

CONFERENCE CALL



LTG Daniel P. Bolger, DCS G-3/-5/-7, speaking Oct. 25, 2010, at the AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, said that the Army expects to reach a 1-to-2 dwell time ratio by 2011 for the Active Army, and, by 2015, 1-to-3 for the Active Army and 1-to-5 for the Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve. Here, Ruthann Allesch kisses her husband, SFC Stephen Allesch, as their children hold tight to their father following his return to Fort Riley, KS, after a 1-year deployment to Afghanistan. (Fort Riley Public Affairs photo by Dena O'Dell.)

Army Readiness: Continuing the Combat Edge

Robert E. Coultas

The Army today is different than it was before Sept. 11, 2001, when foreign terrorists struck on American soil, leaving a permanent mark on the country's consciousness and sparking the persistent conflict that continues today.

LTG Daniel P. Bolger, U.S. Army Deputy Chief of Staff (DCS) G-3/-5/-7, speaking Oct. 25, 2010, at a forum on Army readiness at the AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, said that if the total Army is to remain combat-ready after the drawdown in Iraq, it must

ensure that the dwell time between deployments is at least twice the time gone, retain the current force structure, maintain access to the U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) and Army National Guard (ARNG), and retrain Soldiers to function without contract support.

Strategic Decisions

Bolger said the most important decision after the Sept. 11 attacks was by President George W. Bush and senior leadership to mobilize the military's Reserve Component (RC) for the duration of the conflict. When

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the Nation calls up the National Guard and Reserves, he said, it motivates the population to support the military.

“When you mobilize the service’s RC, you commit people from every state, territory, city, and small town, and an interesting phenomenon occurs,” Bolger said. “The folks who do polling for a living will tell you that the major fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan has sometimes been popular and sometimes unpopular; it varies a lot. One thing that does not vary is that, in general, the people of the United States have chosen to support their military during this conflict.”

Another strategic decision was to deploy forces as units, rather than as individual replacements as was done during the Vietnam conflict. Although this strategy was satisfactory initially when only a few units were deployed, it became difficult with the larger deployments to Iraq, which required heavy use of contractors.

“Forces from around the world who have operated outside from home [their country] realize that although it is not the most efficient—in other words, the bean counters and accountants don’t like it—sending folks by unit preserves unit cohesion and connection back to the home station that is very, very important in a long conflict,” Bolger said.

He also said that unit rotation is the best solution but not always the most cost-effective. “It’s expensive in money, in time, and you do duplicate a lot of

headquarters,” he said. “But on the other hand, your Army can stay in the field a long, long time.”

‘Non-Choice’

The strategic decision that Bolger referred to as a “non-choice” was to operate with fixed end strength. Although the Army did get an increase in end strength later, the relatively small growth led to a dwell-to-boots-on-the-ground (BOG) ratio of 1-to-1, meaning Soldiers were home 1 year between year-long deployments.

Bolger said a key to restoring a broader range of capabilities is expanding the

dwell-to-BOG time. “One of the things we believe is going to happen, as we complete our withdrawal of forces from Iraq, is that we will have the ability to get our Active Component to about 1 year in the fight to 2 years at home, and get our RC to 1 year in the fight to 4 years at home. We are not there yet,” he said.

Bolger emphasized that current dwell-to-BOG time is not sustainable. “If you look at the evidence, and it’s more than anecdotal, in terms of family issues, criminal issues, drug and substance abuse, and suicide rates, those are indicators of a force that’s stressed when you’re trying carry out these rotations with fixed end strength,” he said.

Bolger also said that to attain the optimal BOG time, the Army must maintain its current end strength. “It would be very, very difficult for us if we had a major reduction in strength in any of our components,” he said. “So we need all Active, Reserve, and Guard strength that we have now. If you start taking major chunks of that and



LTG Daniel P. Bolger, DCS G-3/-5/-7, was the lead speaker at an Army readiness forum Oct. 25, 2010, at the AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition. (U.S. Army photo by Gary Sheftick.)

continue the amount of rotations you have right now, you will not reach this sustainable rate of rotation." The Army expects to reach a 1-to-2 ratio by 2011 for the Active Army and, by 2015, a 1-to-3 ratio for the Active Army and 1-to-5 for the ARNG and USAR.

Army Force Generation

Bolger noted that the Army also must resume training for full-spectrum combat after 9 years of mainly counterinsurgency operations. "We have platoon sergeants who've never known any other world

than counter-insurgency," he said, urging a return to training exercises in forcible entry and how to conduct mass ground and air fires.

Also on the Army readiness panel, MG Mark A. Graham, DCS G-3/-5/-7, U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM), spoke of the advantages of the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) programs that provide trained and ready forces for the regional combatant commanders. But Graham also said that as the Army gets lengthier dwell

times, units must "get back to basics," learn to operate in situations other than counterinsurgency, and relearn how to support themselves without contractors, on whom they relied in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Other panel members, BG Jon J. Miller, Acting Deputy Commanding General, USAR, and BG Timothy J. Kadavy, Deputy Director, ARNG, explained how the ARFORGEN process and the 9 years of combat have affected their units. They agreed with

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM UPDATE

Robert E. Coultas

During a briefing on the counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, BG John Nicholson Jr., Director of the Joint Pakistan/Afghanistan Coordination Cell, said that if U.S. Forces-Afghanistan Commander GEN David H. Petraeus were giving the briefing, he would say that efforts have been "slow and steady, but we are making progress."

Nicholson, speaking Oct. 25, 2010, at the AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, said that for the previous 18 months, the objective of *Operation Enduring Freedom* has been to increase military and civilian personnel, develop the Afghan national security forces and local police, build infrastructure, target Taliban leaders and clear them from safe havens, and reintegrate enemy fighters into society by convincing them to "lay down their arms."

Violence Is Concentrated

Nicholson said that about 63 percent of the violence in Afghanistan is in three provinces. "The main efforts are in Kandahar and Helmand provinces, with secondary efforts up in the east along the border areas with Pakistan," he said. "We're focusing

our counterinsurgency efforts on about a third of the districts in the country, primarily focused on the east and the south because that is where the insurgency has its greatest strengths."

Nicholson emphasized that the coalition's main objective was to secure the major population centers, enable the Afghan government to connect with the people in those areas to the degree that they "buy into the government," and then transition control to the Afghan government.

Operational Tempo

Nicholson also said that as forces seek to secure population centers, a portion of the force must continue to keep up the initiative against the enemy, most of which is maintained by Special Operations Forces that are working at an "unprecedented operational tempo." "Every 24 hours, on average, we are killing or capturing three to five mid-level leaders and 24 enemy fighters," he said.

Nicholson added that he is seeing anecdotal evidence that the operational tempo is affecting the

insurgents' morale and cohesion. "Obviously, this is exactly the kind of pressure we need to maintain on the enemy, which then buys us space and time to secure the population and achieve that connection that we're after between the government and the population," he said.

Nicholson said that the security campaign has entailed a spike in violence, which is inevitable. "The coalition is presently at the peak of that violence," he said, but added that as the government's capability and Afghans' confidence increases, the violence will begin to decrease.



BG John Nicholson Jr., Director of the Joint Pakistan/Afghanistan Coordination Cell, said the increased number of coalition troops in Afghanistan has created a spike in violence that is "inevitable," but will eventually decline as it did in Iraq. (Defense News photo by Sheila Vemmer.)



MG Mark A. Graham, DCS G-3/-5/-7, FORSCOM, said during an Army readiness forum on Oct. 25, 2010, that as the Army gets longer dwell times, units must “get back to basics,” learn to operate in something other than counterinsurgency, and relearn to support themselves without contractors. Here, Soldiers from Company C, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment keep an eye out for military movement during a patrol through Paktika, Afghanistan. (U.S. Army photo by SGT Jeffrey Alexander, 982nd Combat Camera Company.)

Bolger and Graham that the Army could not function today without its RC Soldiers.

Funding Needs

According to Bolger, the military gets about \$250 billion in funding, and “they use every bit of it.”

“About half of our force who actually keeps us in the field is contractors, and the force in the field is modernizing constantly to stay ahead of the threat,” he said. “When you decide to add 16,000 Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles to your force, that has a trail of cost behind it. Essentially, we have fielded the equivalent of a new combat system in the middle of a war.”

Bolger explained that if the Army wants high-quality people to join the force and stay in, the Army must be willing to pay for them and ensure that they meet the qualifications of a high school diploma, a clean criminal record, and good physical health with no history of substance abuse. “Right

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now in America, of about 10 18-year-olds who would line up in the front of a recruiting station, only three of them will meet the qualifications to join the U.S. military,” he said.

The competition is intense to recruit the best people, he said. “We’re fighting for a very small cadre of folks who are very high-end,” he said. “It’s the same group that every college in America is looking for, every good [business] firm is looking for, and every police force and municipal agency is looking for.”

The GI Bill and affordable health care are also readiness issues because they allow the Army to maintain a

high-quality force, Bolger said. “A lot of people will pull out this [defense] budget and say, ‘You’re spending a lot of money on personnel,’ to which I would respond—the readiness of the Army is the people in the Army,” he said.

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