

**CHAIRMAN OF  
THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF (CJCS)**

**AUSA SUPPORTING MEMBERS LUNCHEON**

**REMARKS BY  
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Well, good afternoon, and to Secretary Geren, I very much appreciate that introduction and to the Army leadership that is here and my good friend, George Casey, my other good friend the vice chief, Pete Corelli and so many others who have led our Army at such a critical time in our nation's history and, indeed, that leadership has really made a difference.

To General Sullivan and AUSA, little did I know – probably, I think I met General Sullivan about 1995 when I was looking for some assistance on how to build ships, which I spent a lot of my time on and, believe it or not, Gordon Sullivan knows a lot about that. So, Gordon, thanks for your continued leadership of AUSA. I know how dedicated you are, how much you care, and what a difference it makes in our nation and with our Army because of your longstanding dedicated service.

To Bill Swanson, another friend from a previous life, although it continues, congratulations, I'm certainly not surprised. I've known Bill for some time and, again, another leader in our country who is very dedicated to all of those who serve. It's also a great treat to spend a few minutes this afternoon with Nick Chabraja, another very special individual who leads a great, great corporation as well and is equally dedicated.

So it's really great to be here and the – I guess today is the culminating day of what I know has been an extraordinary week.

Being here today around all of this Army brass, essentially, to some degree, I'm a fish out of water, literally. But it reminds me of a Civil War anecdote. Near the end of that war a Confederate general came across a local farmer, who appeared to have a few dozen southern soldiers working in the fields. And, apparently, this was a reasonably common practice at the time in the early days of reconstruction.

Anyways, the general noticed that the farmer had the soldiers working in three distinct groups and he asked why. Well, the farmer said, the first group, they're mostly privates. They work themselves hard. Don't need to tell them very much. Best farm hands I ever saw.

How about that second group, the general asked. Those are the captains and the majors, replied the farmer. They're okay, mostly. They take a little prodding to get them going and you've got watch them very close. Then the general asked about the third group. The farmer just sighed and looked down at his boots. Those there, sir, they are the colonels and generals. Do you know any good privates? (Laughter.)

And, actually, I want to link that back to – I'll make a few comments about the future combat systems later on in my remarks, but – there is a linkage there. Generals or no, I really am honored to be here and to have this opportunity.

Truth is, both myself and my wife, Deborah, feel a bit closer to the Army today than we do the Navy, as we have worked hard to better understand soldiers and their families and all that they have been going through these last several years at war. Not too long ago, I was in a National Security Council meeting, and there was a question of where some of the United States Navy ships might be. I was the only military officer there, I was in this uniform, and I could see where this was going because nobody at the table had a clue where the ships might be. And so eventually it came around to – of course, being a Navy guy, asking me where the ships were, and I didn't have a clue where they were. And it speaks to where I spend my time and what I focus on since I've been chairman, in a little over a year that that's been the case.

The experience with the Army for me really goes back to 2004, when I commanded the NATO peacekeeping mission in Kosovo and the alliance's training mission in Iraq – and in Kosovo, I got introduced to Camp Bondsteel and the brigade that's been out there – the guard brigade that has been out there for a significant period of time and continues to serve today. I also interacted, for the first time, with a slightly younger, better-looking Dave Petraeus, who was my 3-star on the ground there.

Then, later that year as CNO, I made several trips to Iraq and Afghanistan, and I really came to see the need for the Navy to pitch in more to the ground effort. I dramatically increased the numbers of individual augmentees that went to Iraq and contributed expertise where we thought we could help fill some gaps – EOD, Seabees, electronic warfare, public affairs, security forces and others. As I said back then, and I still believe, this is a national war, not an Army or a Marine Corps war. We all need to help.

And yet, it is the Army and Marine Corps who have borne the brunt of the fighting and the dying and the wounds, and we have to recognize this for all the challenges and opportunities it presents.

Then, of course, in this job, I have made several more trips to theater, and Deborah and I have spent a lot of time – as the secretary indicated – with soldiers and families, both overseas and here at home. I really do – I believed then and I believe now that our Army is the center of gravity for our military, and that includes the Guard and Reserves, and we have to make sure we get it right for our troops and make sure we take care of them and their families, for they truly are our national treasure. It's the best and most combat-hardened Army this nation has ever known, indeed the world has ever known. We must do all we can to make sure it stays that way.

So, what I thought I'd do is just take you through some of the things I've learned about our Army, the Army we all serve, and many of you serve and support. Some of them may surprise you, most probably won't, but I thought you might be interested in how this sailor has come to see it.

The first thing I learned about the Army is “Hoo-ah.” (Laughter.) There are 1,000, or 10,000, or 100,000 different ways to say, “hoo-ah,” but “hoo-ah,” it is. And what I learned is it's more than a battle cry. It's a way of life. It says you'll never quit, you'll never surrender, you'll

never leave your buddy. It says you're proud of the hardship you're enduring because you know it matters, you know it means something.

Go stand atop one of those hills in the Korengal Valley in Afghanistan, where I was back both in February and July with paratroopers assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, and look around at the utter desolation of the place and the spartan conditions these young people are living in, and you can't help but come back a little thick in the throat.

I awarded a Silver Star to a young officer up there, Capt. Greg Ambrosia, who placed himself in the line of fire to direct his men to safety. I pinned on some Bronze Stars, Commendation Medals and Purple Hearts as well. These troops had been out there 14 months in July – basically in the wilderness – and seen a lot of tough fighting. They lost a lot of good soldiers, their buddies. And we all need to pay attention to that, not just that these heroes are lost, but what it means to those who were with them when they were lost, and how we stay in touch with them and that impacts them for the rest of their lives.

They knew they were going home soon, but they wanted to point out to me all the places nearby where they could now venture, because they had learned about the culture and had figured out how to work with the tribal leaders. When they yelled “Hoo-ah!” after the ceremony, it wasn't because they were proud of their new medals: It was because they were proud of the difference that they knew they were making together, as a team.

The second thing I've learned is that our Army has, in fact, become the world's best counter-insurgency force, and we did it all in an extraordinary, short period of time. Truly amazing. You don't have to look any further than Baghdad to see proof of that. During that same trip, I was walked down the streets of Sadr City and even visited an outpost in Mosul, places where, a few weeks before, we just couldn't have walked.

Al Qaeda is clearly on the run in Iraq, and the surge and Anbar Awakening and even Muqtada al Sadr's cease fire all helped to make that happen. But, in my view, what really turned it around was the counter-insurgency tactics our troops embraced and perfected. Think about it. Even as late as the winter of 2007, when the President announced the surge, attacks against coalition forces were averaging nearly 180 a day, the highest level since major combat operations had ended. And a new National Intelligence Estimate predicted that Iraqi leaders would be hard-pressed to reconcile over the next year and a half.

And look where we are now. I give a lot of credit to the leadership and to our troops, but it was their commitment to counter-insurgency warfare that really made the difference. The key now is not to lose all that expertise and experience we've gained and to continue to refine it and apply it where and when we can in the future.

As Secretary Gates put it just the other day at NDU, even the biggest of wars will require so-called “small wars” capabilities. And as far as the future is concerned – and a great deal of this week, I know, is focused on that and I look forward to seeing a few of the exhibitions after I get down here from the stage – the future is very much tied, more than anything else, to those

young people who are in the fight right now. Their retention, taking care of their families, is as important a focus area for what we do now, certainly, but also to ensure that our future is solid, because they really are the future of the United States Army.

Third: I have learned that it would also be remiss and irresponsible for the Army – indeed, all the services – to neglect the preservation and improvement of our conventional capabilities. I was struck to learn in one of my very first visits to an Army base – Fort Sill – about how few young artillery officers had earned their basic qualifications, so often had they deployed outside their skill set. And, actually, what they said to me and what the message was what that they really did enjoy that particular skill and they did not want to be forgotten in that regard.

Now, as the CNO who deployed upwards of 12,000 sailors to work on the ground in the Central Command theater, I certainly understand the benefit and the need for people to expand themselves, but I do worry about us losing our focus too much in the counter-insurgency world. We need balance in the way we think, in the way we train and in the way we resource ourselves.

We still face very real threats from regional powers who possess robust conventional and, in some cases, nuclear capabilities. The specter of major conflict may have diminished – it certainly has – but it has not yet disappeared, and will not in the immediate future. The growth of the Army and Marine Corps will, over coming years, provide much-needed flexibility. It will certainly allow us to increase dwell time, which is a must. We must increase dwell time one soldier and one family at a time.

But we must now set about the task of restoring some of the more conventional and expeditionary expertise these two services will require in the dangerous and uncertain years ahead. It is extraordinarily difficult to modernize while fighting a war. I understand that – so do all of you – but we don't get to pick and choose, and in fact, there is an argument to be made that it is while we're on a combat footing that generates the juices and the energy and the sense of urgency that forces us to meet the pace of change that is required for what we're doing now and for what we need to do in the future.

You live in time, not outside it. You win the war you're currently fighting, even as you try to get ready for the one that might be coming. The Army is working hard at that. You industry partners, I know, are working hard as well. And I am encouraged by what I'm seeing both from the program perspective and a joint applicability perspective – the emphasis on force protection equipment: MRAPs, helicopters, Blue Force trackers, robotics, remotes and modularity. The results have been tangible – they've been dramatic – and they must continue apace or even move more quickly.

Because we are at war, and it's a war that is moving at light speed. And that brings me to number four: peacetime processes not adapted to a wartime reality. We have way too many of them. I heard about an Army vet the other day, who when he was in boot camp, had cracked the frames of his eyeglasses. After taping them up, he put in a requisition for new frames. He didn't

get them, so he applied again at each base to which he was sent. Finally, after four years, and just before his discharge, he received six sets of frames, all marked "Rush." (Laughter.)

The truth is, too many troops and family members run up against arcane rules and regulations that prevent them from getting the attention they need or slow them down in doing so. We simply haven't kept pace with the war. Some wounded service members are waiting too long to receive their disability rating and transition out of the military, leaving them and their families in limbo. Indeed, what they tell me is their most precious resource is their time. They want their life back. They want to move on. Whether it's back in the service or get out and start a life in the civilian sector, time for them is valuable. I know we've launched a pilot program with the Department of Veterans Affairs designed to streamline this process, but it is still not moving quickly enough. And I hope that we are able to expand it as rapidly as possible to meet the needs of so many who sacrificed so much.

Not all wounds are resolved quickly, of course. Recent studies suggest that as many as 20 percent of today's troops may suffer from PTS brought on by combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. It can be difficult to diagnose, to be sure, and many are understandably wary of the stigma attached to mental health issues – a problem I believe we can alleviate by making everyone undergo screening, so no one has to raise his or her hand. Indeed, there are now spouses whom Debora speaks with, who talk about not raising their hand, saying they think they have PTS, because they worry about its impact on the member's career as well. We simply must press ahead to remove this stigma. That's led by battalion commanders and command sergeant majors and general officers who knock on the door, having been in combat, saying, I need help. Because if those who we lead see us do that, they, in fact, will follow.

Some are being compelled to go to unreasonable lengths to prove their cases before being referred to treatment. Two weeks ago, I was on the west coast, and had the chance to visit the VA hospital in Palo Alto, and I sat down with about 25 or 30 mostly active-duty PTS patients from all the services. And it really bothered me to see what they had to go through just to get into the program – essentially bottoming out, like they were in an alcoholic or a drug rehab regimen.

We shouldn't be letting that happen, and we shouldn't be letting the families endure it alone, either. We must assume they, too, need help – even those, and in particular, those of our fallen. We shouldn't wait to be asked to provide it.

It is a grim reality of war – you know all this – all of you know this too well – that people die or come home forever changed. Who is reaching out to their loved ones? Who is making sure they get the support – emotional, financial, medical, and spiritual – that they need to move on with their lives? They have been exceptional and exceptionally strong through seven years of war, but for all their resilience, they are brittle, too, and it can be frightening to deal with the bureaucracy. Who among us is making sure we don't forget them?

I know Secretary Geren hasn't, and I know George Casey has not as well, and I applaud all the things that you two, in particular, have done to improve the Army family programs. It has

made a huge difference. But what impresses me most is that you've learned that programs themselves don't always have the intended effect and aren't always enough. They need people in charge and also accountability at the deck plate level – to use a Navy term – to make sure they are responsive to real needs, needs that are changing.

Finally – and that's a great segue – I've learned that the Army, too, is a learning organization. You never stop. So to the families of the fallen – for the families of the fallen – and for those that have been wounded and affected so dramatically – all of them still have the American dream. They still want a job; they want their kids to go to school; they'd like an education; they'd like to own a piece of the rock. And so it is, I believe, to us to ensure that they are given opportunities to do this. And so for communities throughout the land to be able to join up – DOD, VA, as well as communities throughout the land – so that this dream is still possible for them – those that sacrificed so much. Reaching out to them to meet their needs, whatever they might be – in whatever time is required for them – is absolutely critical.

I use the example in the Israeli defense force, where when a commander takes over a unit in the Israeli defense force, one of the last things he signs for is an accountability log that lists those who have been wounded or fallen in that unit – and their families – over the last 60 years. And that that commander gets inspected on that in the command tour and obviously, from an accountability standpoint, is held accountable to make sure those who sacrifice so much are still well taken care of. I'm not arguing we should adopt that model, but that kind of effect is what is capable, certainly, in our great country as well.

With respect to the Army being a learning organization – you never stop – I alluded to this earlier when speaking about counter-insurgency warfare, but I see it in other places throughout the service. From the development of doctrine and the speed with which it is happening – and there's a new one out now about nation-building – to command organization – you move your BCTs and your modular headquarters – to the way you promote people, the Army is changing to meet the challenges of this new world we live in and it is adapting.

We are seeing somewhat greater flexibility in what had been somewhat fixed structures and institutions, a greater willingness to use a scalpel where before, it may have been and it may have taken an axe. We are seeing people succeed, grow and lead who aren't afraid to challenge assumptions or the old ways. This must continue. Our mid-grade non-coms, as well as our young captains: They want to know if they have a future. They want to know if they can develop a life with respect to starting a family and having a life, as many of them tell me. They love what they do. They have led in combat. They are remarkably resilient, and they do us all proud and I think you all know that. We are seeing people succeed, grow and lead who aren't afraid to challenge any kind of assumption that we have.

Junior officers and enlisted men and women need to know its okay to speak out and to question the direction their service and seniors are going. They should be rewarded for it. That sort of feedback is healthy, it's vital and it foments the kind of change that we all need.

Look at the new role, also, for our Guard and Reserves, without whom we would not be where we are. In fact, we wouldn't even be close, and what I've learned, certainly over the past year, is that the historic relationship is not one necessarily we should hang our hat on. We should move forward in the integrated fashion that we have fought this war with to a future where we are fully integrated as well.

I am thrilled to death to see the elevation of the National Guard Commander, General Craig McKinley, to the full four-star position, and Lieutenant General Steve Blum to become deputy commander at NORTHCOM. And I look forward to an extremely bright future working with both of them.

We are seeing a service, a model really, that believes – and acts like it believes. The only thing more expensive than education and experience is ignorance. We are learning. I talked about tying the joke to the future combat system, and in particular, I think that the most important part of the future combat system is the individual soldier, and that we've got to make sure we take care of that individual soldier. And we know that if we do that, he or she will take care of us.

As General George Marshall once quipped, "Soldiers are intelligent. Give them the bare tree; let them supply the leaves." I have certainly seen the forest from the trees here, and have learned a lot about the Army. But for me, and for Deborah, this is a journey.

Most importantly, I have learned from the Army. I am certainly better for it in this job, but I dare say, I am also a better naval officer for it. Thank you for all you do to keep the Army strong. Thanks for all you do for our troops and their families. Take care, and God bless.