

Hon. Ryan D. McCarthy  
Secretary of the Army

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**DWG:** Thank you very, very much for taking time, especially after being our for a dignified transfer so late last night.

A lot of interest, as always, in the Army and in what you have to say about it.

I remember the last time you were with us here at the Defense Writers Group you were the Acting Secretary, and then subsequently you reverted to being Under Secretary under the current Secretary of Defense. Now you are the Secretary of the Army. So it's been quite a ride already.

I wonder, before we get into the detailed questions, if you wouldn't reflect on that just a little bit. And if you were going to advise yourself with what you now know, what would be the first advice you'd give to an incoming Secretary of the Army today that you didn't know when you came to the Pentagon on the first day?

**Secretary McCarthy:** That would consume the breakfast, I think. The one thing I focus on every day, I always say every day's a math problem for me. No matter how efficient you are with your time, you've got to be ruthless in how you invest it. To look back on it is maybe to have spent maybe a little more time on the front end when you look at the men and women that you put right around you in your immediate orbit. You make adjustments. You rely so heavily on your military assistants. So it's how you adjust -- what I joke about is the distance between the Under and the Secretary's office is only about 20 yards maybe door to door, but it feels like an ocean. How do you make that adjustment and then how do you work the division of labor?

What I believe I've been very fortunate no is I have extraordinary teammates -- Mark Milley, Jim McConville, Jim Pasqualette that's sitting back here, and all of my military assistants.

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But more so than anything is just the skill sets you put right around you and how you utilize them every day because like I said before, even if you work 14 hours a day you can't get to it all. You're heavily reliant on the men and women to your left and right.

**DWG:** Let me get straight to questions. Ellen [Milheizer], Synopsis.

**DWG:** [Inaudible] health care. I'm aware of the fact that there's an internal memo going around [inaudible] looking to stop the transfer of military treatment facilities to DHA and also to retain medical research and logistics within the Army. Could you give me an idea as to why you want to stop this and what you think your chances of success might be? And what you've [gotten] from the Hill in relation to this?

**Secretary McCarthy:** Like all pieces of paper they grow legs in that building, huh? My concern, I think what you're referencing is a conversation I'm having with the Deputy Secretary of Defense related to what we call the merger of Defense Health Care to the Defense Health Agency. Like all mergers, it's about pacing. So you're bringing thousands of people and functions to one organization. Like all mergers and acquisitions there are cultural dynamics, there are synergies you try to achieve. And if you do it too fast you can make a mess.

This is the health care of our Soldiers and their families.

I was working for Robert Gates during the Walter Reed crisis. You harken back to that because what was happening then? You were merging the Walter Reed with Bethesda during the height of violence in the Iraq campaign. They made some terrible mistakes that affected the health care of wounded personnel.

So we, as I highlighted a few minutes ago, I was at a dignified transfer a few hours ago. We still have Soldiers in contact. We still have Soldiers getting wounded. So the health care of our people is one of the most important things that we do. So how we conduct this merger and understand the operating model of the Defense Health Agency, how you're going to transition the responsibility to them is incredibly important. And it's not altogether clear how that's coming together.

With respect to the research and logistics, we have the lab

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network, we have a massive organization. Our Materiel Command performed the logistics to move this capability and the execution arm of that work.

So more so than anything it was just a conversation about until we have clarity, it's hard to transition the MTF's responsibility. We still are a nation at war. We have 1.2 million people in uniform. This is just too important to get it wrong.

**DWG:** Some of the MCFs have already transferred. How do you see that working if you stop the transfers at this point?

**Secretary McCarthy:** I wouldn't say they're stopping the transfers. The pacing of the transfer. We're going to transfer. We're going to do this, it's the law. But it's the pace that you do it and how you do it is what's the gist of the memorandum that I sent.

**DWG:** Tony.

**DWG:** I wonder if you could elaborate a little bit on something that you talked about at Brookings the other, I guess last Friday. The MDO units. Can you go, I understand there's long-range fires, electronic warfare effect. That sort of thing. I wonder if you can go into any more detail about exercising and if there's a target date for actually deploying the first unit and that sort of thing. It's more about the concept and the timeline for it, becoming the reality.

**Secretary McCarthy:** The Multi-Domain Task Forces will be stood up over the next year, 18 months. We're going to have two of them stood up. The windows for deployment were, I'll keep it at a broad range because I don't want to highlight the specifics for operational security reasons.

The foundational elements -- intelligence, cyber, electronic warfare, long-range precision fires. Those are not only fires, but effects. Long-range capabilities. Because those types of capabilities are what we say can bring the inverse effects to anti-access area denial investments from near-peer competitors. So those long-range fires and effects, such capabilities form a tremendous deterrent but also capability to envelope combat operations to flow on other forces like maritime capability, like air assets. So it's a very unique capability for us to absorb

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terrain, battle space if you will, but also it is a capability that can be used in the initial phases of large ground scale combat operations.

**DWG:** Can you distinguish between long-range fires and long-range effects?

**Secretary McCarthy:** Long-range fires would be a precision strike missile like the ATACMS replacement. A munition that will hit a target and will explode. Long-range effects -- cyber, electronic warfare. So a non-kinetic capability that still has a profound impact that can disrupt, create dilemmas for an enemy, but you can also do that in the competition space.

**DWG:** Can you comment on when the first exercising will be?

**Secretary McCarthy:** Can you look at putting it in a Defender series, whether that's in Europe or Asia, over the next 18 months.

**DWG:** Dmitry, TASS.

**DWG:** Good morning. I actually wanted to follow up on [inaudible]'s question. I was wondering if you could say publicly where in Asia you plan to put those two task forces. And I also wanted to ask if you have, you didn't speak about this as far as I understand at the Brookings Institution, but I don't know if it's simply because of lack of plans or, anyway, do you plan to put the same things in Europe or not?

**Secretary McCarthy:** The way it works for what I do is we develop the capabilities. The actual disposition or emplacement of the forces is a decision by the combatant commanders. With respect to where we would put them, more often than not, the philosophy you see in the department, the dynamic force employment. So they would move around the area of responsibility based off of the operational plans of those commanders.

**DWG:** I guess that's it for me.

**DWG:** Michael Gordon, Wall Street Journal, and Rick next.

**DWG:** The CNO has made the point that in trying to implement strategy for great power competition, it doesn't make sense to just do one-third, one-third, one-third. [Inaudible] services,

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and then you should just look at the threat and make adjustments accordingly.

Do you agree with that basic proposition? If you do, what do you think the implications might be, since according to the Army's own thinking after 2028 China becomes the dominant threat. That seems to be an adversary that really the Navy and the Air Force are really, would be more critical in trying to deter in that theater.

**Secretary McCarthy:** It's not one-third, one-third, one-third. The actual math, the U.S. Army has 24 percent. But we have less than 24 percent buying power. It's really like 22 percent because two percent of our budget is to finance operations in the Middle East. And we do that. We're 60 percent of combatant commanders' requirements worldwide. So [that's] the real math, and I'll provide that to you as well. The one-third, one-third, one-third, I mean that's a historical perspective, but that's not reality today. What's on the Hill, what's going to the Hill -- excuse me, what's going to the Hill here in a few weeks. So from the fiscal perspective, pure buying power, we are 24 percent, but put an asterisk next to it because of the operations we conduct worldwide, and we're paying for that on our balance sheet. A lot of it. In particular, the Middle East.

With respect to who will provide the greatest capability in deterrence in East Asia, it is not a Navy/Air Force fight. We had three ground wars the last century in that part of the world. If you look at the [CHADS] in about 30 or 40 countries in that part of the world, three-fourths of them are Army officers.

The greatest deterrent is boots on the ground with our allies, shoulder to shoulder, worldwide. It's proven very well for us in Europe. We're going to do more of that in East Asia over the course of this calendar year as well as next with the Defender series exercises. We have a very robust Emergency Deployed Readiness Exercise program as well as what I mentioned before, the Defender series.

So substantially more U.S. personnel operating in places like Thailand, Philippines, Palau, Japan. So we're excited about that, but the U.S. Army's presence is very substantial in that part of the world and very necessary in order to have deterrence.

**DWG:** You mentioned you have a more detailed kind of number.

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**Secretary McCarthy:** That's why I brought the G8 with me today.

**DWG:** Can you provide that?

**Secretary McCarthy:** Absolutely.

**DWG:** However you want to do it.

**Secretary McCarthy:** Those are hard numbers because that's a big part of my job is trying to get the top line as we can to support what is the largest demand signal from all combatant commanders worldwide for U.S. Army capabilities.

**DWG:** I'm happy to distribute to the group here if that's desired.

Rick [Mason], Army Magazine.

**DWG:** As usual, he's much more diplomatic than I am about asking about the Navy, what the Navy said yesterday. What the CNO said was that they need money because static budgets won't work. I think that's a sentiment you would agree with. Then he said that the National Defense Strategy justifies the Navy getting a bigger piece of the pie than the other services because they have a very pressing need.

So can we handle those things sort of separately? First, you're worried like everybody else about the out years and how you're going to pay for modernization, and you're clearly not going to [inaudible] with a whole bunch of night courts between now and then to [inaudible] paperwork. Does the Army need a bigger budget even though we're not asking for one at this moment?

**Secretary McCarthy:** First, with respect to bigger budgets. Demand is incredibly high. This is simple economics. You've got to continue to bring more capability and supply because combatant commanders need more of it worldwide. So a lot of that is about choices from a national objectives perspective.

If things remain constant, with inflation, you run the math. Do you need more funding? That's why you see such substantial O&M growth year over year. We are pressurized in O&M because of a lot of things we are doing worldwide. But the Army has, we've really figured it out in a flat environment because our

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leadership team was committed to making very hard choices. In the last two budgets alone, cutting billions of dollars across the FYDP to be able to finance our [ambition].

So it's incredibly difficult. It's easier when you get budget increases. The '18-'19 deal was a substantial uplift but you were coming off the cusp of about five years of deficit investment. This 2021 deal is good, but there again, you have to have consistency, and it takes about a FYDP to get something done in the department. Weapons systems development, transforming the force. We're doing some extraordinary things worldwide.

What other organization on earth could go grab somebody, no notice, on New Year's Eve, and then have them boots on the ground 24 hours in the Middle East? 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. Promises kept. Drop of a hat.

O&M, how we train organizations, how we get people ready to go and working with our TRANSCOM partners. TRANSCOM really did a remarkable job there.

So it's incredibly important to have the growth that we describe, but it's a tough fiscal environment and we have to do what we must.

I don't want to get in fights with other services about top line budgets. Everybody needs budget increases year over year. But it's a tough place to be. But it is not a one-third, one-third, one-third split. Not even close.

**DWG:** Sidney, then Tony.

**DWG:** Let me ask, this tends to get put as a very either/or question. I suspect it's not really. On the one hand you have, indeed, people fighting and dying in the Middle East and Afghanistan, right, right, right now. We have this whole, the 20-plus years of irregular warfare that refuses to end. [Inaudible] to pivot away from it.

On the other hand you have the National Defense Strategy, the recent focus on as we discussed here China, but also Russia.

[Inaudible] dichotomies? I'm trying to think, are there aspects of your big six, [inaudible] programs modernizing for the great powers that actually translate, actually could help save lives

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and prevail in the irregular warfare that we're ongoing; and conversely, are there lessons from the irregular warfare of the last 20 years that we should be applying to great power especially competition when there's so much use of proxies, information warfare, where hearts and your minds, as you said, is a big part of it. Not just huge force on force.

**Secretary McCarthy:** When you look at the six investment priorities, six plus two, it's best in breed. What do I mean by that? It means if you have that capability it provides you the technical margin to beat anybody on the earth. It's not just lining up against one competitor.

Where we've learned a lot, in particular in Afghanistan. I made some remarks at the AUSA back in the fall about how information operations in Afghanistan has become really the most unique capability at this point in the campaign about how we're utilizing it to inform the Afghan people about services being rendered, security on the ground.

The challenge for us in particular in Afghanistan for the 19 years here has been the choice for the Afghan people. Are the Americans going to stay? Are the Afghans going to be good enough? Or the Taliban. If the Taliban can provide services in the form of rule of law, it may not be great, it may not be very good, but if there's consistency the people have a choice.

One of the challenges that we've seen statistically over the years in Afghanistan was the fight over land. Who's going to adjudicate that?

So one of the things we do, organizations like [NSOC, YELFA] and others is just that. How you communicate, help the Afghans communicate to their people to show them we can turn the power back on, we can keep the neighborhoods safe. Basic needs that everybody in this room wants to have in their suburb here in Northern Virginia, right? Or wherever they live.

So when you look at the information space, the speed to which you can respond and get the right information to the right people at the right time, to win the battle of ideas. That's at the more, it's not as sophisticated as dealing with a near peer, but the fundamentals are the same. And how you incorporate that with Special Operations Command who go and hit hard targets or just conventional forces that are doing advise and assist is



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incredibly important. And it's something that we learn every day on that battlefield and we're feeding that back into the system and adjusting and it's helping not only how we train our people, but the types of investments that we make.

General McConville is leading an effort to transform our cyber to make an information warfare organization, for example. If you look at that, that is the phase zero of combat operations where you're in the competition space before there is a bullet fired.

So it is helping us in how we invest, but also how we train, and the mindset of our soldiers. When you start to bring information operations into the fold, and how we use space capabilities, that's what's truly going to transform the force from the Air/Land Battle operating model to Multi-Domain Operations.

**DWG:** And that's applicable across the spectrum of conflict.

**Secretary McCarthy:** Absolutely. I tried to bring you an example of a pure irregular warfare, to dealing with near peer competition.

**DWG:** Tony?

**DWG:** On the Multi-Domain Task Force, are the task force sizes at the battalion level or --

**Secretary McCarthy:** It's slightly larger by 1,000, 1,100 people. The point of emphasis we make and I really like this. General McConville again. When you give a specific mission to this commander, allow them to make adjustments for the capabilities that they need. So it could be slightly larger than a thousand people, could be slightly less. It's dependent on the mission set they're assigned when they deploy to East Asia or Europe.

**DWG:** You said the '20 budget deal was good. That increases spending at about 690 at '21, so a lot less than you got this year. Did that force another round of night court to try to accommodate the lower level?

**Secretary McCarthy:** Yes. We're going to have to do night court whether I'm in this job or not, because if you look at how we're trying to transform the force, if the prototypes that are landing, just look at the modernization counts. If the prototypes start landing over the next 18 months and they work,

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it's a good problem to have, but now you have to make choices. Do you start scaling long-range fires before helicopters, before armored vehicles? And then ultimately is it a tiered acquisition approach so you select units that you outfit, instead of spreading the peanut butter thin? Those are big muscle movements that will happen in the Army over the next 24 months as we yield success.

With respect to the budget numbers that you laid out, Tony, first and foremost, we got a budget. We're not in a continuing resolution anymore. So I instinctively just am grateful that we got a deal done. Do you want year on year growth? Of course.

**DWG:** But the fact that when they signed it in August you had a [bogey]. Did you have a night court that cut maybe not as much as last year, but some from the '21 plan?

**Secretary McCarthy:** They were refinements where you got to get greater specificity. If you look at the balance sheet engineering that we did, it was, there was a wedge of dollars in the out years. We knew they were going against these accounts in modernization. And as the demonstrators and prototypes started coming together and we started buying, you got more precision on the dollars. So it was more accounting than anything.

But there were some hard choices. There were some cuts. You'll see that here in a couple of weeks. Some programs that were either truncated or cut again. And I won't get into specifics for at least two more weeks, three weeks. And so you'll see that on I think the mid-February timeframe when we launch the PBR. And if we're successful, as I highlighted here a second ago, over the next 18 months then harder choices are coming again.

**DWG:** But it's not as extensive as last year's blood-letting in terms of night court and all the number of programs you whacked.

**Secretary McCarthy:** The volume of programs, no.

**DWG:** Erick Schmidt, New York Times.

**DWG:** You spoke about the demand for Army forces around the world. You have at least a couple of places where that may be actually going down. There are discussions going on in Iraq right now on the killing of Qassim Suleimani, about whether U.S. forces including large numbers of Army forces will be drawn down

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or withdrawn altogether from Iraq. You've got a proposal kicking around OSD to withdraw U.S. forces from West Africa.

I know these aren't your specific responsibilities, but to the extent that you're involved in these conversations can you shed light on where you think this is all trending? In at least those particular areas.

**Secretary McCarthy:** With respect to Iraq, I think that's more political. The relationship with the Iraqi government. We don't have a Status of Forces Agreement signed with the Iraqi government. We were asked to come back at the request of the Iraqi government due to the ISIS security challenge that they had. So how we work out the relationship for our forces that are on ground, we've got about 5,000 people there, that is largely the State Department driving that with Secretary Esper.

With respect to the internal discussions on Africa Command, we are doing this for all the combatant commands and that gets back to the point before that Secretary Esper appreciates the fact that demand is very high. His primary responsibility is are we meeting national objectives worldwide in line with the administration's National Defense Strategy? Those discussions on Africa will happen over the next couple of weeks, and then I think he's getting ready to make some decisions.

**DWG:** Just given the security situation, how it's deteriorated so markedly in the last year in West Africa, and even the calls this week by the French government for the U.S. to remain. It's a relatively small number of forces. Does that make sense to you, to cut relatively small numbers in support of that larger strategy when it could actually expose interests on the continent, U.S. interests there and those of allies?

**Secretary McCarthy:** Well I don't know about specifically with cuts related to a specific geographic part of the continent. One of the things in particular we're looking at is disposition of forces and how the United States can meet its objectives across the continent. So from a larger, more comprehensive view, that's where I'm keenly interested because it could require more or different types of capabilities.

With respect to the security situation in West Africa, we have a substantial presence there and have been supporting our allies for years now.

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**DWG:** Matt Binart and then Kyle Renfer.

**DWG:** First, a quick question following up on night court. Last year's process before the budget was detailed and released, it was kind of put out how many programs. So just in this situation could you maybe say how many programs were truncated or cut or is it just wait two weeks?

**Secretary McCarthy:** I don't want to get out ahead of the President or the Secretary of Defense so I'm not going to give specifics about cuts. What I would say, Matt, is if you go back to the '19-'20 experiences, they were far more aggressive because you had to reshape the portfolio. If you were to look at it from those decisions that were made then to now, over half of our RDA -- Research, Development and Acquisition -- account is going towards new capabilities. So the ratio from legacy to new developmental, that's pretty extraordinary and there's a lot of risk associated with that.

This budget is the refinements of those decisions. And you've got to be successful in the form of demonstrations and prototypes before you would want to expand and start buying LRIP tranches, obviously. That's all going to transpire. You're going to kind of be staying the course on those decisions. You get more data, you get success, then you've got hard choices and you start buying LRIP tranches.

So from the portfolio, if you were to have your bar charts to see how the dollars are laying in, if you started back in '18 it's just a large ramp or the pie chart or whatever you want to do. That's where the Congress, the taxpayers, industry, they'll see we're laser focused on this but we've got to yield success before we can make any other big moves. Reduce our risk so we don't have another catastrophic failure for a major defense acquisition program.

**DWG:** A follow up on that. Specifically with the LMFV competition, there's only one bid sample that was accepted. You mentioned that this budget will reflect you're going to stick to the 31 programs, but within that, taking a step back and looking at the way the competitions are going and the [Navy community] reformed their bid or refined is based on the kind of path that they've taken so far. Will that [inaudible] in terms of LMFV or kind of continue on the way that it is even though there's only

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one bid sample accepted? Any other kind of changes you might be able to see in the near future?

**Secretary McCarthy:** We're looking very hard at LMFV and we're getting ready to make a decision on that here. That's imminent. On other programs, we are concerned about competition. On all of them. But the thing we're most concerned about is time. We have a very focused modernization program. We have had, we're going on our fourth budget in a row with consistency and focus of investments and it really does take about a FYDP to start getting the success on a developmental weapon system where you start getting tranches of capability and our soldiers get out there and put their hands on it and test them and see if they can employ it operationally.

So you have to be conscious of time. We're trying to create a sense of urgency in the defense industry in particular. We need them to invest. We need them to invest in tooling, research and development, put their best engineers against these projects, and build capability. The world is very complex and dangerous and we can't afford to wait.

**DWG:** Kyle Renfer, Army Times, and then Scott.

**DWG:** You spoke last week about an SFAB going to the Pacific. I was wondering if the Army identified which brigade that will be. And then also, if you go into the timeline for that and what their mission and partners --

**Secretary McCarthy:** We're going to have one available for the Pacific. I'm sure the Indo-PACOM Commander will put it in the SDOT book and ask for it. What General McConville is looking at is a regionally aligned concept for SFABs similar to the way the Special Forces Groups do so that you can have these units that are arrayed around the country and they line up with the combatant command and they really understand the area of operations and have the cultural, professional military education and other types of experiences they need to be successful. And also lining up relationships in that part of the world.

So what we're doing is providing the capability, have it in the queue to be ready to go. And then ultimately lining them up so there's consistency in their performance.

**DWG:** Do you know when the first of those deployments would

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occur?

**Secretary McCarthy:** I don't know when they will actually deploy, but as I said before, there's a window when they'll become available. I'll get you the date.

**DWG:** Would that also include then SFABs being aligned to AFRICOM, SOUTHCOM, EUCOM?

**Secretary McCarthy:** Conceptionally, yes. Ultimately that's something we'll work out with the Secretary of Defense and ensure that lines up to meet national objectives.

**DWG:** Scott, Federal News Radio. Then Haley.

**DWG:** The spending bill, back to night court. The spending bill had some, I guess maybe a little bit of a slap on the wrist to the Army. Basically saying we kind of want to know a little bit more about what's going on, to be kept in the loop a little more. I don't think they necessarily had any requirements. But is that --

**Secretary McCarthy:** Can you be more specific?

**DWG:** I think they had a specific provision in it and they were like we don't necessarily, we feel like we weren't kept in the loop because we, as Congress gave you this money for this reason and now you're kind of cutting it later on down the road.

**Secretary McCarthy:** You've got to help me out here. What are you talking about specifically?

**Voice:** There was some language about deep dives in night courts.

**Secretary McCarthy:** Oh, the methodology of how we did night courts.

So much about a budget is about trust. You bring it over there and you meet with the Committees of Jurisdiction and you have to lay out your proposal. No different than business or any other profession. And ultimately the Board of Directors has to believe you've made the right choices. You put rigor behind your analysis and you're making the best investment with the taxpayer dollar.

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They asked for specificity on the night court process, and we owe them that. I think we do, I don't know if we've gone up and briefed them yet, but --

**Voice:** We've briefed all four committees.

**Secretary McCarthy:** Perfect. And I've talked to Members specifically about it.

In large measure, if you really look at what it was, it was the four senior leaders of the Army owning the risk and looking and pushing the system to put as much analytical rigor against a proposal as possible. When you take the risk back to the senior leaders of the department, that's where we're going to get the most energy behind the effort. The bureaucracy won't just kind of drift along. And we had to be ruthless in prioritization because of flat budgets, because of massive worldwide demand.

We formalized this effort and now you have four star commanders and assistant secretaries in a co-chair environment owning these large investment portfolios. It's changing the behavior of the Army to be more conscious of every dollar that we get from the taxpayer.

**DWG:** And secondly, a real curve ball. It's been two years since the Marines United issue came up, and all the services put out their social media misconduct strategy. Have you seen any changes in the way that the Army is approaching social media misconduct? And also the way that it's indicting people and taking criminal actions?

**Secretary McCarthy:** I don't have any specific examples that I could give.

**DWG:** Hilly Risky of Task and Purpose, then it will be Jack.

**DWG:** If I can kind of piggyback off of Eric's question on troop numbers. Robert O'Brien, National Security Advisor, said that whether or not there's a deal made in Afghanistan that the White House is thinking of withdrawing troops. I know that term is very broad and vague, but just kind of with your knowledge of kind of what's going on on the ground, could you give us any insight as to whether you think that could be happening? Within a year, sort of what you're seeing and if that's a real possibility.

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**Secretary McCarthy:** I don't know the pacing of any potential withdrawals. What I do see is a very successful advise and assist capability that is getting the Afghans more forward in the operations and every day less and less reliance upon U.S. forces. But what we will see in an enduring presence, the President talks about a [inaudible], you need that intelligence and warning capability on the ground as well as strike capability. Twenty of the most sophisticated, well-financed terrorist organizations in the world are along that border, and you need to have that capability on the ground for the foreseeable future.

**DWG:** One more on housing. [Balfor Baby] out at Tinker, the Air Force has taken very strong action against them [inaudible] investigators were seeking computers and other such property from their offices in Oklahoma. [Balfor Baby] [inaudible] images, thousands of Army homes as well. Is that a concern for you the way that [Balfor Baby] operated with the Air Force? [Inaudible] similar things on the Army? Is that something that's kind of on your radar?

**Secretary McCarthy:** We're watching it very closely. The one thing that is very unique is as you travel around the various installations, it's the same company but you'll find very good management teams and ones that struggle at the local level. In some cases the decentralized nature of their company and their footprint, the work that they do for us, in some cases it is hit or miss on the talent mix on the ground, where we've had, we've seen [Balfor Baby] perform, and other places where they're challenged. So we're watching it very closely. It is a concern for all of us that could this be a systemic problem? We just don't know yet.

**DWG:** Jack, Monitor; then Jen.

**DWG:** Thanks for doing this.

Last month Secretary Esper said at the Reagan National Defense Forum that there was a risk of the U.S. potentially passing a tipping point with continued deployments to the Middle East. I'm curious with regards to the [FDS] of course, that you lose that focus. I'm curious if you see sort of that risk increasing given since then you've seen several large Army deployments.

**Secretary McCarthy:** It is a concern. We have a substantial, a



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huge footprint in the Middle East. It's hard not to focus a lot of your attention day to day because you've got troops over there, and in some cases you have troops in contact in Afghanistan. So having the balance as a senior leader is incredibly important so that you are giving the appropriate level of attention and resources to meet national objectives worldwide.

But it's a dynamic problem. It's a problem that's been a challenge for everybody that's been in his seat. You try and define that balance every day is the real challenge for every senior leader in the department, and we're trying to do what we can to keep that balance. We're doing some pretty aggressive things with how we are with our resources as well as our people.

**DWG:** And obviously with the Iranian ballistic missile attacks last week on al-Assad, I understand there weren't any Patriots or such capabilities in the area. But has sort of the recent spate of Iranian attacks [inaudible] and ballistic missiles helped the Army identify any more gaps in your capability with regards to protecting American troops in the region?

**Secretary McCarthy:** They're a very capable enemy. They have capabilities that can strike and hit Americans. We are looking at additional capabilities that we can send to the region, and ultimately Secretary Esper will or will not assign those, [inaudible] push more forces forward.

**DWG:** [Inaudible]?

**Secretary McCarthy:** It could be a variety of enablers like missile defense and others. So we're looking at that.

**DWG:** Jen, Aviation Week.

**DWG:** I wanted to follow up on the night court issue a little bit. You mentioned that there are all these R&D [pushes]. Is this where we're going to see kind of a shakeout on the OTA agreement that has been signed where we'll see whether or not it is proved out?

**Secretary McCarthy:** For example, our Integrated Visual Augmentation System, that's an OTA. We're looking at a couple of others. The Army is the, we have the most OTAs in the system of any of the services. You have, it has the attention of General McConville, General Martin, Jim McPherson and myself on all of

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them. So we're watching it very closely, trying to be judicious, but watching it very closely so that if there is a challenge with them that we can work through this with the Congress. Because this is a new authority, and how well our program managers are utilizing the capability, a lot of it is, there's a lot of risk there. So if we do clip the hurdle on one of these programs, that we're there to help them manage the challenges with the Congress.

Congress has been very good to us on this, allowing us to have this authority. They were like we want you to use it. But like with all things, if something happens and something goes wrong, we've got to be there to manage any fallout that could potentially happen.

**DWG:** So as part of that is that making budgetary decisions, whether to proceed and go further with them? And is that something that we'll see in this budget release?

**Secretary McCarthy:** So in particular with the [IVAD] system, we're partnered with a non-traditional partner, commercial company. And they move very quickly. This is something that now we're going to have to condition the committees as well as Army Acquisition, Army Staff and others because just the pace of how quickly we developed and been successful as we go through these capability sets. So that's different for us. Normally we don't move that fast. And you have this OTE authority, you have this non-traditional company, and you're moving really quick. There's a natural propensity for everybody to pay attention to it, want to cut it, slow it down because they're not used to it. So it takes a tremendous amount of focus and communication between Army leaders and the Committees of jurisdiction and the Office of the Secretary of Defense oversight [inaudible] like ANS and CAPE and others.

So we're paving new ground with OTEs. It's a great authority. We want it. We want to keep it. We want to protect it, but we've got to perform.

**DWG:** And I just wanted to ask one more question, General Jay Raymond was sworn in as the head of the Space Force yesterday. How are you going to be working with the Space Force going forward? How is the Army plugging into that? How will you be working with both the Space Force and the Air Force to get the tactical space benefits [inaudible]?

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**Secretary McCarthy:** We had a two-hour meeting with General Raymond on Monday. So he is, he has kind of this extraordinary task that hasn't been done since 1947, of standing up essentially a service. If you go back through history and you look at that, what are the things that need to stay organic to the Army? Watercraft is in the Army, not the Navy. Helicopters are in the Army, not the Air Force. So are there organic space capabilities that need to stay in the Army? And what do you have to divest to the Space Force? A lot of it is lining up the national mission that he has been tasked to put in place and how we ultimately come together in the process.

So a lot of our discussion was just how he puts this model in place and how the capabilities will fall in around it.

**DWG:** Can you talk about those capabilities that would remain with the Army?

**Secretary McCarthy:** Some of the stuff was like SAP, so no, I can't.

**DWG:** -- Defense News.

**DWG:** I wanted to ask more about LMFV. You said a decision was imminent. We also saw Congress give you sort of a crippling cut to that program. What does that cut do to your [inaudible]? I know you still have decisions to make. If you could talk a little bit more about what the options are on the table right now in terms of that decision.

**Secretary McCarthy:** I can't.

**DWG:** What does that cut do to the program? What --

**Secretary McCarthy:** We'll be able to lay that out with the announcement.

**DWG:** The announcement being imminent. Can you provide a little bit more detail on when --

**Secretary McCarthy:** We'd like to try to do it this week.

**DWG:** Okay.

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**DWG:** That's on down-select or competition?

**Secretary McCarthy:** It's an announcement on the LMFV that we'll make this week.

**DWG:** You're going to start trying to --

**DWG:** Military.com.

**DWG:** Look, I wanted to get back to the response [inaudible] that happened around the first of the year. You said things worked well. The Ready Brigade, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of that, they went out the door, planned, and [ordered] the rest of the brigade from the 82<sup>nd</sup> over there. There were some usual players that went out there. The 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade out of Vicenza. And so there's other units in the 18<sup>th</sup> Airborne Corps, as far as a rapid deployment for 101<sup>st</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> ID, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain. I'm just wondering if you guys are looking or analyzing response times, things like that. You have the usual players that went out the door, right? But there's a brigade of 82<sup>nd</sup> that's deployed to Afghanistan already. It left one brigade back. That brigade took over the Ready Brigade Mission. It doesn't seem like anybody had any answers as far as who was next.

**Secretary McCarthy:** Who was next for what?

**DWG:** Who was next if they needed to go out the door? Or are they going to be ready? If it's training as usual.

Is the Army looking at, and I'm sure you have plans, is the Army looking at, does its rapid response force need tweaking, redesigning, so other units take on this Immediate Response Force? You mentioned 82<sup>nd</sup> has it. There's obviously 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment. But those are, it's a division and a regiment.

Are you guys talking about that? Do you look at that?

**Secretary McCarthy:** Absolutely.

This discussion we had last fall and elements of this budget, you'll see more funding for emergency deployment, readiness exercises as well as division level deployments to Europe and Asia. This is, in particular with the very robust [EDRI] program. Bang, hit your watch. They're on the clock until they can get on the plane, get their kit and move out.

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So that is a big part of strategic readiness, what we call strategic readiness. So the tactical readiness being the blocking [inaudible] fundamentals -- marksmanship, squad level life fires. Strategic being the points, to the heart of the element of your question, how long does it take from a phone call on New Year's Eve to get boots on the ground somewhere else in the world? We've made investments in this FY21 budget related to that, but it's also the mindset that General McConville and General Mike [Geard] are pushing into the system of being ready to go at a moment's notice so we can put people on the ground worldwide.

The Defender exercise from I think a year beforehand, we had a brigade from Fort Bliss, Armor Brigade, within nine days on the ground, shoulder to shoulder with European counterparts doing live fire exercises. How can you refine that and how can you go faster? That's the mission the Chief's got in the system and there's laser focus on that.

**DWG:** Financial Times, Katrina Manson.

**DWG:** I wanted to return to the issue of the future of U.S. troops in Iraq, if I may, and I know that one of the proposals in the air is the potential [inaudible] on the [matrix] umbrella. And I wanted to ask from your perspective, is that something that the Army could accommodate? Is that feasible? And are there some other [inaudible] training mission, some part of U.S. forces in Iraq that can fit under a [inaudible] umbrella? How do you see that negotiation working?

**Secretary McCarthy:** General Milley, our Chairman of the Joint Chiefs is in Europe right now. I'm sure this is on his agenda among a host of other things. I'm not involved specifically in those discussions, so I'm going to wait until he comes home and hear how it went.

**DWG:** Connie?

**DWG:** [Inaudible] contract for SMET for [DDLs] is canceled. Is that striking any sort of concern about [inaudible] the Army? You discussing that?

**Secretary McCarthy:** I haven't seen any blow-back from that as of yet. I'll have to sit through the AAR with the team just to see

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where the challenges were.

**DWG:** I wanted to get back to the enabler [inaudible] under consideration for the Middle East. You mentioned specifically missile defense. I was wondering if you can get into any more specifics possibly. And is that because you're expecting more attacks either [inaudible] or proxy forces [inaudible]?

**Secretary McCarthy:** I'm not going to highlight anything specific about threats. There are substantial threats in the region, obviously. There's a variety of neighbors, and I don't want to get into specifics.

**DWG:** Tony?

**DWG:** Army Recruiting Command, those [texts] that went out a couple of weeks ago or a week and a half ago by [fake], the draft may be reimposed. Is there any kind of [inaudible] tricks or potentially more malicious?

**Secretary McCarthy:** I haven't seen, we've asked them to look into that.

**DWG:** Who's we? You've asked who?

**Secretary McCarthy:** I think it was we asked TRADOC to look into that. TRADOC owns Recruiting Command. They haven't come back to me yet on the specifics.

**DWG:** So it could be malicious.

**Secretary McCarthy:** Could be maligned actors. Could it be anything. I just don't know.

**DWG:** A follow-up to my questions on military health care. What has your response on the Hill been to your idea of slowing the transition?

**Secretary McCarthy:** We're in discussions with congressional committees. They wanted to know what provoked the note. So we're having discussions with them literally today.

**DWG:** Sidney?

**DWG:** One thing I think Genera. McConville said yesterday that

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his [inaudible] is broken. It's much more in-depth than [inaudible] assessment of the [inaudible] is kicking off I believe today. Obviously that's been very much one of his focus areas, but what's your take on this whole talent management effort? Certainly it was a big priority for SecArmy Esper when he preceded you. I'm sure lots of you would love to reform the hell out of the personnel [inaudible] in the Army, but I think there's also a [inaudible] feat that everyone would be now GREd and standardized tests and that. [Inaudible] help people [inaudible] for combat.

**Secretary McCarthy:** I'm a big believer in the talent management effort for a variety of reasons. You want to get the right person in the right job because there's as much chemistry on the Herb Brooks analogy, 1980 U.S. [Olympic] hockey team. Get the right mix of players, not necessarily the absolute best person available. So in order to do that you have to have a lot of information on the individual.

Historically reading an officer record brief and they'll say 101<sup>st</sup>, 82<sup>nd</sup>, bunch of badges and they're 6 feet tall and they're 180 pounds. And then you'll say is that making the best informed decision about the individual?

So this IPSE management system is how you collect data on an employee so you can make the right choice for them professionally, but it also informs the individual about themselves so they can see themselves more clearly. Maybe I'm not an Infantry officer. Maybe I'm really good at math and I should go get a master's degree. You can help the individual make very informed choices in early stages in their careers.

With respect to the battalion commander's assessment program, I see that, it's like an NFL combine. You go in there and they look at the physical and then they ask them questions and you understand the cognitive side of this individual and you can just have a more thoroughly vetted decision before they get these incredibly important jobs. A battalion commander is one of the most influential people in the Army because you get these young men and women, they're right at the first opportunity to stay in or get out. You really need the absolute best people we have leading our formations because of leading troops in combat, but also the developmental phase for young officers and young soldiers at that initial stage of their career.

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**DWG:** I was just wondering if there was any light you could shed on the [SNF] contract situation. There are tons of reports that the deal might be canceled after the protest and it has to kind of be reworked. So any sort of update you're able to provide?

**Secretary McCarthy:** I'm not [inaudible] talk about it.

**DWG:** If I could ask one more thing about the SFAB. Since they're starting to go back to this idea of regional aligning, does that mean that the Amy [may] still be [less] needed doing the heel to toe deployments to Afghanistan in the next few years?

**Secretary McCarthy:** I don't think you can say just because they're aligned to Africa or Europe, it doesn't mean they aren't going to go to Afghanistan. At the end of the day if we have troops in contact, we have a commander that needs a capability, the SecDef can pull forces from anywhere in the world. And maybe at the dismay of a combatant commander from another region, but they're going to where the sound of the guns are.

**DWG:** Are you happy with the [inaudible] to Afghanistan?

**Secretary McCarthy:** Extremely proud of the performance of the SFAB. If you were to talk to General Miller, I guarantee you it will be part of his architecture going forward.

**DWG:** Just to follow up on Kyle's question, with the SFAB. The Army attempted regionally aligned brigades five years ago, four years ago. What is the difference between those and what you're doing with SFAB? Now it just sounds like visually aligned brigades [inaudible].

**Secretary McCarthy:** I'm not as familiar with that concept, but if you look at the advise and assist capability as very similar to that with the Special Forces Groups, looking at cultural dynamics, the regional dynamics and being experts in certain parts of the world and the training with their militaries.

If you look at a Brigade Combat Team, that's much more general purpose for combat operations, less for advise and assist. We created the advise and assist capability so you can keep the purity of a brigade combat team to do just that -- combat operations. When we look at advise and assist, it's more so of not doing it going in. It's enabling a partner force and getting them out front and doing the fighting.



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**DWG:** To follow up on the [inaudible], without going into details in that country, do we have, you know, SMET needed to be [rebooted] apparently. We have OMFE down to more than contender. Are there other signs that, it's inevitable when you're going this fast that there are places where we have maybe gone too fast. It's already programmed too much and need to slow down because we've changed the way we're going fast because you're making slip-ups? There's a reason for the whole of war [inaudible] process, which is [inaudible] beat down all possibilities for a protest [inaudible].

**Secretary McCarthy:** We're trying to change behavior, Sidney, because the world is very dangerous. We don't have the luxury to wait for people. They need to pick up the pace.

**DWG:** Mr. Secretary, thank you so much for coming today. I hope you will consider coming to see us again in a year's time, whatever the results of the election.

**Secretary McCarthy:** If you'll have me back when I'm unemployed. [Laughter]. I'm just focused on today.

Thank you all for coming. It's nice to get out of the Pentagon, even though I'm heading right back.

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