

TRANSCRIPT

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**Lieutenant General H. R. McMaster**  
**Deputy Commanding General, TRADOC**

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**DWG:** Our guest this morning is Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster. He's got quite the title here so I'll read it verbatim. The general is Deputy Commanding General, Futures, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, and Director of the Army Capabilities and Integration Center. Major McMaster was a guest of the Defense Writers Group in October of 1997, which makes 17 years and four months the longest gap between guests in the history of the Defense Writers Group. We're sure of that. So thank you for coming back. Thank you for remembering us.

You wanted to make an observation at the top, sir.

**LTG McMaster:** I just wanted to say thanks to all of you. Thank you for what you do every day actually as well. I think it is more important than ever that the American people stay connected with the people who fight in their name, you know? And I think as all of you know because you deal with this every day, there is a gap I think in terms of understanding what the threats are to national security, and even really what our soldiers are doing every day in defense of our nation and I would say in defense of all civilized people. So thanks for what you do and thanks to Adam in particular, for convening this group.

One of the things we're emphasizing in the Army Capabilities Integration Center at TRADOC is thinking clearly about the problem of future armed conflict. To do that we're in particular emphasizing an understanding of continuities in the nature of war and changes in the character of conflict. We've tried to capture our thinking in broad terms about how the Army has to operate in the future in this Army Operating Concept which you have in front of you.

Now that Army Operating Concept is a starting point. It's a starting point for other documents that will be prepared along, what are called the Army's warfighting functions

-- fires, intelligence, maneuver, sustainment and so forth. But what's different is that we are asking first order questions, the answers to which will improve current and future force combat effectiveness. And those questions allow us to collaborate across those warfighting functions with multinational partners, what's called now interorganizational partners across government, but also across the joint force certainly and primarily.

So what that allows us to do is to combine those things which have to be combined in combat or on operations, whereas those warfighting functions had to artificially separate those things which have to be routinely combined. Then we're using that framework, we're using that framework to drive our campaign of learning. You need a snappy name, so it's Force 2025 and Beyond. I don't know how snappy it is, but that's, Force 2025 and Beyond. That's really all of our learning activities. Experimentation, wargaming, but it's exercises like Pacific Pathways, or it's training exercises like we're doing in JMRC, in Hohenfels, Germany with an emphasis on interoperability with our European partners in particular. And it's also combat operations and operations overseas. Any operations overseas.

So we now have a framework for learning, we now have a way to sort of categorize what we're learning, and then to apply that. Of course implementation is critical on the back end. So you know innovation's the big word these days. We say and we make that attendant in our operating concept. We say that innovation is turning ideas into valued outcomes. So there's a qualitative aspect to that, valued outcomes. And that's again based on this clear view we think of the problems broadly of future war.

Then also we have to be able to innovate faster. We have to do that to stay ahead. We say even in the document, determined and adaptive enemies. So that's what we're doing is we're thinking, we're learning, and then implementing what we learned to build a more capable and effective Army for the future.

**DWG:** Let me begin with the big picture look at future concepts. When you plan for the future what the Army needs to succeed against future enemies, how much of the energy and focus is on variations of today's fight against al-Qaida or ISIS/ISIL type enemies. How much of the energy is dedicated to large scale force on force vice potential enemies of the Russia or China variety? How do you divide your time between those two extremes?

**LTG McMaster:** Essentially we're trying to make this choice, right? This choice between do you go after networked enemy organizations, insurgent and terrorist type organizations. That's what you train for principally. Or do you go to train against the fielded force of a nation state? What we're endeavoring to do is to make that a false dilemma and a false choice. We have to be able to do both. We've always had to do both, in fact, across the history of our Army for 238 years. So I think that what we've tried to do now is institutionalize the lessons and adaptations of 13 years of war by integrating into our training, into our scenarios, into our simulations the kind of complexity that we've encountered in both Afghanistan and in Iraq, and that complexity is associated with a determined, capable, illusive, adaptive enemy organizations and it's also due to a very complex environment. A complex environment that really reveals

complex political and human dynamics, that keeps war fundamentally in the realm of uncertainty. I think one of the problems we had in the 1990s as a joint force in particular, and I think all Western militaries are kind of infected with this idea of the revolution in military affairs and technology associated with it, shifting war fundamentally from the realm of uncertainty into the realm of certainty.

Remember some of the language -- dominant battle space knowledge would give us full spectrum dominance and so forth. We conduct rapid decisive operations. And war was going to be fast, cheap and efficient. Gosh, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, I mean they reminded us that war is anything but that. Right? War is fundamentally uncertain because of its political dimension, its political nature, its human nature, the uncertainty that comes with the continuous interaction with these determined enemies. So you can't be dominant, right? We don't say in this concept we're going to dominate this, dominate that. We say that we're going to work hard as part of the joint force to seize, retain and exploit the initiative over the enemy.

Then we talk about the need to consolidate gains, consolidate gains to get the sustainable outcomes usually political outcomes consistent with our vital interests and what brings you into that fight to begin with.

So our Army forces have to do the broad range of activities we've had to do. We have to fight effectively as a combined arms team. That's fires and maneuver and infantry and armor, protective fire power and engineers and aviation and access to joint capabilities. Combine those things to defeat enemy organizations, to overmatch them in close combat.

But then we also have to do the other things we have to do. Operate in a multinational environment, foreign internal defense and combat advisory type skills operating with other indigenous forces, building the capacity of those forces in a way that is consistent with what you want to achieve politically. Military support to governance, rule of law, and so forth.

These are things that the Army actually always had to do, and what we're not going to do is do what we did, as some people pointed out, after Vietnam. We say okay, we don't want to do that again. Let's just turn our back on that. And Conrad Crain has a good paper on this called Avoiding Vietnam. So we said okay, we are going to recognize the nature of war, the enduring nature of war. We're going to also try to identify changes in the character of armed conflict, and then based on that we're going to develop our training, we're going to develop our leader development, we're going to develop our organizations, integrate new technologies in a way that we can deal with that range of enemies and that range of very complex environments. I could give you lots of examples of that.

I think the way that we're structuring our training through the Training Brain Operation Center, it's called the TBOC, which would be a cool place for you to visit. What they essentially do there is they look at armed conflicts around the world, conflicts we've been involved in, and others, and they genericize the data. The intelligence and the

experience. And then graft that onto training exercises wherever you are. The National Training Center, the JRTC down in Louisiana, your home station training, a simulation that you're doing. So our Army has really institutionalized the complexity of the environment. The title, Win in a Complex World, our Army Operating Concept, reflects the need to conduct military operations in a way that you get to an outcome to accomplish our mission. And it acknowledges, obviously, the complexity of the environments and the enemies that we interact with in armed conflict.

**DWG:** Sir, there's been an estimate in the last few months that heavy armor is moving into Europe with the European activity set. I'm wondering with your background and experience in these things, the thinking on armor is changing. Could there be a greater emphasis on it? And what about the force mix in Europe?

**LTG McMaster:** I think armored vehicles, combat vehicles, are immensely important. Unless you're developing a force to read back World War I, right? You need combat vehicles. Combat vehicles were designed obviously during World War I to restore mobility to the stalemated battlefield on the Western front, to defeat the machine gun, right? So I think sometimes people get caught in a trap where they think about war as completely symmetrical. So if you build a force with certain capabilities, you're building it to fight a light force. Not necessarily. It's really those combined arms capabilities, right? I mean combat is in many ways simple, to use a simple analogy, it's rock, paper, scissors, right? If you show up with a rock and the enemy's got paper, you better have scissors, and to use capabilities in combination with each other.

What we have said and what we're really working on now is a combat vehicle modernization strategy which is in draft form. If any of you are individual interested I could share with you, I'd like to get your feedback and just keep it, you know, don't publish anything on it, I'd ask you not to quote from it until it's finished. But what we say in that combat vehicle modernization strategy is the end, what we're trying to achieve, is to make sure every formation in our Army possesses the appropriate combination of mobility, protection and lethality to accomplish the mission under the mission variables in which that formation is committed. And mission variables are mission, enemy, troops, terrain, civilian considerations.

So what we have also said is we want overmatch. We don't want fair fights, right? So if you get in a firefight with a U.S. Army unit that firefight's going to be over fast and you're going to be on the losing end in a dramatic way, right?

So what we want to do is assess the mobility protection and lethality across all our formations and prioritize our combat vehicle development efforts so that we can maintain overmatch across all formations, recognizing that one of the strengths of our Army is we can also tailor organizations, task organize kind of on the fly across armored brigade combat teams, Stryker brigade combat teams, and infantry brigade combat teams.

In this strategy also we describe the strengths and weaknesses of each of those formations and then endeavor to magnify the strengths of those formations with our development efforts, compensate for, determine the weaknesses.

So we believe that combat vehicles are an essential element of our Army's ability to overmatch our enemies. They are part of our nation's asymmetrical advantage over enemies. And I think that you've seen this in every conflict we've been involved in or every conflict that we have not been involved in even.

If you can make the argument that tanks are changing the geopolitical landscape in Ukraine right now. They give you a close combat overmatch capability. And so it's really how you use those capabilities across our Army in combination to see [tank exploitation] initiative and accomplish the mission. And recognize that you don't want a fair fight.

A fair fight in battle is ugly. The outcome is ugly.

**DWG:** Is that changing? Is that triggering a change in thought in any way? There's been a lot of talk about agility. And you might not necessarily --

**LTG McMaster:** It's super agile. That's one of the misunderstandings, right? A tank can go all sorts of places that an MRAP, for example, can't go because it's all about ground pressure and power ratios and so forth. So tactical mobility for a tank is great. Operational mobility is limited not because of the tank itself but because of the logistics demand in places.

So if you're looking at deploying large numbers of U.S. forces, you're going to go by boat. You're not going to deploy a large force no matter what the configuration is by air. It's the laws of physics. You can't get enough there in enough time with the air frames that you have. But air deployability is super important, but you have to recognize that for a force to conduct a large-scale operation it's going to go by sea. No matter what you equip a brigade with, whether it's a future fighting vehicle of some kind of a certain weight, it's two boats. It's basically two boats, no matter what. And then what you're deploying forward, and these are all sort of misunderstandings, right? Only 20 percent of that, of what goes on those ships is brigade combat teams. The rest of that is enabling capabilities and logistics capabilities.

So if you want a force that some of the words that are used are like lean and nimble, right? IF you want a force that's lean you don't necessarily want to diminish the capabilities you have with mobility, protection and lethality. What you want to do is reduced logistics demand. There are technologies now we can apply to do that, right? So this is power and energy technologies, it's increased reliability and so forth of vehicles, so we're really emphasizing those technologies, and then we're looking across the whole force. Not just myopically at a brigade combat team. That's one aspect of it.

So what we have said is mobility for a while. We want to be able to deploy forces rapidly and to unexpected locations and those forces, though, have to have the appropriate

combination of mobility, protection and lethality to accomplish the mission and overmatch the enemy, and we have to deploy forces of sufficient scale and for ample duration to accomplish the mission. Right?

So it's not just about like lean and nimble. I mean Richard Simmons is lean and nimble, but you don't send Richard Simmons to go fight anybody, right? So it's really defining the terms better. And in the Army Operating Concept there's a definition of expeditionary maneuver that I think is important so that we're clear about what we're talking about. There are tremendous opportunities, though, to get leaner and be able to sustain high tempo operations at the end of extended and contested lines of communication or supply lines in austere environments. That's really what we want to be able to do. We want to be able to conduct expeditionary maneuver and what we're calling joint combined arms operations.

Joint combined arms operations are in the deployment of forces into unexpected locations who can operate widely disbursed with combined arms and joint capabilities at lower levels, decentralized. These forces can operate widely disbursed but maintain mutual support between each other which means they can aid each other in the accomplishment of the mission. So we want forces to be able to sustain operations over greater distances to lower the logistics demand. We want them to be able to see and fight across wider areas. But we need them to have the mobility, right? The mobility so they can concentrate against enemy weakness or unexpected opportunities or protect against unanticipated dangers.

And this is not super new. Think about Napoleon's [olm] campaign. That's what he was doing. Think about the tactics of infiltration that almost broke the stalemate, thankfully did not, on the Western Front in 1918 with [inaudible]. So this is in many ways trying to elevate the tactics of infiltration to the operational level. And what this does in joint combined arms operations is it gets, it really gets at this problem of cross-domain warfare, where we see other domains -- the air, space, maritime domains -- increasingly challenged by the transfer of advanced technological capabilities that we've had a tremendous advantage in in recent years.

So what we are saying is Army forces operate on land, right? And that's important because, guess what, all your problems in cyberspace, in space, in maritime air, where do they originate? They originate on land because people live there. That's where of course all the political dynamics that cause the conflict to begin with are involved. So Army forces have to operate on land to defeat enemy organizations like we've always had to do, to control territory, to deny its use to the enemy. I think you see this with ISIL. Control of territory is pretty significant in terms of an enemy's ability to access and mobilize resources, right? To control and coerce and victimize populations, to perpetuate the kind of local and broader regional sectarian conflict that gives them their power and their justification. So for all these reasons, to control territory, secure populations, but then to deny its use to the enemy, and that's increasingly important if you think about long range ballistic missile capabilities and what some have said are A2AD capabilities.

A2AD, the way it's been defined, has been defined in a very limited and I would say almost narcissistic way in terms of us saying hey, we're the most capable, right? We're the baddest. Our military. So our enemies are going to try to keep us out. Well how about the offensive capabilities associated with long range ballistic missile capabilities? Isn't that analogous to the V1V2 threat to London in World War II? Or the SCUD missile threat to Israel out of the western deserts of Iraq in 1991. Or the rocket threat out of southern Lebanon to Israel. Or the rocket threats out of Gaza. Now you've got increasing urbanization. You have the proliferation of these weapons. Urban areas could now be launching pads for these kinds of capabilities.

What do you need to deal with that? Do you want to deal with that only with standoff capabilities? It's not going to get it done, probably, right? Because of enemy counter-measures. So this idea of joint combined arms operations is meant to ensure that the Army remains as it always has been, a key element of the joint force.

American military power is joint power, right? It's rock, paper scissors. So how do we develop Army capabilities in a way that we can seize, retain, exploit the initiative against enemies, and that we can operate across domains.

**DWG:** General, I'd like to get down in the weeds for a moment. Conrad Crane may have written *Avoiding Vietnam*, but President Obama is trying to write *Avoiding Iraq*. You were in Tal Afar. We're on the verge of a third Iraq War in 25 years. What is 5-25-3-1 going to teach us to allow us to do better this third time around?

**LTG McMaster:** You allude to a really important point which is what are we going to learn from these wars, right? And I think in many ways what we learn from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq could in the future be as important as the outcome of those wars, right? And that's because if we learn the wrong lessons we'll engage in the kind of self-delusion that we engaged in in the '90s, which I think set us up for many of the difficulties that we encountered in both Afghanistan and Iraq, when those wars weren't fast, cheap, efficient; when they weren't just military operations. Military operations had to be part of a larger campaign that included diplomatic, political efforts, informational efforts, development efforts to consolidate those gains.

So I think what the operating concept tells us is that we have to ensure that Army forces provide foundational capabilities to the joint force and to our nation. And by that what we're saying is that we don't conduct Army operations obviously ever, just as an Army operation, right? It's always a joint operation. But what we also say is that Army forces allow you then to project national power. Wow, is that the Army exaggerating its importance? What do you mean, you project national power?

What we're saying is that we have to support a broad range of efforts in areas that are unsecure because they're contested, right? And so if you go into a dangerous environment and you're trying to affect that environment politically at the lower level, you better go with soldiers with U.S. Army on their chests to go secure that effort. So we talk about Army foundational capabilities, we talk about the Army's role in projecting national power, and the other critical thing that we emphasize is the need to develop

situational understanding at these kind of environments. It's very difficult to do that in these standoff environments from a standoff range, right? You really have to understand these local drivers of conflict that our enemies then use to perpetuate violence, and then to portray themselves as patrons and protectors to some of those parties that are in competition. And you can only really figure that out, oftentimes, on the ground.

You can also maybe only figure out the degree to which indigenous security forces are infiltrated and subverted by either criminalized patronage networks, organized crime networks, or political entities that are pursuing a narrow, particularistic agenda that cuts against what you want to achieve or they're infiltrated by foreign intelligence, arms or militias like the IRGC or [MLS], like -- It's a problem that we've seen in Iraq.

So you have to figure that kind of stuff out on the ground. So we emphasize in the concepts, we have to be able to develop situational understanding in close contact with the enemy because we have an elusive enemy who is trying to avoid being classified as a target but from standoff range, right? So you have to find your enemy and understand your enemy, but you also have to develop the situation in close contact with civilian populations.

And then the other aspects of the concept that addresses this, what is a lesson, is this idea of consolidation. Consolidating gains. I think the lesson is that it's not that these kinds of missions are impossible. I think one of the key lessons is we made it just about as hard on ourselves as we could have. Right?

**DWG:** By doing what?

**LTG McMaster:** By not acknowledging the need to consolidate gains in either Afghanistan or Iraq. So let's take Afghanistan for example quickly. In Afghanistan we waged a very effective military campaign. It was a military and civilian campaign in terms of our intelligence capabilities that were applied. And we relied principally on Special Forces did a tremendous job, on our air capabilities, our naval and Air Force capabilities and precision strike and surveillance capabilities which of course have grown even more effective over the years. But what we did with those capabilities is we super-empowered Mujahedeen-era militias. Mujahedeen-era militias who once they were victorious in collapsing the Taliban regime and its fielded forces were then able to effect state capture essentially over state institutions and functions that had been destroyed by the civil war from '92 to '96, really the Soviet occupation before that, and then had been systematically dismantled by the Taliban, right?

The effect of that is that these militias then morphed into organized crime networks essentially. Organized crime networks that were engaged in criminal activities. Criminal activities that hollowed out the institutions that we in the international community were trying to build. But were hollowing them out for criminal motives, to make money and so forth. But the commoditization of positions, the pyramid type schemes associated with that, the diversion of resources and so forth, and assistance.

But they were pursuing a political agenda which was really to consolidate power in advance of a post U.S. or post ISAF, later, Afghanistan.

So the way that we waged the military campaign made it very difficult for us to consolidate gains, so this so-called leg footprint approach and so forth.

If you think about war as a contest of wills, right, and how the Taliban were able to reconstitute across the border in Pakistan with the assistance of foreign intelligence in al-Qaida, they were able to come back into the country, again, because mainly of this light footprint approach, and also because we had unwittingly relied on proxies in a way that created exclusionary political economies in portions of the country and left key actors outside the tent, right? Super empowering certain tribal leaders over others, created the conditions where you had the have's and have not's and the Taliban could come to the have not's right? The [Oxcheckboxi's], the [Alakozi's] for example, if you look at the political structure and the political economies developing just in Kandahar Province, and say hey, you need me. You need me to advance your interests. You have no future in this political economy that is now being established.

So I think the lessons we learned aren't super important and the lessons we ought to learn is that it's very difficult to achieve sustainable political outcomes from standoff range. It's very difficult to influence the course of events because you not only have to communicate your resolve and determination to the enemy to defeat them psychologically, which we did. We defeated the Taliban psychologically I think mainly in 2001. But you also have to bolster your partners and allies and influence neutrals. And while standoff capabilities are immensely important to our national security, you really need land forces, Army forces in particular, to be able to exert that kind of influence and get to sustainable outcomes. I think that's the lesson.

Now there's a danger, as you're alluding to, of learning the wrong lesson. Most kind of [inaudible] are too damn hard to do, right? But if you think about it, we have had many experiences of being able to really consolidate gains effectively and conduct military operations in a way where we achieved sustainable political outcomes. You can look at recent military history. If you look at the intervention in Panama, the Dominican Republic in 1965. If you look at really a lower scale, sort of Special Forces support and interagency support, Plan Colombia is a tremendous example.

If you want to look at a larger scale example, I think Korea is a great example and the Korean War. Look at the situation South Korea was in in 1953. You had a country that had been ravaged by decades of war, really, that was, had no natural resources, had illiterate, at least undereducated, largely illiterate population, a hostile neighbor and a corrupt government. I mean it looked pretty darn bleak, right? But we committed the resources necessary, not at the same scale as '50 to '53, but we committed resources over time and got to a sustainable outcome with now the fifth largest economy in the world.

So these things take time. The lesson is that you can't conduct military operations without an eye toward what is a sustainable outcome, except in very -- Unless you're

doing something punitive where a raid or something with very limited objectives, and that we have to pay attention to the need to consolidate gains.

Libya is another example. Libya is an example of when you don't, I'm not questioning any policy decisions. But Libya is an example of what happens when you don't consolidate military gains.

**DWG:** But as a military man, sir, you've disparaged several times light footprint. Are you advocating for a heavy footprint to defeat ISIS?

**LTG McMaster:** No. I can't talk about any specific policy things, that's not my job, and the Army will do whatever the President asks us to do or whatever the Secretary asks us to do. I mean --

**DWG:** Okay, a quick follow-up. You alluded to confusion about the outcomes in Iraq and Afghanistan. To your mind, what were the outcomes of those two wars?

**LTG McMaster:** I think in Afghanistan, I think we have a tremendous opportunity, with new national leadership there and what our soldiers have fought alongside Afghan soldiers and alongside our ISAF partners, have fought to give the Afghan people a chance at a future they deserve, which is much better than the horror they've had to live through in the last several decades. I think in Afghanistan, and I've been out of it since, I've not been there since 2012, but I think you can quickly see the dramatic changes and positive change in Afghanistan. That said, it's obviously very contested, still, based on the Taliban who want to reimpose this sort of medieval type regime that will deny people their human rights, that will continue to oppress the population as they did from '96 to 2001.

So I think what's necessary in Afghanistan are four things that we all are working on. The first is an internal political settlement and accommodation between the various groups inside of Afghanistan. Afghanistan is essentially, it's essentially an intra-Pashtun civil war that has a regional dynamic associated with the Taliban based in Pakistan. But there are also competitions, as you know, between various factions and ethnic groups and so forth, and sectarian groups inside of Afghanistan. What's critical for Afghanistan I think to be able to consolidate its security is a common understanding of a future vision for the country in which each of those groups believe their interests will be advanced to protect it.

I think President Ghani's done, just from watching, reading your reporting, has done a tremendous job in doing that and I think he deserves all the support he can get as he builds that kind of accommodation and that settlement. That's the first thing.

The second thing is the Afghan institutions have to be hardened against the regenerative capacity of the Taliban. That's security forces in particular, and that's what the military is focused on. General Campbell is the perfect guy to do that. And the team that he has there. So that's the second I think key factor.

The third factor is Pakistan and the role that Pakistan can play in addressing the problems that are cross-border in nature and deal with Pakistan's decision, it appears based on the horrible attacks against their own people, to begin to go after these groups less selectively and to recognize that these groups are a danger, even a greater danger to them in many ways than they are to Afghanistan. It seems that President Ghani, just look at the reporting. You're always skeptical about these kinds of things, but it seems that there have been some tremendous advances in that connection, which is the third factor of Pakistan.

The fourth factor is international community support. I mean Afghanistan's going to be relying on the international community for the foreseeable future. There are all sorts of possibilities associated with Silk Road Initiatives and economic development associated with minerals, and they've got a great Minister of Mines now with Al Saba, so I think, but that's long term.

So I think a fourth factor is internal political settlement, hardening Afghan institutions and strengthening them. Pakistan. And then the fourth key thing is the international community support. I think all that's doable.

What does the Taliban really have to offer? I think in terms of our sustaining the effort, one of the things that bothers me sometimes is I wish we could talk more or get the people more interested -- present company excepted. I think the media other than you could be more involved in explaining who we're fighting.

So when you hear statements, that Americans are weary of the effort and so forth, sometimes we don't spend enough time talking about the nature of our enemies and what are the stakes. How many Americans could name the three Taliban groups? Even name them. Can you imagine fighting a war in the past and not even be able to name your enemy?

So I think now we're seeing this with ISIL, the [inaudible] brutality is so apparent now because they're promoting themselves. It's not our reporting that got the American people to say damn, this is really worth fighting these guys; it's their own propaganda. And we don't even focus on our enemies. We talk in terms again that I think sometimes could be criticized as narcissistic. We define these conflicts in relation to us rather than pay due attention to our enemies, the nature of our enemies, what's at stake and why it's worth the effort.

**DWG:** Sir, you didn't talk about Iraq.

**LTG McMaster:** The Iraqi outcome is still very much to be seen. So what we had in Iraq is obviously a return of large-scale communal violence. I think based on a failure on the Iraqis' part to sustain the political accommodation between the various communities that removed support for the extremists. And this is I think the temporary and obviously in retrospect fragile victory that we achieved from 2007 to 2009. So we were unable, the Iraqis were unable to sustain that political accommodation that removed support for Shia Islamist militias who were working for the Iranians on the one

side and for al-Qaida associated groups. And I think the front line series that was done was very good on that. I think people's books do a really good job of laying out really how that collapsed, how that accommodation collapsed. So I think it's pretty well understood.

**DWG:** I wanted to talk to you a little bit about [inaudible]. The new SecDef says that's a priority. I wanted to know from an [inaudible] perspective what can be done in the near term [inaudible] long term. And with that, you came out with a memo on the [inaudible] radio about a year ago [inaudible]. And [inaudible] for that radio. So I wanted to know what your thoughts were on that strategy, and also what [inaudible] moving forward.

**LTG McMaster:** On acquisition, we can do a lot ourselves. A lot of people will complain about the Federal Acquisition Regulations and so forth, and certainly there are changes we need there. There are changes that Congress I think could advocate for, but there's a lot we can do internally. And what we can do internally is we can simplify and unify the requirements process. So in combat developments in the Army -- Now in the Army it's harder. It's much harder than any other service because of the way we operate. The broad range of capabilities that we need and I'm not diminishing the complexity. An aircraft carrier is super complex, right? I mean a nuclear sub is super complex. But you can see that. It's a sort of big tangible thing that is a system of systems and you can say that's my requirement, the next aircraft carrier, the next sub, right? For the Army you need such a broad range of capabilities, right? With a broad range of combat vehicles and all the functions that they perform and the sustainment capabilities and the engineering capabilities and the port opening and Army watercraft. Small arms capabilities and soldier capabilities. All these things, so the Army has a lot more requirements.

The way the system has worked typically in the past is that if you're in combat developments and you don't have a capability gap, you're nobody. So you write up the capability gap, you get your gap recognized, now you're somebody in combat developments, right? And then once you get your gap recognized you can come up with a required capability and ultimately a solution and a requirement to fill your gap. Now that becomes a program of record, man, you're somebody now in the acquisition process, right?

How easy is it for us right now to understand how the aggregate of all of that chasing of gaps gives you a better Army? It's pretty hard right now. So what we have done is, we have said that we're going to develop our requirements around the Army warfighting challenges. We're no longer going to take these really detailed views of Army war fighting functions, right? Again that artificially separate those things which have to be routinely combined in combat, we're going to look at first order things we have to do.

So for example, how do you develop and sustain a high degree of situational understanding in complex environments and against adaptive enemies? That's an enduring problem. Right? So for each of those questions we have ten learning demands based on our assessment of how well we can do that not just today but with a base force

seven to ten years out. Right? And then that's where we identify our gaps and opportunities to make the future force better. Then based on those gaps and opportunities, then we develop the requirements. So we can trace now, we'll be able to trace a requirement back to how it helps us fight better, how it helps us accomplish the mission, and then all the analytical effort, the capabilities based analysis that serves as the foundation for material solutions, justifying material solutions. That's going to be done not on its own. It's going to be done in the context of Army experimentation in realistic scenarios that help us, help try to solve concrete problems in future armed conflict, and then that analysis will then feed into the joint capabilities integration process, the JCIDS process.

So requirements, that's part of it, is tying it to this framework and to experimentation and analysis. Now all of that's done together. Then when we do the analysis that way in a more predictable manner, so we're extending our planning horizons out to three years, experimentation. Then we're partnering with Forces Command, with Pacific Command, with European Command, with African Command, and we're making all of this experimentation not just an experiment for future force stuff, but it's a training opportunity for units and staffs. So we're going to get expertise involved with this, with really operational experience, looking at our experiments and helping identify what the requirements are and provide better analysis to do military judgement as well as through the operations research type analysis and measurements based analysis, all the stuff that I kind of barely understand.

So I think we're aligning all of those activities and that's going to be big payoff.

The other part of this, the writing of requirements documents. Right? The writing of requirements documents is going to be done by a group of people who can all provide important sort of input into that requirement document. Obviously the requirements community, that's us, right? TRADOC. But we're going to bring in Forces Command.

So for example, we just did an initial capabilities document for mobile protective firepower. This is an armored vehicle that would ensure freedom of movement and action for infantry forces in close contact with the enemy. It would be designed to support light forces and maybe eventually Stryker brigade combat teams.

When we wrote that document we brought together 18<sup>th</sup> Airborne Corps and other IBCT and Stryker brigade combat team leadership who had recent operational experience and what kind of capability they needed. We brought together obviously the acquisition community. So PEO combat vehicle was in on the writing of the requirements. We brought in the Army Lab, the TARDAC, to bring in the latest technology, and knowing what technology can deliver realistically in the writing of a requirements document. We brought in Army Materiel Command and the sustainment community to help write it, and then we brought in the Army G3 and the Army G8 and we wrote the document together.

So instead of the Warner-Decker report on acquisition, remember the sawtooth thing for requirements? Like it would come up to a general officer at TRADOC and we'd say

yeah, we want to do this. Then it goes to like a council of colonels on the Army Staff. I mean unbelievable. So Clausewitz said that war is like movement in a resistant element. Sometimes in acquisition it's like setting concrete, you know what I mean?

So what we're trying to do is control what we control. What did Aristotle say, spend your time on what you can effect in your life. So we're trying to effect what we can effect, which is the requirements process. The logic of it to make it more compelling, and to do it together and collaborative at the beginning.

**DWG:** The radio?

**LTG McMaster:** Oh, the radio thing. Part of the problem we were dealing with with the network and radios is the legacy of developing requirements in our cylinders of excellence, in these stovepipes of maneuver, sustainment, fires and so forth. So what has happened over time is that we have fielded systems that don't fit together very well. That is added to the complexity of the network.

So we have an opportunity now, based on what we've learned, to write requirements for the overall network, right? What do we want the overall network to be able to do? This is what we're calling the common operating environment. How this all fits together.

We have three fundamental problems with the network that we have to solve. This doesn't mean we have to give up what we've done. We do have some, we've got some tremendous capabilities but we have to simplify it. It's over-complex, right? I mean we need to simplify it. We need to do this with all of our equipment. We need to really emphasize human factors engineering, engineering psychology, those disciplines as they apply to material development overall. And we also have to make it more resilient, which is related to its complexity, right? All of our systems need to be able to degrade gracefully, you know? We need redundant capabilities where those are relevant. We need to operate degraded as a force for every kind of vehicle. And you see the importance of this obviously now with the increasing cyber attack capabilities, electronic warfare capabilities, maybe even future capabilities like electromagnetic pulse -- So we have to be able to have those degraded gracefully. We have to complete the network. It's incomplete. We've been getting parts of it, a black box kind of approach. And I don't mean to disparage. This is all old history. People are working on this. It's getting better now.

Those are the things we have to work on, complexity, we have to make it stronger, and simpler, and we have to kind of complete it. It's kind of incomplete.

So on the hand-held thing, this relates to your question on acquisition reform. The key is those people that I mentioned who had to work together on requirements documents, they have to stay together across the entire acquisition process for these programs, and they have to collaborate continuously to improve it.

So I would say that the adjustments we're making, those are victories. Those are things that ought to be celebrated. Like man, the Army, they really screwed that up, they didn't

have the requirements right for the MANPAC radio. Actually we learned and we adapted. Can you imagine if industry -- Industry doesn't go for 100 percent solutions all the time, right? So we had a 70 percent solution and we learned what the deficiencies were, and now we're rewriting requirements, we're working with industry to see what's in the realm of the feasible for range and weight and heat generation for that. That's just one example. I think that's the kind of feedback we need.

A capstone event for us, a centerpiece for us is this Army Warfighting Assessment which is the network integration experiment at Fort Bliss. That AWA is going to be a really key event to do what people who track innovation and our innovation experts say the key is to get designers and users together earlier in the process. That's what we're endeavoring to do with all of our experimentation and with the Army Warfighting Assessment in particular.

**DWG:** General, I wanted to ask you on the combat vehicle strategy that you discussed earlier, the Army is for a long time they wanted the holy grail of lethality, mobility, --

**LTG McMaster:** Right.

**DWG:** You know, General Shinseki wanted that and it's been kind of a long time pursuit. But people in industry say it's not --

**LTG McMaster:** Feasible.

**DWG:** It's not doable. You can't get that perfect balance. So you're still doing, I mean you're still looking for that perfect vehicle but if industry tells you it's not possible, why can't you just downscale the expectations to something more realistic and not continue down the same path?

**LTG McMaster:** You're absolutely right. That's exactly what we're doing. So we're just downscaling expectations based on what we know industry can deliver. What are the mature technologies that can be applied to vehicle design, so it's not just -- So there's material science that's a big part of it. It's other technologies that are relevant to combat vehicle capabilities. But it's also the design of that vehicle is part of it, and then the concept that's driving what the vehicle has to do.

So what we have said is the U.S. Army's not a boutique force. We get called upon to do a whole bunch of different things in different environments. So we think that for the foreseeable future that we will need the range of capabilities that are reflected in infantry brigade combat teams, the Stryker brigade combat teams and armor brigade combat teams because that slows you to necessarily try to optimize a particular vehicle or capability or type of formation, it allows you to combine those formations based on the mission set and the environment and the enemy that you're fighting and so forth.

So that's what we're endeavoring to do.

The other thing is for the vehicle modernization strategy. We're saying that because this has to be a sustained effort, combat vehicle modernization over time. We have to sustain the fleets that we have. So the fleets that we have, we have to make sure that we sustain them and they provide our soldiers with the overmatch capability they need to accomplish the mission and reduce risk to soldiers as well. We have to improve some of the vehicles we've had, and we've done that over the years, right? Tremendous improvements on our combat vehicles. The tank and Bradley are great examples, right? We've got longer lives out of them than we thought we would. So some of the things we're looking at doing to improve them further is obviously increased power and the power ratios for those tanks and Bradleys. Other improvements associated with engineer change proposals for those. To improve the Stryker we want to up-gun the Stryker vehicle, for example, and give that a canon-type capability. I mean in general, bullets that explode are better than bullets that don't explode and we want to have a firefight ending capability in all of our formations. So you shoot at us, it's done, right? It's over for you.

So improvement across the fleets is another part of it.

Develop new systems. We have to develop new systems to maintain our differential advantage over our enemies in the longer term. The new effort in terms of the future fighting vehicle, it all depends on funding, right? I mean we need a future fighting vehicle because the Bradley will become obsolete before we're able to field that future fighting vehicle based on a long development time it takes for that kind of vehicle. That vehicle, though, has to -- We have to inform the requirements based on a realistic understanding of what kind of technologies are maturing that we can apply to it. Material science, there are going to be some savings in weight there with some new alloys -- But a different approach to armoring as well, some of which is classified, but we're taking different kinds of armor that can allow you to lighten it up but also to make the vehicle smaller. It's a concept that can be employed for a future fighting vehicle can change. Maybe carry a fire team instead of a squad, for example. And lethality upgrades, with the XME-31 for example that we developed for the ground combat vehicle, and SCS before that. There are technologies we developed that we're going to apply to the new capabilities as well. So we have to develop some new systems. I mentioned [inaudible] protected fire power, light reconnaissance vehicle is another one that we're looking at.

Then we have to replace obsolete vehicles. The M113 is obsolete. It's a danger to our soldiers. So we want to accelerate the armored multipurpose vehicle and other capabilities that we may develop and other decisions and echelons above brigade to replace that obsolete vehicle.

Then we have to continually assess the effort, which is your point I think. What can technology deliver? What do you get out of single hull casting? What do you get out of new alloys? What do you get just lightening the vehicle up more overall? What do you get from power and energy savings? More power from smaller engines which gives you less volume under armor. There are all sorts of things you can do, but they're tradeoffs,

and to say that there's not going to be a trade any more between mobility, protection and lethality, that's not true. We know that's not true.

So part of this draft combat vehicle strategy we have a section called the combat vehicle riddle. It's just about the thought process we have to go through so that we design vehicles that give us overmatch. All this has to be tied to a couple of things. It has to be tied to joint capabilities and to our aviation, because we fight as an air/ground team. We want to pose multiple dilemmas for the enemy is what we say in the operating concept. We want our enemies to respond to multiple forms of contacts simultaneously to give us a temporal and psychological advantage as well as a physical advantage over them in combat.

The other thing is we have to tie it to our dismounted capability and our soldier and squad foundation for decisive force capabilities. There are a whole bunch of efforts ongoing there to make sure that the infantry squad also has the right combination of mobility, protection and lethality. And again, a firefight ending capability.

**LTG McMaster:** -- system is key to that as well, to that development, and integrated combat vehicles. Yes.

**DWG:** Okay, I've got a question for you, just to shift focus a little bit. Probably the most interesting innovation in military, in warfare in the last year or two has not been the United States, but in the Russian Federation which has been the evolution of hybrid warfare where you have insurgency, not counter-insurgency, but insurgency, covert operations, conventional weapons with regular forces, diplomacy, psychological operations, and all kind of working together I would say rather effectively. What's striking is that this is happening in Europe which has traditionally been a very important theater for the U.S. Army and could eventually pose a threat to some NATO allies, at least in the [inaudible] NATO allies.

You must have studied this. In your assessment, what has made this so effective? And what is the counter for it? Because the counter isn't necessarily U.S. [inaudible] warfare, but something else.

**LTG McMaster:** These are great great questions. This ties really to the first question in the beginning. I think this is the kind of enemy capability that our Army has to be prepared for as part of the joint force, obviously, to deal with this threat of hybrid warfare which is using, from a military perspective, unconventional forces under the cover and using the power of conventional forces in combination.

What we say in the operating concept, and we use Russia as an example. I don't know if Ukraine had begun yet but obviously it was clear in Crimea what was happening. It was clear from George before and so forth. Is that our enemies, future enemies, whether they're state or non-state actors or so-called hybrid enemies, will do four things to cope with what they view as our competitive advantages.

The first thing they'll do is they'll avoid our strengths, right? What they see as our strength they'll avoid it, either politically as they have here to a certain extent through thinly veiled actions that they can deny, but they're going to avoid it. So oftentimes we think linearly about future war right? And again, this is this kind of narcissistic thinking, that our enemies are going to be passive recipients of our overmatch capabilities, right?

What's different about war on land is a war on land is very different from the maritime, air, space fight, cyberspace fight even. On land you have instead of a bounded target set you have tens of thousands of targets oftentimes, all of whom are trying to avoid being classified as such. Right? And so they're employing countermeasures of dispersion, concealment, intermingling with civilian populations.

We also see our enemies are going to emulate our capabilities. You see what Russia's done with the reconfiguration of its forces, the qualitative sort of improvements in their forces and so forth. Again, I mentioned armored vehicles. Armored vehicles are a huge part of what they've been able to achieve in terms of their objectives in Ukraine. So you'll see increasingly emulation of these advanced and combined arms capabilities.

Then I think the other thing that you'll see is they'll try to disrupt our capabilities, right? Disrupt us with countermeasures to what they see as our strengths. That can be politically but also militarily with going after our network strike capabilities.

But ultimately I think what we're getting at with hybrid warfare is they'll try to expand on the other battle grounds. What's critical is for us to recognize that war is a competition that is played out on much more than the physical battle ground. It's played out on the battle grounds of perception, and we see obviously there's been a lot of discussion the last couple of days. Yesterday and today, obviously, with the conference going on here on the battle ground perception with ISIL. But also it's carried out on the battle grounds of political subversion which is what you see I think Russia doing particularly effectively under the auspices of protecting Russian minorities and so forth.

So what is the answer to this kind of capability? I'm not advocating for this in Ukraine, I'm just saying that in general to face an enemy that is using so-called hybrid warfare what can you do?

I think there's a strong case to be made that the only way to cope with it effectively is through forward deterrence. I think that forward deterrence involves land forces. I think if you look at who has this kind of unconventional capability, political subversion, fifth column type capabilities with conventional capabilities. North Korea. Right? What's prevented North Korea from having effects in South Korea that are analogous to the effect that Russia's been able to have in its effort to change the geopolitical landscape in Europe and Eurasia?

I think the difference is there hasn't been a forward deterrent in many of these places.

So what Russia has done is they've waged limited war from limited objectives. They've been able to use unconventional forces under the cover of conventional forces to seize limited objectives quickly with no cost. And then to portray the international community's response as escalatory.

So only I think you can make the argument for forward deterrence at the frontier. To ratchet the cost up of that initial action limited war from limited objectives is the answer. I think that land forces have an incredibly important role in that. I think the deterrent value of land forces is something that we undervalue at our peril because what we could in fact do by not recognizing how important it is to have land force as a part of that is that you could make really dangerous and costly conflict more likely.

So I think that that is a broad observation that's relevant to maintaining security and stability not just in Europe but you could say in Asia as well.

**DWG:** Last time you were here you had written *Dereliction of Duty*. I wanted to ask you whether a sequel could be written based on Iraq. George W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Lies that led to Iraq. Is there a sequel on that?

**LTG McMaster:** Thanks for that question, I appreciate that. [Laughter].

I think history is best explained by a unique interaction, and I write this in the conclusion I think, a unique interaction of personalities and circumstances. Right? So I think one of the problems we have sometimes are simplistic historical analogies. Sometimes it's better, I mean I think it would be better if we knew no history sometimes than people who shop around for the historical analogy that allows them to make the point they want to make contemporaneously.

So I think the same case is true in Iraq. I do not believe, for example, that there was a deliberate effort to deceive the American public in the decisions that led up to Iraq. That doesn't mean those decisions were right --

**DWG:** That led up to --

**LTG McMaster:** That led up to the intervention in Iraq. If you take the public statements of President Clinton, for example vis-à-vis Iraq and ask somebody, hey who made this statement? Everybody would say it was President Bush, right? So this was a misunderstanding, maybe of the degree to -- Of course it turns out in recent weeks of course they [added] as well, with the chemical weapons and so forth. But I think, was it a wise decision? I think certainly there can be books written about that. It was the kind of deception you saw in the run-up to the Vietnam War in which President Johnson was mainly concerned with preventing Congress from having a say in the decision to go to war, essentially.

**DWG:** The Joint Chiefs, according to your book.

**LTG McMaster:** And what the Chiefs did in this period of time, during the Vietnam War, is that they took essentially a foot in the door approach to the war, and endeavored mainly to get the first bombing runs on, get the first troops deployed, and then to argue over time for the degree or effort and more resolute military action they thought would be necessary. So they compromised sort of principle for expediency and helped to [mask] some long term costs and consequences of the decisions.

**DWG:** Do you think we did that to go into Iraq? Shinseki --

**LTG McMaster:** I think it's pretty clear that the planning for the war in Iraq was inadequate, and I believe that that was an intellectual failure more than it was a failure of dishonesty. So for example, you can I think clearly ask in retrospect how can you endeavor to collapse the regime of Saddam Hussein and not plan for the actions necessary to consolidate those gains and to secure it. Right? And again, Conrad Crain and Andy Terrell wrote this pamphlet in March of 2003, this was a quick sort of summary of previous campaigns that were analogous to what we're about to do in Iraq and said hey, make sure that your war plans consider these things they're going to have to do. And the plans were obviously inadequate to do that.

I think they were unrealistically sanguine and they were unrealistically sanguine because we neglected continuities in the nature of war. And this is the biggest danger I think as we think about future armored conflict, is that oftentimes we as Americans, I think we think about change. Change in the character of warfare because we tend to take an engineering approach to things, right? We tend to think that there are technological solutions to the problems that we face. It's part of American progressivism. I mean it's part of our strengths as a culture. It's our optimism that grows out of the industrial revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This kind of thinking is you know, current wars [inaudible] hard and difficult and complex. And at times lengthy and so forth. But man, the next war, the next war's going to be great. It's going to be fast, cheap and efficient and we'll be able to solve it with technology.

So we have to guard against that. The best guard against that is to pay attention to continuity and change. What Carl Becker said. He said the memory of the past and the anticipation of the future have to walk hand in hand in a happy way. So the memory of the past for war is war is an extension of politics. That's what we ought to cover and what you guys write about that I think is so important is, what are we trying to achieve politically? How do you get to sustainable political outcomes? War is profoundly human, right? People fight for the same reasons Thucydides identified 2500 years ago - - fear, honor and interest. What is our understanding of the drivers of conflict, and how can we effect those drivers of conflict? War is profoundly uncertain. The future course of events depends not just on what we want to do but on determined enemies, right? This continuous interaction with the enemy. Finally, war is a contest of wills. I think the last of these gets to the question of our national will and understanding who we're fighting, what is at stake.

It also has to do with, you know, I think understanding our enemies and that really war, each side tries to outdo the other. So we ought to fight to win and I think we're at risk

sometimes of under-valuing victory. I don't mean this in a MacArthuresque sort of lifting of all restrictions on the application of force or rarely, obviously, can you track progress in accomplishing your political aims by tracking the Army's progress across a map to an enemy capital. But what this means is a rational determination to achieve an outcome, a sustainable outcome, consistent with your vital interests. So I think that determination is an important lesson.

So I would say lessons of recent armed conflict are that the continuities of war still apply, and that we have to recognize both continuity and change.

When we think about future war in this, we look at war through the lens of four sort of lenses. The first are threats, enemies and adversaries in the operating environment. Remember the old capabilities based? I think we just need to be capabilities based and we just need to think about how bad we want to be in the future. Then the most hubristic language, we were going to lock the enemy out of the market of future conflict. Remember that kind of language? We were going to be so damn good nobody would even mess with us. But we have to consider, I think, threats, enemies and adversaries in the operating environment, a lot of which we've talked about here, so-called hybrid threats. What we see Russia doing in terms of hybrid warfare, state and non-state actors, all those things.

**DWG:** So is that a [shortcut] in the Iraq planning going on?

**LTG McMaster:** Oh yeah, yeah. Absolutely.

**DWG:** -- a book.

**LTG McMaster:** Sure, there are going to be a lot of books I think. I think so. But the key is, will we learn the lessons. I'm skeptical about it. I think already we're creating fallacies in our minds about future war, which defines future war as we'd like it to be rather than as it is. And we're treating, I think increasingly, if we treat Afghanistan and Iraq as unique, then I think that's a danger. I think we have to look at the war to look at the right lessons. Otherwise what we'll do is we'll create a misunderstanding of those wars, we'll apply that to the future, we could build vulnerabilities into our force.

**DWG:** We're out of time. We do thank you for coming in, sir.

**LTG McMaster:** Thanks a lot. Sorry I gave too long of answers to your questions. I get kind of carried away. Thanks to all you guys.

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