounded, ill or injured Soldiers, and organizational changes that underscore that positive trend. Overall, the Warrior Transition Units (WTU)/Community Based Warrior Transition Units (CBWTU) population continues to decline as there are fewer Soldiers entering these units and more Soldiers departing, fewer deployments, fewer MEDEVACs, and fewer Reserve Component mobilizations. As of February 3, 2014, the population of wounded, ill, or injured Soldiers assigned or attached to WTUs and CBWTUs was 6,988, the lowest level since the fall of 2007.

Force structure changes within the Warrior Care and Transition Program (WCTP) reflect a decreasing WTU population while retaining scalability in order to meet the Army's future needs. To be sure, WTU force structure changes are not related to budget cuts, sequestration, or furlough. These changes will improve the care and transition of Soldiers through standardization, increased span of control, better access to resources on installations, and reduction of unnecessary delays in care.

We also continue to improve the process with the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES). In FY13 the Army made tremendous progress across the IDES by significantly reducing backlogs at the Medical Evaluation Boards (MEBs).

Last year the Army made a concerted effort to eliminate the backlog of IDES cases at every stage under its control, thereby processing approximately 80% more cases than we had done in any previous year. Since the beginning of FY13, the Army processed over 34,000 cases. During the same period, more than 29,000 Soldiers either separated from the military or were found fit and returned to duty.

We are now meeting timeliness goals for all stages we control. The Army is continuing to collaborate with our VA partners to speed up IDES processing while ensuring Soldiers receive the benefits they have earned and deserve.

Closing

Throughout this past year, while continuing the fight, drawing down our force, and working within fiscal constraints, our Soldiers have continued to demonstrate their professionalism in several key ways. The expansion of entitlements and benefits to same-sex spouses has gone almost unnoticed by most Soldiers. This professionalism is also highlighted in our ongoing campaign to ensure every Soldier understands how their competence, character and commitment underpin the American public's trust and respect for the Army.

In closing, I want to recognize the amazing work being done every day by our Army Team. As the Sergeant Major of the Army, one of the best parts of my job is visiting our Soldiers, Families and Civilians across the world. The professionalism, dedication, and sacrifice they display every day is the reason our Army is the envy of every other in the world. Today, our Soldiers are the best trained, best manned, best equipped, and best led force in our history.

Tomorrow we will be smaller and we may be leaner, but we will continue to be the best trained, best manned, best equipped, and best led force in our history.

And, ten years from now, we will continue to be best, and I feel confident in making that statement because I know we will continue to have your support. Thank you for what you do.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak before you and tell our story. I welcome your questions at this time. Thank you and Army Strong.