

General James C. McConville
Chief of Staff of the United States Army

Defense Writers Group
Project for Media and National Security
George Washington School of Media and Public Affairs

11 March 2021

DWG: We're honored today to have as our special guest for the Defense Writers Group session this afternoon General James C. McConville who's Chief of Staff, as you know, of the United States Army. General, it's very good of you to join us. Thank you for taking the time.

General McConville: It's great to be here, David.

DWG: There will be a lot more perhaps serious and detailed questions than I've got, and this may seem lightweight, but in some ways it isn't. You're the Chief who has made one of the mantras of the U.S. Army to be People First. The question I want to ask you comes sort of under that rubric, if you will, so forgive me for going slightly off to the left here. But Fox News anchor Tucker Carlson on Tuesday night complained on the air about what he called the feminization of the U.S. military. He said we've got new hairstyles, we've got maternity flight suits, pregnant women are going to fight our wars for us, it's a mockery of the U.S. military was what he said. I thought I'd just start by giving you a chance to react to that comment.

General McConville: What I would say is, I'm extremely proud of the 185,000 women who serve with distinction every single day in the United States Army. And there have been millions who have served over the past. And if you think about every single conflict since the Revolutionary War, there have been women serving our country. And I just think it's insulting to those women to have a comment like that.

I was a brigade commander in the 1st Cav Division in Iraq in 2004. There was an outpost in Najaf being overrun. We dispatched a team of Apaches that came down there and basically saved this outpost that was being overrun and that team of Apaches was led by CW2 Sidney Roselle. And I don't remember anyone questioning her gender after she saved their lives. And there's tons of stories that can be told like that. I'm just very, very proud of all the women that serve in the Army including those in my

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family.

DWG: You have a daughter in the military, I understand.

General McConville: I do.

DWG: With that, let's get to the questions of the members. There's a very large signup, you're very popular. Many more people that we're going to be able to get questions in the hour that we have from you. But Ashley Roque with Janes is first in line, and Travis Tritten will be next.

DWG: Hi, General. I hope you're well and enjoying the beautiful weather. I wanted to ask two housekeeping questions. One is a follow-up. Over the past few years the Army, specifically former Secretary Ryan McCarthy, and Esper before him had mentioned the Multi-Domain Task Force and sort of looking at different options in the Indo-Pacific, potentially basing some in Japan, possibly the Senkaku Islands. I wanted to sort of get an update on where that stands, particularly the islands.

General McConville: First off, just what is the Multi-Domain Task Force on the islands? We're not ready to say where it's going to actually be stationed, but what it is operating and being deployed throughout the Indo-Pacific right now. What it is, it's an organization that's going to provide long-range precision effects and long-range precision fires. And we are building it while we're flying it, so to speak.

So the long-range precision effects that it's going to provide is certainly, it's got an intelligence capability, it's got an information operations capability, it's got a cyber capability, it's got electronic warfare capability, and then it has a space capability.

It also has a long-range precision fires capability that we're developing that can range anywhere from hypersonic missiles to mid-range capability, to precision strike missiles and these systems have the ability to penetrate an Anti-Access Aerial Denial environment. They have the capability in the future to sink ships. Also there may be some type of air and missile defense capability that goes along with that capability.

So that is a task force. It's not prescribed. We see the future of that being in the Pacific, probably two in the Pacific; we see

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one in Europe; and we're building them as we speak.

DWG: Just to follow-up, thank you. Could you sort of walk us through where you guys currently stand on deciding and announcing where these will be [inaudible] and sort of what are some of the ongoing talks with partners in the region about this issue.

General McConville: We're in the process, the Secretary of Defense is out there, we've got a new administration, there's a lot of diplomacy going on and we're waiting for that diplomacy to work its way out. Then security or the military will be in support of that diplomacy with the new administration. So we're giving them an opportunity to have those discussions and I think that will drive where the final end state of this organization is.

DWG: Forgive me if in some cases I call on people who aren't on the line because I cannot see if people are on the telephone line rather than on Zoom.

Travis Tritten of Bloomberg, are you on? If so, would you like to ask a question? I don't see you.

How about Paul Shinkman of U.S. News. I also don't see him.

DWG: I'm here. Hi, General.

I've got a question about the Quad meeting tomorrow but I wanted to first follow up on the Tucker Carlson business. I've seen a lot of fallout since he made his monologue and then subsequent criticism from you and your colleagues about why his program is still being carried on the American Forces Network.

I know by doctrine why it is, but I wonder if you have any concerns about that now. Whether in this era of political hyper partisanship and perhaps even bordering on extremism, do you have any concerns about that?

General McConville: I don't.

DWG: Going back to the meeting tomorrow, can you give me a sense of what the Army would like to see come from the Quad, come from this relatively loose arrangement of countries and what it might turn into in the future? Do you see this turning into a Southeast Asian version of NATO for example? Are there specific

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things you'd like to see begin to take place? More intelligence sharing, interoperability, that kind of thing?

General McConville: I kind of believe in the peace through strength. There's a lot of discussion about great power competition, great power competition with China and what I believe is, first of all, we don't want great power conflict. What we really need is great power coexistence and we have to figure out what that looks like. I'm kind of an advocate of peace through strength, and that peace through strength comes from a whole of government approach, it comes from a very strong military, it comes from a very strong Army, and it comes from - which I think is extremely important, which I think the Quad kind of plays into, is very strong allies and partners.

I've spent a lot of time in the Pacific working with those partners. The Australians are very close, the Japanese very close. We've done certainly calls with the Indians. I think what we all want is a free and open Indo-Pacific. We want stability in the region. I think many believe the way you get there is through strength and that strength comes from a whole of government effect and it comes from strong allies and partners.

DWG: But are there specific things that you think are lacking right now that could achieve that goal? More fusion centers, for example, to make sure that you're coordinating with one another's militaries more closely?

General McConville: I think we're working really closely with a lot of the militaries out there. One of the organizations we haven't talked about is our Security Force Assistance Brigades that were put out there. Some people say what's the difference between them and Special Forces? Well, they work with the conventional forces in a country and by the fact that they're working very, very closely it gives us that capability to have much better interoperability. We've had the Thais have come to our Combat Training Centers with the Security Force Assistance Brigade; the Indonesians have come there; the Koreans have come here. A lot of the forces out there were doing exercises together. We're working very, very closely together and I think this is very, very important for building those type relations.

The other thing I've learned in this job is the importance of our International Military Education and Training. What I've found with a lot of the senior leaders out there, and many of the

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senior leaders in these countries are Army officers so there is a lot of opportunity there to collaborate with them. But those who have gone to our schools, especially Command and General Staff Colleges and War Colleges, really have a profound appreciation for our values and how we operate and have been very instrumental in quite frankly trying to get their junior officers and non-commissioned officers through our schools, through our training events and I think that's very, very important.

DWG: Sydney Freedberg, Breaking Defense. Then Haley Britzky.

DWG: Thank you very much.

There's been talk for budgetary bloodletting, there's been talk of new roles and missions evaluations, and one of the things that gets a lot of attention is the Army's new emphasis on strategic fires. You mentioned them in the long-range fires aspect that are so crucial for Multi-Domain Task Force, especially the hypersonics, the mid-range ability, the longer-range weapons. Some argue that's redundant to or competitive with existing airstrike capability from the other services. Others would argue they're complementary. What's your case for why the Army has a unique contribution to make in the land-based long-range fires? Especially in the Indo-Pacific theater?

General McConville: What we want to do as a service is provide the combatant commander, and really it's a global campaign right now, these multiple options. What do I mean by multiple options? Certainly our Navy has incredible capabilities; our Air Force has incredible capabilities; our Marine Corps. We're all together in the Joint Force.

What you want to do is provide the COCOM commander multiple capabilities. What that does to our adversaries in a deterrence mode is provide multiple [inaudible]. There's a lot of discussion. The term of the day is Anti-Access Aerial Denial. In order to do that you have to penetrate. You have to penetrate that capability. That's one of the things we provide with long-range distributed fires. If someone's saying hey wait a minute, this is something new for the Army, I would suggest if you go back to Desert Storm and you take a look at the opening shots of Desert Storm, there was a penetration mission done to basically penetrate that air defense system that was up. It was done by Army Apache helicopters. Two companies led by then Lieutenant Colonel Dick Cody. They took out those two kind of air defense

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systems that opened up the gap and allowed the Air Force to go on and do the incredible things, and the air forces to do those incredible things that they do.

I would argue we wouldn't do that today, but we might do it differently. So some of the concepts that we think we're going to need in the future, the ability to maybe suppress air defense, and we're going to do it maybe from a strategic range, is going to put more challenges on a potential competitor. The ability to set up our own Area Denial Anti-Access capability is going to put pressure on those who are developing a sea-based capability.

So I see a lot of options. And when we see what this costs, the cost is fairly reasonable for the capability that's going to be brought, provide.

DWG: What does land-based give you that is different from, not just sort of additive to a bomber or a fighter with a missile slung underneath it?

General McConville: I would say the value of land-based is, first of all, it's 24x7. It's always there. It's tough to sink. Some of the island there, you know, if you have the ability for mobility to do that and you're in a position to move.

Again we have great capabilities in our Navy, great capabilities in our Air Force. What we're doing is providing an option that may in the future enable both air and maritime maneuver which is something different than we've done in the past, although you could argue we did that in Desert Storm.

DWG: Haley Britzky of Task & Purpose, and Kyle Rempfer will be next.

DWG: Thank you, and thank you sir for doing this.

I was wondering if you could give us an update about, last year it was announced that 14 leaders at Fort Hood were being relieved or suspended. I know that we saw that General Efflandt was being reassigned. But can you give us an update on what has been decided with the other 13?

General McConville: That's going to come out very shortly. The commander that had the - General Garrett who is orchestrating or directed the 15-6 and the investigation that went on, he heads

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the investigation. There's due process going on between those who were suspended. And it takes some time because they have a chance to come back and give matters on their behalf and that may change some of the things.

But I think the first part of that should be coming out in a couple of weeks.

DWG: I was wondering if you could also talk to us a bit more about in the People First vein, what progress has the Army made thus far in improving the SHARP program? What actual steps have been taken and what changes have been done to improve that program?

General McConville: We've been talking about this People First and really part of that, what we're trying to do is really get after three behaviors that we're trying to prevent. The number one behavior we're trying to prevent is sexual harassment/sexual assault. We're trying to prevent suicides that happen in the force. And we're trying to prevent racism and extremism in the force. So that came out long before and we're putting in place the systems to get after it.

One of the key systems that we're taking a look at, and we learned this from Fort Hood, is the value of independent review and the value of holding leaders responsible.

One of the processes we've put in place was a Battalion Commander Assessment Program; a Colonel's Commander Assessment Program. We're doing the same thing with the Sergeant Majors and we're doing the same thing with our First Sergeants.

So where before we would just do a paper review of their files to see if they were appropriate to lead or command, now we actually do what would be very similar to a professional football combine. They come in for five days and they try out. It's not just physical fitness. There's a lot more to that.

But one of the key aspects of that is we use surveys that go out to the people, their subordinates and their peers and they don't know who we're going to, and we're asking questions like what type of environment or command climate or culture do they set in their unit? This is helpful in determining a leader's truly getting after sexual harassment/sexual assault? Are they truly getting after racism and extremism in their formations? And the

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Sergeant Major's been very, very aggressive in really focusing this process down to the squad. He talks about this is my squad. And what it really comes down to is, when we looked at where most of the problems occur in the United States Army it's with our 17-24 year old young soldiers that come into the Army, they come off wherever they came from and they bring the culture or climate that they come from. And quite frankly, we have to change that in many and we have to make sure they understand that there's no room in our Army for sexual harassment, sexual assault. There's no room in our Army for racism or extremism. And we're putting things in place.

We're doing some pilots right now where we have an independent review team going out to a unit, doing a survey of the entire unit, getting a sense of what is actually going down at the outcome level. We've done investigations before, but the investigations were more along the line of how compliant are you with how many sexual response coordinators do you have? Have they been to the training? These things.

These mechanisms are designed to get into the culture and to get into the climate and then we can actually get after that.

DWG: Kyle Rempfer of Army Times, do you have a question? And after you will be Jackson Barnett.

DWG: I do, yes.

General McConville, I was wondering in light of the Fort Hood report there have been some proposals to reform Army CID and in particular to mold it into like an independent organization with civilian leadership rather than military police. Similar to naval criminal investigation.

My question for you, where do those proposals stand now, and can you give any insight into which way it's leaning?

General McConville: We're taking a look at it right now. I think you've written about this. There's opinions on both sides on where to go. The Secretary and I want to get the best results for our soldiers. At Fort Hood we learned that we needed to have more investigators.

One of the things that we're coming up with, even with the sexual harassment/sexual assault, is make sure we have the right level

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of expertise, especially on the sexual harassment side. Because we tend to do those as administrative type investigations.

I think it's very, very important that when we have sexual harassment, we have sexual assault, we have any type of racism, extremism. We have the right investigators that can really have the skill sets to get after that.

What we're looking at right now, what's the best way to do that? It may not be just make it all civilianized, and it may not be making it all military. It may be a hybrid in there. But we're not ready to make that final decision and we have some more work to do. But the end state is to get the best law enforcement in place so we can hold people accountable for these [inaudible] behaviors that are in the Army.

DWG: You had mentioned earlier like the value of independent review and that's something you guys learned from the Fort Hood report. My understanding is a lot of proposals with reforming CID are being drafted and looked at by people within CID chain of command like Military Police Corps. Do you think there's any need for like an independent review of CID in order to come to a better conclusion of how to organize it in the future?

General McConville: I don't think it hurts to have people taking a look outside the organization. Sometimes it's very hard to change if you're part of the system. A lot of stuff we're doing in talent management came about because - I was the G1 but I'd never had a battalion S1 job, a personnel job so I wasn't necessarily tied to the system. So there is some value in having an outside look at some of these type things. We've just got to bring that together and see the best way to do that.

DWG: Jackson Barnette of FedScoop, if you have a question you're next. After that, Michael Gordon.

DWG: Thank you very much.

A question on robotic vehicles and some emerging technologies. How are you talking with senior officers that are not necessarily involved in developing the technology or say working out at Army Futures Command or the like? But those who are going to have to be using these technologies and operationalizing them, putting them into the mission space. Are you preparing them to lead exercises on building trust with AI driven machine and just

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getting them integrated into how their battle rhythm - what is that conversation like? What is how your message for those are developing but going to be operationalizing technology?

General McConville: It's interesting. I see a lot of enthusiasm for moving to technology. The 18th Airborne Corps has done some very innovative things with artificial intelligence. In fact most of the commanders are very involved in the process. They understand what we're doing with convergence, they understand where we're going with artificial intelligence.

The way we're doing the acquisition process is very different. Rather than - the old days the way we used to do it is we would spend five or seven years coming up with a requirement and then produce the requirement and it would be a very prescriptive document, probably going off the roof here, you know, 6 or 7 feet high. We would hand that over to our acquisition professionals. They would go out with the traditional industry members and they would figure out how to do it.

Now what we're doing is we're going out with characteristics. Hey, we want something that does this. Come back and give us a white paper. A hundred people may come back, we'll get some non-traditional companies coming in to do that, we bring it down to maybe 10, and they come back with a design, we bring it down to five with the design. Then we start putting soldiers on these systems and they're out there training with them and they get an opportunity to actually get it to where they want, and we find this very, very helpful. For the leaders, they have to do it. The young men and women that are there are really excited about it. We're getting ready to stand up a software factory. We have young men and women writing software on the battlefield during Project Convergence because that's what we're going to have to do to get the speed, range and convergence that we need for precision dominance which really we see as the future warfighting overmatch concept.

So that is all coming together. I think many of our leaders, if they don't know they're learning very, very fast. But they are seeing the technology, they're seeing these new units that are not completely built. We talked about the Multi-Domain Task Force. We're in a campaign of learning but we're starting to employ that organization before it's completely built.

DWG: If I can just follow up on the 18th Airborne Corps. I've

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spoken with some people down there and I've seen some of the work they're doing with kind of the Dragon Flare Initiative for new apps. But there's only been a handful of new apps for things like booking ranges. They've sent about a dozen or so I believe soldiers through different internships on data science. Where a group of soldiers the size of a corps, is that enough? Are you satisfied with that? Do you want to see that sort of thing being replicated in other corps? How are you measuring some of their success down there?

General McConville: What we're trying to do is we're a big Army and we're just trying to keep - we want speed in delivering systems but at the same time we want to make sure that the systems can talk to each other. One of the biggest things that's going on in the services is the Joint All Domain Command and Control. We've actually added Combined Joint All Domain Command and Control. And [inaudible] as convergence and working with the Air Force and the future we see machine-to-machine data exchange is going to be really important. That's where you really get the speed. That's where we found out Project Convergence, the ability to have multiple sensors whether from all the joint services tied together in bringing those targets back into some type of artificial intelligence capability. And that artificial capability begins to move so fast you quickly get to lethal effects that we found in Project Convergence. That is what we see in the future and that's where we see we're going to get the overmatch.

What we want to do is make sure that if we build these systems they tie in. You don't want to build a system that doesn't fit. So we're trying to do that. We're trying to - we want disciplined initiative out there. But we don't want to have - we've got to keep everyone within the same box so at the end all the systems come together the way we need them for convergence.

DWG: Michael Gordon of the Wall Street Journal. And Mandy Mayfield, you'll be next.

DWG: Sir, sort of a two-part question. Pinging off David Ensor's initial question, as I recollect your background, your wife was in the Army and your daughter is still serving. Can you just tell us what rank your daughter is and what her specialty is? And do you have any other female extended family members who are serving in the Army?

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General McConville: My daughter is a clinical social worker in the Army. My wife was a captain when she got out. She's a dietician. And just for those out here, that's better than buying a gym pass is have a dietician as a wife. As far as other women in my family, my two great aunts drove trucks in the Pacific theater during World War II.

DWG: And what rank's your daughter please?

General McConville: My daughter's a captain.

DWG: My question is given the ambitious modernization agenda that you have and the long-range fires and Project Convergence and all this other programs that the Army's pursuing, and given a realistic budget environment, are you going to need to trim end strength to pay for this modernization? And how are you going to make these decisions? How are you going about making that? What factors are you going to consider? And when are you going to make these decisions?

General McConville: We take a look at end strength. We actually had plans to grow the Army to a much larger amount. So we're sitting right now, it's a little over a million for the total force, but for active duty it's 485,000. So 485,000 is where we stand right now.

You go back 20 years ago before 9/11, the strength of the active duty Army regular Army was 485,000. So we have basically the size of the force that we went into OIF and OEF into Iraq and Afghanistan. And we quickly had to grow that force to 570,000 and we had to bring in about 150,000 National Guard and Reservists on active duty to get to about 720,000 and we were still extending our soldiers for 15 month rotations.

So when we talk about end strength I have concerns about cutting end strength because of what I see the stress in the force right now. If we're going to cut end strength then we need to take a hard look at what we do not want the Army to do.

Then you take a look at modernization. We've done a lot to move money into the modernization. Billions of dollars, very judicious moving over into our modernization priorities.

From where I sit and what I believe is the Army must transform about every 40 years. We did it in 1940 when General Marshall

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sat in my seat. He often talked about when he had the time he didn't have the money; then when he had the money he didn't have the time. Then we did it in really 1980, quite frankly, when I came in the Army. Army graduation speech President Reagan spoke and he talked about peace through strength. And most of the systems that we have were built up during that time frame. They might have been developed earlier, but there was that contribution. So if you look at the tank, the Bradley, the Apache Helicopter, the Black Hawk, the [inaudible], all those systems were built up in the 1980s and were incrementally improved over the last 40 years.

So I take a look around the world and I take a look at what China's doing, I take a look at what Russia's doing and I see the threat from Iran, I see the threat from North Korea, and violent extremists haven't gone away.

I believe that we must transform the Army right now and we must come up with new doctrine that's going to recognize that we're going to be contested in all domains in the future. Not just on the land but also in the air, the sea, and space and cyber. So we need to develop the force to do that. We need to develop organizations that are going to do that. And we've got to bring in the systems that are going to give us the speed, the range and the convergence to get precision dominance, and I believe I must do that right now for those that are going to follow me. So the young men and women that are coming in the Army five or ten years from now are not using 50 year old doctrine and 50 year old equipment.

DWG: So the answer is you're not planning to trim end strength.

General McConville: That is not my intent.

DWG: Mandy Mayfield of National Defense Magazine. And then Ellen Milhiser.

DWG: I don't have a question today. Thanks, General.

DWG: Ellen Milhiser of Synopsis, do you have a question?

DWG: Thank you, sir, for meeting with us today. You've answered my questions. Thank you so much.

DWG: Tara Copp of McClatchy? Do you have a question?

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DWG: Yes, thank you very much.

General McConville, I'm wondering about the June investigation the Army launched into the National Guard response to Lafayette Park. It's been eight months and that report still hasn't been released. The IG's office is done with it. They said that it's in the Army's hands and it's up to the Army to release it.

Are you committed to making that report public? And why the delay?

General McConville: I think it's just, at least what I've been told, it just came out of DoD IG and we're in the process of [forwarding it on].

DWG: As a follow-up, will you all commit to doing a briefing about that report and the lessons learned that have come from that?

General McConville: Sure.

DWG: Thank you very much.

DWG: George Seffers of Signal Magazine? Do you have a question? And Michelle Tan will be next.

Okay, Michelle Tan of Army Magazine? Are you on and do you have a question?

How about Robert [Copiter] of Combat Aircraft Journal?

DWG: I'd appreciate any update, information on the Future Vertical Lift program. Thanks.

General McConville: We're very pleased with the Future Vertical Lift program so far. We have two major categories of aircraft. The future long-range assault aircraft and a future attack reconnaissance aircraft. And assault aircraft really replace helicopters because of the speed and range that these aircraft are going to bring to the formation. As we stop to look around the world, speed and range really matters in employing these type of aircraft. So the future long-range assault aircraft. The aircraft - we've down-selected the two final competitors and are in the process of bringing those aircraft together. They're

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going through the flight test and there will basically be a fly-off and the same thing is happening with the future attack reconnaissance aircraft. They are moving very quickly to bring those new capabilities to the force we can down-select and get to a final decision.

DWG: Dennis Haglan of PBS News Hour? And Katie Bo Williams will be next.

DWG: Thanks. I've got a question about sexual assault and the UCMJ. Do you think it's a good idea that when soldiers are found to have committed sexual assault and a determination has been made to kick them out, that when it comes to the sentencing phase very often they're retained. What's the message that sends? And would you like Congress to change the UCMJ so that doesn't happen?

General McConville: I believe we should hold people responsible for sexual assault. I'd have to take a look at the case to say that they were going to be put out of the Army or not put out of the Army, but from where I sit, there's no room for sexual harassment or sexual assault in the Army. I do trust our commanders. I do believe, though, that there is a role for an independent review capability within the Army. I don't believe it should be outside the Army. But I think there's value in at a certain level of the chain of command in having an independent capability to look at that.

We do that in Army aviation. We have the Army Aviation Safety Center that comes down and handles those tough cases with the expertise that we need to get after those type problem sets.

One thing I've learned, having been in aviation for 40 years, our safety records are the best they've ever been compared to when I first started flying in the 1980s because we have a very robust after-action safety capability and investigators can come in and really take a hard look at what happened with the expertise to say hey, this was a maintenance issue, this was a pilot issue, this was a command issue or all the above.

I think there's some value, in fact that's one of our pilots that we're looking at is how do we get that system in place with the right expertise.

DWG: So what's the message when people are found to have

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committed sexual assault, it's been determined that they should be kicked out, but at the sentencing phase they're retained. What's the message that sends when that happens? I've spoken to a lot of women and that's, this is not an isolated case.

General McConville: I'd be glad to take a look at the case. Again, the judge made a sentencing, is that what you're talking about? It went to a court martial?

DWG: No, they did not go to a court martial. They did not go to a court martial, it was handled as non-judicial punishment. And I don't have just one example in mind, I've got many examples in mind where this is a systemic issue, where it's been handled as non-judicial punishment, there were determinations made to kick them out, they've admitted to the incident, and then it gets to the sentencing phase and it's like oh, the decision is reversed.

General McConville: I'd have to take a look at the case.

DWG: Katie Bo Williams?

DWG: General, thank you.

We have been really directed by OSD towards the services for sort of better data on service members who are declining to take the COVID-19 vaccine and so I'm wondering whether or not you can sort of shed any more light on any kind of clarity around both sort of acceptance decisions and decisions to decline and sort of how you're thinking through that problem right now.

General McConville: I want everyone to take it. I've taken it. Our intent is to get it into as many arms as we can. As you all know, we can't force people to take it, but what we're looking at is with the team, we want everyone to get it because we really are in a situation where we can't telecommute to our jobs in combat and our training, so we've got to have the whole force vaccinated. We need to do that. We're spending a lot of time with our doctors getting out there and our medical professionals, showing them that it's okay. Some people are kind of waiting to see how it goes. We are putting shots in arms as fast as we can get them in there.

So if someone decides they don't want it right away, they move off the line and we put it in someone else's arm and we're having people come around and get it later.

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That's where we're at right now. There are a certain amount of young people out there that seem to think that they would like to wait and see. For our critical civilian workers, most of the older ones have taken it at a very, very high rate, so we have some education that we need to do and maybe even incentives as far as masks and those things when we get a little better guidance from both the Secretary of Defense's office and CDC on how we're going to operate in this environment once we have a majority of the people that are vaccinated.

DWG: Are you tracking specific numbers for like this is the percentage of people that are declining it? And are you sort of categorizing that at all in terms of why people are choosing not to do it, number one? And number two, is there any further discussion of potentially making this mandatory either now or down the road?

General McConville: I think what will happen is, if it becomes a non-emergency type vaccination that changes the rules. I don't think we're there yet and I don't have exactly an idea of when that's going to happen. We vaccinate all the time and we do it mandatory all the time, so that's not new to the Army. When you say exact numbers, some of it's anecdotal. I mean folks throw around this percentage or that percentage. I have some hard numbers but they're very very small. I think it's actually more than that, and I think that would be helpful, because the numbers that are hard no's are kind of small. So we do track hard, hard no's but those numbers are very, very small. Again, from what I get from commanders, we don't have enough to go around completely yet and it's probably not helpful to speculate on if they actually have a shot at it will they take it or not.

So we have some work to do on that. I think in a month we'll have a better idea of what the hard no's are and we'll be in a better position to have that discussion.

DWG: Dan Lamothe of the Washington Post, and Kaitlin Kinney you're next.

DWG: Thanks for your time today.

There's a pretty vigorous conversation in the Army right now about the ACFT and whether it's fair to women. I wonder if you've seen Captain Kristen Griest's recent piece raising alarm

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about the discussion of gender specific scoring, the backlash to that piece as well. And then more broadly, where do you see this review of the ACFT going this year? I know it's still ongoing, but it sounded like there were a couple of flex points.

General McConville: There are concerns about the Army Combat Fitness Test. It's been coming along for a couple of years. The intent behind it is to improve the overall fitness of the Army. And it's been done by science. But as I became the Chief, I want to make sure that we don't put a fitness test in place that disenfranchises a critical portion of our force. And there was a lot of concerns, specially from some of our mid-range female soldiers on the knee tuck. So one of the modifications that was made is the plank has been substituted for the knee tuck and that's put in place with - and I think we're in a much better place as far as when people see - when they take a look at the events, that's going to change how we actually do the test.

The feedback I'm getting now is with the opportunity to do the plank, a lot of the concerns have been somewhat - there's still concerns out there, but that's changed.

Now the other question that came up that Captain Griest brought up, and she's a terrific officer in our Army. Very very proud of her. She went through the first Ranger graduate and that was an incredible accomplishment. I've just got tremendous respect for her.

Where she's coming from is hey, I want to compete straight up. I went to Ranger School. I don't want an asterisk. And she has, she has met the standards. She wants to come in and do those type things.

But I think we'll go to the future, and I'm big in this talent management, there's certain branches that really, this should be a driver. When you take a look at how we look at our branches in the Army. Knowledge, skills and behavior. First of all we want everyone to be fit, but what jobs are more important? If you're a light infantry person in a Ranger battalion, this fitness is really important. So there's no other way around it. You're carrying 100 pounds into combat, you're doing something like that. You've got to be able to do those type things. If you're a cyber whiz, you may not have to have a 600 on the test. So maybe that shouldn't be as important when we're looking at you for further promotion. And what we're really going to in the

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Army, which is pretty transformational, is we're moving from an industrial age personnel management system to a 21st century talent management system. So we manage each individual by their talent. They may have 25 of them vice you're a captain of infantry or you're a sergeant of engineers. If you're a level 6 cyber person we're going to promote you and incentivize you. I have a great soldier that's a sergeant, one of the best in the world in cyber. And he happens to be a sergeant. So you have a sergeant who's the best in the world in cyber or pretty close to it and a sergeant who's also in the cyber force that's really good but not of that ilk. So how do we recognize those talents and compensate them for them?

That's where the Army's going in the future . There's a lot of discussion about - we don't want to disenfranchise any of these people in the Army and I want to make sure that doesn't happen. That's why we're rolling it out. That's why we're taking time. That's why we're thinking about it. That's why we made changes to the plank that people feel comfortable with.

The toughest thing is going to be, and I'm one of them, I'll be 62 in a week. I just took it. I took the thing. I can pass it but I'm not maxing that thing. You know? It's 600 points. I am not going to get the 20 knee tucks. It's just not going to happen. I'm going to try. I do it every night. But at the same time I don't want to slow down those Rangers because I can't do what I used to do 40 years ago. I'm not as good as I was 40 years ago.

So we're trying to find that sweet spot and that balance. We've made a lot of modifications and the Sergeant Major of the Army's kind of leading that effort. And we're very cognizant of what we want to try to do here.

We have rolled out an occupational physical assessment test in recruiting and when we first did it we were really concerned about it. One of the reasons we did it was for recruiting we wanted to get people to a certain level of fitness before they came in the Army because quite frankly, we don't want to hurt them. We want them to get to a certain level before we ship them off and what we found was when we first tested the soldiers in the Army on this occupational physical assessment test they did terrible. We were really worried about it. We said well, maybe we shouldn't use it because certain people had a much harder time. But once it became a requirement, now like 96 percent of

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both males and females pass it. They do very, very well. They come into the Army in much better shape. And I can't prove it but the 3 or 4 percent that probably didn't pass it probably would have got hurt and probably would have never got through the wicket.

So what we're trying to do, and we're talking March '22 when - people have two or three years to get on this. It's a great workout and we think it's going to help the force and we're going to tweak it so we don't disenfranchise a population when we put it in place.

DWG: When you say tweak it, in what regard? The scoring or different events? How would that work?

General McConville: First of all, if you look at the passing rates just to pass it. You're talking ten pushups. If you really look at one knee tuck or I mean what we want to do is get people on the program. The minimum standards are not that high.

What's going to come out is how we - the test will stay the same but how we score it for promotion, we'll come up with a [3-0] and it it's not quite out yet, although it is out and people have seen it because I think it's gotten out. But the intent will be to score people within gender by top five percent, top ten percent for your score. So you could be a top-performing person in a gender because of, and it won't inhibit your ability to move ahead. But the base test will be the same. It will just be how we score it base don gender is what we're looking at right now.

DWG: Kaitlin Kinney of Stars & Stripes, you're next. And Matthew Cox after you.

DWG: Following the support we've all kind of seen this week on social media in regards to women in the military after Mr. Carson's comment, especially from a lot of Army officers I've seen, I just wanted to hear from you when you really honestly think a woman will be chosen for your role as the Army Chief, and what more needs to be done to make that happen. Whether it's job opportunities or cultural changes on who should have the job. Thanks.

General McConville: We're starting to see - General Laura Richardson. She was my Deputy G3 in the 101st Airborne Division. The first woman to have that job. I selected her over two

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Rangers, Infantry Rangers going to battalion command because she had that capability. She's going to a COCOM Command which is a major step in what I think is the right direction. I'm an incredible supporter. I've known her and her husband for years. She's got the right credentials. She's a combat arms officer. She's an aviator. I'm the first aviator that ever became the Chief of Staff of the Army, so things are changing. I think we'll have, as the Army changes and things that we may not think are that important. Right now we have a four-star cyber commander because that became important. WE have a four-star space commander because that became important. I think as we move into the future, in some ways the Army will look to its core - and core is land combat. That's why it tends to be Infantry, Armor and Artillery tend to be the Chief of Staff of the Army, but that's not necessary for the future. I think a person with the right talents. And that's where we're going in this talent management business.

The other thing we're doing is we're actually competing for talent. We're doing a lot of things in place. As we take a look at first of all, bringing extraordinary young women into the military, whether that's at West Point or ROTC. There's 240 women in the class at West Point. Not that West Point is the only place to go, but that is one of the key commissioning sources. I was in the second class at West Point. Two women from my high school went there and they inspired me. One of them wrote a book called *Tough as Nails* and inspired me really to stay and serve.

I think women have come a long way in the Army. My daughter has to deal with this too, and I'm working with troops. How do you work the family business? I think what we have to do is we have to compete for that talent. One of the things we're doing in this talent management program we just rolled out, it's a pilot, is we're going to basically, usually we move people every two or three years. So we're trying to get to the point where you do your time as a lieutenant, you come to the captain's career course, we assess you, we take a look at you and you're someone that we really think has the potential to go much higher, we're specifically looking at high quality diversity officers. So how do we actually write a contract? Here's what you're going to do for the next eight years. And it may mean you're going to grad school, you're going to West Point, you're doing something like this and you can look at that and say I can actually have the predictability to start a family. I can make this work. So I'm

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not going to go get my MBA at Harvard. I think I'll stay with the Army and I'll go down this route.

So what we're trying to inculcate is we're in a war for talent and we're going after the best and brightest and we're going to do what it takes to keep them in the Army.

DWG: Thanks. Do you think with those changes, like how fast are they happening? Do you think that this is going to be like another generation or two? Twenty years? Ten years? Fifteen years? To really see enough women come up to be recommended for a role like yourself?

General McConville: I don't think it will be 20 years. I think if you take a look at General Richardson. Laura was a battalion commander in the 101st Airborne Division during the opening of OIF. So she actually flew one of the big air assaults. She was the commander for one of the big air assaults in Operation Iraqi Freedom. So probably right around 2003. So she was a lieutenant colonel in 2003. It takes you a few years longer to get there, so it takes some time. There are certain gates that people are going to expect you to go through and we're starting to see women coming up that are going to do that.

I can't speak about it now, because it's not released, but I do know what the next brigadier general's board looks like or the nominations that are coming up. I think that is going to be big step in the right direction.

DWG: Do we have time for two more questions, do you think? We do have time for one anyway, and that would be Matthew Cox of Military.com.

DWG: Thank you so much for doing this.

A lot has been written about the Pentagon's response to the January 6th riots at the Capitol. Last week Major General Walker testified about [inaudible] more detail. We've all heard about the more than three hours for him to get notification that he was authorized to go to the Capitol. What struck me, what surprised me and a lot of people was it took, one, he didn't have control over the QRF, the 40-member QRF was never big, but he had to have it approved and he also had to submit a ConOp, a concept of operations to get it approved.

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It took 30 minutes from the time that the SecDef authorized the DC Guard to go to the Capitol and for him to be notified that he was authorized to do it.

Can you just talk a little bit about what is the Army doing to look at this and kind of make sure it doesn't happen again?

General McConville: I think, as you probably know, there's a DoD IG going through the timeline. All the people that were intimately involved in that are going through the process to take a look at what happened.

I think one of the things that I would say, I would wait for the DoD IG to come out, but the other thing I'd take a look at is what happened on January 20th. Not too many people have written about that. I can give you some insights on that. First of all, lesson learned in having done a lot of operations. Here you had a lead federal agency. If you take a look at DC as a whole and you try to do analysis. And I'm not going to talk about the 6th, I'll let them do it. But I do want to talk in general because I've watched this over a couple of years.

There's 46 law enforcement agencies in Washington, DC. Forty-six. Under four Cabinet members, from Justice to Department of the Interior to Homeland Security. And then DoD has a really small part to play. And it's only supposed to be used in last resort. And after all federal forces and local forces and everyone else is exhausted.

But case in point, if you look at the 20th, and a lot of people are concerned about the 20th. There was a lead federal agency that was the Director of Homeland Security, but really it was the Secret Service. They had a very good integrated security plan. So I would say that anyone that's going to do anything security wise you need an integrated security plan [inaudible] the District. Not just for one place. They're all connected. And the military has no capability in fact we're prohibited from gathering any type of intelligence.

So the civilian - the FBI, they have the ability to get that. So you have the integrated security plan.

The other thing that allowed it to happen and we were able to support, there was a large interagency rehearsal done over at Fort Myer. The whole thing was laid out, all the different

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areas, all the different concerns and that was actually rehearsed between the interjencies. So all the different interagencies were there, all the leaders were there, they talked through contingencies, they talked through who's going to do what, where people are going to be, who is going to do what, what happens if this happens? Do you want people armed or not armed? Do you want people doing civil disturbance or not doing civil disturbance? And you also had a lot of federal forces come into the city to help out with security.

That also allowed us, what we did as a follow up for the National Guard, and it was 25,000 soldiers, was to bring all those leaders in and make them go through a rehearsal where we can put contingencies on them saying okay, how are you going to link up if something happens? What if this happens? What happens if you send the force and what is their task and purpose. What are they supposed to do when they get there? They also had the ability to put a lot of command and control in place. So it wasn't just sending 40 people or 100 people. It was a much better case as far as you can work the coordination out.

So I think there's a lot of good lessons that were learned from all these cases, but that's a pretty good model of what should happen. Lead federal agency. You rehearse it. You make sure everyone has a task and purpose. And you use as much local law enforcement, state law enforcement and federal law enforcement. The military's in a supporting role. It's only used I last resort.

DWG: As a follow-up, January 20th went off very smoothly because, like you said, there were 25,000 Guard troops there. And there were a lot of federal law enforcement there. You had a lot of rehearsals.

None of that was really done before January 6th, or at least very little was done as far as the pre-planning. Guard members were assigned to some traffic stops, but.

So are you saying that this kind of a thing should happen in the future any time the Guard is involved?

General McConville: I'm not going to talk about 6 January because that's under investigation. But what I would say is if you're going to commit forces, and I've committed forces all over the world and specifically in some pretty serious combat

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situations. Not that this is combat. But I believe you really want to have a plan. And you want to do as much as you can to make sure that that unit is being committed with the appropriate capability to conduct the tasks that you want them to do. Clearing a building in a very contested environment is something that only our most elite forces are trained to do. What I learned is, my experience is you should be very careful about putting, employing the military into situations that they may not be trained for or had that skill set, because sometimes you can make the situation even worse.

The other thing is the big call, and again a decision was made on the 20th, there were organizations that were determined that they would be armed and there were organizations that were set up in a civil defense mode who were not armed. They just were with riot gear and you really don't have them armed because you don't want someone to grab their weapon when they're doing riot [inaudible].

So you have to think your way through how you're going to employ those forces. My advice to leaders as they go through this process is the more you can do to plan ahead of time, the more you can do to rehearse, the better results will be when you get into a crisis mode.

DWG: General McConville, thank you very much. We've kept you a little over an hour and I don't think we should keep you any longer, but thank you very much. It's been a wide-ranging and fascinating conversation. I'm grateful to you and hope you'll do it again sometime with us.

General McConville: I'd just close where I started. I'm real proud of what our soldiers, what our civilians, what our families are doing. This is a very, very difficult time I know for everybody. And we've all got our masks. It's very difficult to do - a lot of times you study war and they always talk about the fog and friction of war and those type things. This has just made everything harder for everybody because everything you're doing, you're worried about the health and welfare of your people. It's just hard. People are not connected the same way they are.

But the fact that I've watched these incredible people deploy around the world, take their families to Korea, to Germany, and move them around the country and work their way through quarantines and still get the job done. I just think it's pretty

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amazing.

So I'm just proud of them, and thank you for taking a few minutes to listen to me, so thank you.

DWG: Thank you, sir.

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