

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

WHAT ROLE WILL THE ARMY PLAY IN
GREAT POWER COMPETITION AFTER COVID-19?

Washington, D.C.

Thursday, April 30, 2020

PARTICIPANTS:

Moderator:

MICHAEL O'HANLON
Senior Fellow and Director of Research, Foreign Policy
The Brookings Institution

Panelists:

RYAN McCARTHY
U.S. Secretary of the Army

GENERAL JAMES McCONVILLE
Chief of Staff
U.S. Army

* * * * *

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: Well, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Michael O'Hanlon. It's an honor to be hosting an event today, with the leadership of the U.S. Army, talking about how the Army is handling the COVID-19 Crisis, and continuing to maintain its many responsibilities around the world, including with great power competition, and broader Middle Eastern challenges, and many others.

I'm honored to be here today with two long standing servants of the country, and great American Patriots, and soldiers, Ryan McCarthy, former Army active soldier, but now the Secretary of the Army, and General James McConville, the Chief of Staff of the Army.

Secretary McCarthy is the 24th Army Chief of -- excuse me, Army Secretary. General McConville is the 40th Army Chief of Staff. They're remarkable individuals. Both have served in the deserts of the Middle East; General McConville, in Iraq, as well as Afghanistan, Secretary McCarthy, in Afghanistan.

General McConville comes from the great state of Massachusetts, and returned there for a Graduate Degree, but also went to West Point, and also the Georgia Institute of Technology. He's a Scientist by background, got a degree in Aerospace Engineering, also is a Helicopter Aviator, with considerable experience on a number of platforms.

Secretary McCarthy has his background in History, at the Virginia Military Institute, hails from the great state of Virginia, also has a business background, and, in addition to previous jobs on Capital Hill and in the Pentagon, has worked with Defense Industry, and understands much of the nitty gritty and the technical dimensions of Weapons Acquisitions, as well as Military Modernization, for this era of Great Power Competition.

So, it's a real privilege for me. We've hosted them before at Brookings, never in this kind of a forum, and I'm really delighted they would join us today. Each of them has some brief remarks, talking about a scene setting, for how the Army is dealing with COVID-19, and maintaining its many obligations at the same time. After that period, I will follow up with them, with a bit of a moderated

discussion, and some questions, a number of which we already received from you, and also you'll be able to add additional question. We can't promise that we'll ask all of them, but I will convey them to the secretary or the general, if you're able to send them in through means that were conveyed to you, when you, I think, initially accepted the invitation, from Brookings, to join in on this event.

So, without further ado, I will welcome, again, the secretary and the general, and pass the baton over to them. Thank you, gentlemen, for being here with us today.

MR. MCCARTHY: Michael, thank you, for the gracious introduction. We -- this is very different from when we were together, back in January. When we -- I was over at Brookings, and had the opportunity to talk about where the Army is heading in its efforts in the Indo-Pacific. The Chief and I both traveled independently to the region, within about two weeks of that time frame of our discussion in Mid-January.

So, it was -- it's really unique, the timing, and we'll talk about that here in a little bit, but the COVID Crisis, really -- on January 26th, a Crisis Action Team was stood up by the U.S. Army, when we started seeing the developments in the Region, and we wanted to get a better understanding, with piecing that together, between open source and intelligence findings, of where things were heading, and then the Chief's travel, and my travel, we actually got to see leaders on the ground, in Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand, and had engagements about how this was developing.

Really, but wasn't until about late February timeframe, early March, when we started to see COVID boomeranging into Europe, and this is a really -- we recognize that this is probably not a Swine Flu related Regional focused virus, but it was starting to spread in other areas around the world, and it was this first moment where we had to make a decision, around the March 9th - 11th, timeframe, to cancel the Defender -- err, excuse me, curtail the Defender 20 Exercise, where we send a CONUS Based Division, along with thousands of other troops, in the form of enablers, to support a NATO -- combined NATO Exercise, in Europe.

Two years of planning, tremendous amount of effort, between the NATO Alliance to put this exercise in place, and it was really, the strength and the courage, of some really talented Army

Leaders that came forward and met with the chief and I, and we went down the hall and made a recommendation to curtail the exercise, which took the preponderance of the force we were going to send, and keep it home station, and thank God we did because many of those enablers, that we would have sent forward to Europe, are now responding in American Cities around the country.

So, really, if you see, from that decision, the Army has been doing what it does best, and that's responding to these threats around the country. We have 191,000 soldiers deployed around the globe, conducting Combat Operations, in Middle East, and Iraq, and Afghanistan, like we've had for the last two decades. We have over 37,000 National Guard Soldiers supporting the COVID-19 Crisis around country, in all 50 States and the four territories, conducting testing sites, in Target parking lots. We're Urban Augmentation Medical Task Forces, which are these composite groups of doctors, and nurses, and physical therapists, and others, that are augmenting staff in American Hospitals, in New York City, and Detroit, and Chicago, and other places, but we're also -- are delivering food and much needed equipment to cities.

So, in every front we're working in these cities. We also have 4,000 service members, that have served in these task forces. So, you have 37,000 guardsmen, 4,000 reservists, 2,000 members of the Army Corps of Engineers, who are building these alternate care facilities, that we're putting into -- building hospital like facilities in Convention Centers and in Athletic Stadiums, to put us in a position where, if the hospital capacity of any given city overflows, they have a final line of defense and have additional capability in these cities because, early on, General Todd Semonite was really instrumental in developing this concept, and flying -- having him and his Leadership Team flying around the country, and advising governors and mayors, throughout the country, of here's your architecture care, from screening all the way through recovery, and how do you put this large trauma type of event, to manage these volumes across the continuum of care, and there was a recognition that, ultimately, we would need additional capacity.

This could be a long fight, that this virus could boomerang and hit us hard again, in the next flu season. So, that capacity will be there. It's basically an insurance policy for governors and

mayors around the country. The -- as the chief and I began to visit our troops around the country, we see how well they've worked with FEMA, and HHS, and local and state officials. They really blended in seamlessly, and I'll tell you, from my own personal experience, and I know the chief will mention his, like I -- look at Detroit.

In nine days, from when we put people on the ground, they stood up the facility at TCF, which is a convention center, and they have a 250-bed capacity, negative pressure rooms. They did it in nine days. I mean, we have not seen collaboration, and infrastructure laid in place like this, really, since World War II. In the Chicago Convention Center, McCormick Place, a 700-bed facility constructed in a little over two weeks. So, this is extraordinary Leadership of the Corps of Engineers, from National Guard Army Reserves, but great collaboration with the cities and states all around the country.

Our modernization efforts remain on track, and we've seen the courageous American Workforce. Sergeant Major Grinston and I, yesterday, were viewing training at Fort Benning, and we shot across the border, over into Alabama, and saw the Hell Fire Factory, for the Lockheed Martin Corporation. We just talked to workers, thanked them for getting in the truck in the morning, and going into work, and then continually pushing these products down that production line.

When the vice chief, General Martin, and I were in Michigan, we went over and saw BAE and General Dynamics, and just thanked workers, and it's really extraordinary that these men and women, keep pressing on, masking up, and putting the gloves on, and they're going to work, and they're - - keep protecting the schedule of a lot of these weapons systems that we're in development. As you know, we have 31 Signature Systems in our investment portfolio, and they're largely staying on track. So, we're very excited about that.

One place in particular that the Army has been key, is in the vaccine development and test capability. Medical Research and Development Command, at Fort Dietrich, our doctors, our physicians, are all supporting the Inter-agency Task Force. We're currently working on about -- and collaborating with industry, and other governments, on about 15 vaccines, worldwide, between those entities, private sector governments, as well as here, in the U.S. Army, that have the promise to be a

candidate for a vaccine. Some are entering clinical trials with humans, other are working with primates and other smaller animals, but this shows tremendous promise because it's probably the greatest collaboration of vaccine development in the history of mankind.

You know, I'll leave -- I'll make my final comment here, is that we've been doing all of this, all the while, since January 3rd, when the -- we basically had the entire Brigade Combat Team flow into the Middle East, after the Soleimani Raid, where we put immediate Response Force on the ground, within days.

We've reconfigured the GIFT Map to continue to support Iraq, Afghanistan, Operations in the Middle East, as well as Asia and Africa. Our forces continue to ring incredibly agile, and support national objectives, all around the globe, and recruiting and training. We are moving thousands of soldiers, from every corner of the country, to our Training Centers, and we found a way to continue to do this safely, responsibly, and effectively, and still remain a very agile force. Chief.

GEN. MCCONVILLE: Okay, thank you, Mr. Secretary, and thanks, Michael, for being here. It's just absolutely wonderful, and you know, as the secretary said, this is kind of a very different time. We are in a war against an invisible enemy or threat, so to speak, and, you know, that's what the Army does, and I think when we're faced diversity, that's when the Army comes to -- you see the best in what the Army seen.

As the secretary said, he and I have been all over the country, to the hot spots, seeing what our soldiers are doing, and the heroes in this fight are the doctors, the nurses, the scientists, the medical professionals. They're really doing an incredible job. I'm very, very proud of them.

But, you know, even as we work to defeat the virus, we still have to be ready to go to combat. We can't telecommute to combat, and, so, we have implemented pretty extensive screening, testing, and tactical dispersion procedures, so our soldiers can train safely, and, if you will, it's more like a safety bubble. We got to put a safety bubble, bring these kids in from the United States, get them tested, get them screened, and allow them to train. We stopped initial military training for about two weeks, to get our procedures in place.

They've done a fabulous job. I was down in Fort Jackson. The Secretary was down at Fort Benning. We had chance to check out those procedures, and they're working very well. So, we're bringing young men and women in safely, to the Army, and they're continuing to train. We're going to get back to a higher-level collective training.

We have a Security Force Assistance Brigade, that's getting ready to deploy. So, we were down at JRTC, yesterday. Making sure they also have the screening, the testing procedures in place, so we can go ahead and get ready to get back to collective training, and, so, again, you know, the Army stands ready, and that's what we do, and we will defeat this virus, just like every other enemy that threatens the United States, and, so, Michael, over to you for questions.

MR. O'HANLON: Gentlemen, that's fantastic. First of all, thank you for what you're doing, and thank you for what your soldiers, and their families are doing, and the entire Army.

Also, there are a couple of specific points, you mentioned, that I thought I would just quickly follow up on, while they're fresh, and, General, you just mentioned the JRTC and the Security Force Assistance Brigade headed there. I wonder, could I ask, how much have the large-scale exercises in the United States been disrupted or delayed, so far, because of the COVID-19 Crisis?

I had been under the impression that the National Training Centers, in California and Louisiana, where you normally do the big Brigade Scale Exercises, that the efforts there have been temporarily put on hold. Is that true, and if --

GEN. MCCONVILLE: Yes.

MR. O'HANLON: -- if that's true, how far down, in terms of the echelon of training have you had to suspend operations so far?

GEN. MCCONVILLE: Well, first of all, we took a pause at the National -- at the -- at two Combat Training Centers. One was the 81st Striker Brigade Combat Team, which comes out of Washington State, and, National Guard Unit, they were supposed to be going to the Combat Training Center. We talked to them, the governor, because, at the time, Washington State was having some, you know, serious concerns about COVID. We did not want to take that brigade out of the state, put them into

the National Training Center, when, quite frankly, when I was out in Washington State, the National Guard is doing some incredible things to support the state. So, that was a decision where we did not send them. So, we paused there.

On JRTC, what we're doing, we're just -- we're in the process of staying up again, and we've really delayed some of the rotations, but we're really using -- is the SFAB, which will come in with about 800 plus soldiers in the Security Force Assistance Brigade, plus the Security Force, about 400 more that will deploy with them, and this will give us a chance to try out the procedures that were put in place for 1,200 soldiers, and then we'll, you know, the intent is turn onto a full rotation with the 101st Airborne Division, later in the summer, and we're going out to the Combat Training Center at NTC and doing the same thing.

So, what you're seeing is there's still training going on, but what we have found has worked is limit exposure, you know? You know, do social distancing, but even within the distancing, have a safety bubble and have smaller safety bubbles. So, you can train at the squad level, but that means there's only 10 people at risk, and what we're trying to do is segregate them from other squads and we try to keep -- you know, we call it tactical dispersion. Some people call it social distancing, but for us it's spreading out organizations. Limit their exposure. Limit exposure when -- even if they live off post. If they go home, and they come back in, and they're not exposed to other people, and we've found this has been successful in limiting the exposure of the force and avoiding clusters from the COVID, but it's real. People are taking it very, very seriously, and -- but we know the tactical pause really hasn't hurt -- rated us that much, but we can't go, you know, 12 months, 18 months without training at this level. We've got to get back on it, and we're going to start doing that through the summer.

MR. O'HANLON: So, just to complete the picture of what's going on in the Army today, or what's been going on in the last couple of months, most soldiers at their home bases are continuing to train pretty intensively, but at small levels, the squad level, where, if there is risk, you can limit it to that small group, almost like a extended family, if you will, and you are not doing exercises, let's say, at the company or battalion level on your home base. For the most part, you will try to move back towards that,

as more testing becomes available, as the summer progresses, if I heard you right. Is that correct?

GEN. MCCONVILLE: That, that is correct. You know, we're still doing Ranger School, which is -- which does get up to larger levels, but it's more along the lines of how we create the safety bubbles, you know? If you go off -- you go off to Ranger School, you know, they continue to train, they're out in the woods, they're -- you know, they're pretty much in a safety bubble, but once they've been through, and they've enabled it to do, you know, those platoon-sized type patrols that they do.

Again, most of the units, they're outside. In that situation, we've found from the testing, that that gives them the opportunity for social distancing, plus safety, and the fact that we keep them away from other folks allows us to continue training, but, as you said, you don't see large brigade type operations, and, as the Secretary said, one of the biggest concerns we had about Defender 20 is when we -- when we move those large masses of forces, we don't have the infrastructure, when they move, and to take care of them. They tend to -- you know, you bring 20,000 soldiers in, they go into these huge fest tents. They're very, very close together. We were very, very concerned we'd end up with a quarantine X, and we didn't want to do that.

MR. O'HANLON: Could I ask you both about that same question, but as applied to Korea and Poland, or any other place where soldiers are deployed in substantial numbers and you have this tension where you're trying to maintain combat readiness, including at higher echelons because, like you said, you can't telecommute to the fight. We don't know when an adversary might decide to try to take advantage of the situation. So, you've got to maintain a certain level of readiness all the time, and I know you're doing that, but how do you -- how do you wrestle with those challenges? How does General Abrams, in Korea, for example, wrestle with this, and make sure that whatever degradation is occurring is very gradual or not at all?

GEN. MCCONVILLE: Yeah, I think, you know, the secretary and I -- he had talked about it a little, but he and I would, you know, and, fortunately, in a lot of ways, we were right up -- we were both in Korea over, like, a two or three week period, from January. I think I was there the second week or first week in February. I think he was in there in January.

MR. MCCARTHY: (overtalking) before, yeah.

GEN. MCCONVILLE: Yeah, so. So, what we saw was -- one of the things that we learned from General Abrams, and we learned -- who was in Korea, and also General Cloudier (phonetic) who was in Italy, is the procedures they put in place to protect the force, and, you know, you almost have to protect the force first, first of all, and in all the things, as far as screening with temperatures, making sure checking who was coughing, who had these symptoms, doing the contact tracing, and then limiting exposure to large organizations. So, we're continuing to train, and if our adversaries were to threaten the security of the United States, we're ready to go, I mean. It just, you know, you can see I'm amazed at, you know, how well our medical folks have done. I mean, and, you know, they have -- you know, we were given an order to go to New York City on a Tuesday. On Sunday, I was at Javits Center, five days later, and those two field hospitals were set up with 1,000 beds, ready to treat patients, and the same thing happened out at Washington State, with two field hospitals, and, so, I think the Army's demonstrated that it's -- you know, the secretary and I are very, very proud about their readiness and ability to do it, and they have been called out on, and these were no notices, too. These were no notice type things for that. It was a no notice for the 82nd, going into Iraq, and, you know, we still have soldiers in combat.

We still have soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan and, you know, standing, defending, and working with our partners around the world. So, the Army stands ready. We're just not doing the large training exercise that we usually do, but, again, we're going to get back on those very shortly.

MR. O'HANLON: And is the key to resuming those that you hope that we will, you know, flatten the curve, and that the relatively mild incidence rate in the Army can come down even further, and, therefore, you'll have less risk, or are you really counting on a lot more availability of testing as the sort of key to resuming higher echelon training?

GEN. MCCONVILLE: So, yeah, you want to start that, yeah?

MR. MCCARTHY: So, there's a couple of factors that we're looking at. The first is in the area, pick an area in the country, where you have about a 14-day decline of COVID cases. So, we're

looking in that -- at that first, and that -- is that curve not only flat, but bending. The second is the capacity, whether it's an MTF or the local community, whether or not they have enough hospital beds to support if you had an outbreak or you had a massive cluster of soldiers or family members that got sick. The third is your capacity or ability to monitor, so, if you had to put people in isolation, you had to put people into quarantine. And then the fourth, of course, is the test. I mean, those aren't in order, but there are four variables to an equation that we believe is going to give us a quantifiable answer to the type of risk we can or cannot take, and that allows us to continue to push that down to the appropriate level. The Commander is the only one that's going to be able to make that call. Those are the people that are -- they're all -- they are responsible. They know the terrain. They know the area. So, that's what we're working on and refining, and, to the Chief's point, we're going to try to turn this on very soon.

GEN. MCCONVILLE: Yeah, I've been very impressed with the procedures that have been put in place. Again, we learn a lot from General Abrams and General Cloudier, but people are even taking that further, you know? It's intro -- once we put them in Jackson, and, you know, we don't, you know, report numbers, even when we really had no cases. They -- I mean, we basically -- you're talking about flatten the curve. We put it down, well, then the curve was pretty much on the ground for about eight days straight, and I look at JRTC and in -- at Fort Polk, Louisiana, and what we're finding is you really have to go to almost the county they're in because if you go further, certain places, you go to maybe New Orleans, where there's more of a curve, if you make your decision on that, you're not going to be making a risk informed decision at Fort Polk because, quite frankly, they've flattened their curve almost to the ground, where there almost isn't a curve at Fort Polk, and what we want to do is make sure we keep it that way by putting the right screening in place, where people leave, you know, if they're coming, you know, that's SFABs coming from Fort Carson's. We want to make sure that they leave in a very uninfected way, and they show up and they go through a process, and if someone does come up positive, we take immediate action, so you limit the spread, and, quite frankly, we're very fortunate with our population, that if someone does come up positive, small numbers, the recovery rate has been extremely, extremely good, and, quite frankly, most of the time, we wouldn't know unless we tested

because they're asymptomatic with a lot of the young people that are in the military.

MR. O'HANLON: Speaking of young people, one of the things that's been in the news is boot camp, and I believe that you temporarily suspended that, but you've now resumed. Is that correct? And then, also, what's the pipeline? Have you resumed at normal pace, and what are your concerns about boot camp as a place where, I don't know, if it's the closest thing the Army has to sort of a petri dish, like, you know, a ship at sea? We've seen the Navy struggle with a couple of ships, just like the cruise ship industry has struggled. There are certain kinds of proximate quarters that are especially prone to contamination, as we're all aware, and yet boot camp, at least, has the advantage that people there are generally young, and you have a little more spacing than on a ship. So, I would just be curious how that's going.

MR. MCCARTHY: It's obviously -- was a big challenge up front of how do you manage this extraordinarily decentralized type of operation because young men and women that are starting in the pipeline from every corner of the country, you know, through a MEPS station, they're on a bus, they're on a train, they're on an airplane, then they get to one of the four Army Training Centers.

We had start -- we had -- initially, when we went through the process, we started looking at -- and, literally, General Frank Muth (phonetic) and his Sergeant Major, Tabitha Gavia (phonetic), have done an amazing job, literally drilling down every soldier in every zip code in the country and how they came to making risk-based decisions of where they would flow to, and whether or not we would say hey, New York City is pretty hot right now, you need to stay home with your family, we can do, like, a delay bonus, we can push off your ship date, so you can get through this process and help your family, and they did a remarkable job with that.

So, the meter would go up or down, for week over week, where the Chief and I ultimately made the determination. We had, in Fort Jackson, South Carolina, an instance where about 50 soldiers tested positive in one battalion, and the Commander down there, Beagle, did a great job of tying it off very quickly. It didn't grow any, but that's the largest cluster we've faced today, and what the -- really, it was hard to -- the chief and I said we need to take a tactical pause to make sure we set the table correctly, get

the appropriate testing and medical capability in place to, you know, over and above what we think we are, where we are, and that we got ourselves in a much stronger footing, better protocols, and that we think that we're in a much better place, and since making that decision, it's afforded us more time and ensuring that everybody's trained appropriately. See, this is very different for drill sergeants to take this approach now, and we've both been able to get out. He was at Jackson. I've been to Fort Benning, I've been to Fort Lee, for the (inaudible) AIT. It's remarkable because how quickly the force has adjusted and how much our non-commissioned officers, in particular, are enforcing the social distancing, keeping soldiers clean, hands clean, clean barracks, and been able to adjust.

The pipeline was very strong, ahead of the peer outbreak here in the United States. We were a couple, what, 4,000 ahead --

GEN. MCCONVILLE: Yeah, it was 4,000, yeah.

MR. MCCARTHY: -- in the pipeline, and then these are kind of down months in the recruiting window, and then we've gone to 100 percent virtual, and, Chief, why don't you talk about virtual? You were -- in particular --

GEN. MCCONVILLE: Yeah.

MR. MCCARTHY: -- and how we've -- how we've been able to perform them.

GEN. MCCONVILLE: Yeah, well, the -- you know, one of the things that's -- you know, again, we closed our, you know, brick and mortar recruiting stations, and we went to virtual recruiting and, you know, we're learning a lot. You know, one of the things about learning is some of this we had to do, but, in some cases, it's actually been beneficial because many of, you know, the young men and women that are interested are on social media. That's how you contact them anyways, and just like we're having this discussion, we're -- you're much better if we're all in the same room and you can see us and feel us, but there's a lot you can get done. So, that is -- that is happening, and I think we're going to take some lessons learned about some things we're going to keep virtual, some things we're going to keep brick and mortar, and getting back, you know, the thing that Secretary said about the actual initial military training is, you know, one of the things we learned, and I've had a chance to talk to the chief of Naval Operations,

is social distancing really matters, and, you know, you know, if you think about what people see as initial military training, we used to have a whole bunch of troops in barracks very, very close together, and same thing when we went to the Joint Rangers Training Center.

You go down there today, and they have them spread out. I mean, it's every six feet. The barracks aren't packed in, like cordwood, probably the way we used to be in some of the deployments, and if you go into the stands, where they'll have people, they have X's every six feet. If they have to stand somewhere, there's footprints every six feet. They have masks on. They're washing their hands. They -- we even have a -- I should -- I didn't bring it with me, but they got green, you know, of course, we have, like, a nice little can of the green --

MR. MCCARTHY: Purell, yeah.

GEN. MCCONVILLE: -- that Purell. I mean, it's cool. It's like Army Purell, and it -- you know, they -- so, all the -- you know, this is going to -- it'll be interesting long term how much healthier our troops are, just by, you know, some of the other sicknesses that they tend to get by the procedures that people are putting in place, and I've been very, very impressed with our non-commissioned officers who are really enforcing the standards.

Now, you know, if you go down to one of our bases, you'll see some folks that are not, but there'll be someone quick to tell them if they're not doing the right thing.

MR. O'HANLON: What is the overall incidence rate, right now, in the Army, roughly speaking? I seem to recall that it was not too different from in the population, on the whole, but the death rate is much lower, perhaps because you have a younger, fitter population, but it's -- I thought it was sort of a few tenths of a percent. Is that about right?

GEN. MCCONVILLE: Yeah, I mean, you know, if you look at our total cases, and we talk cases, we're just not talking soldiers, you know? We're talking -- we talk -- we track, you know, everyone, you know? So, really, I think the denominator I had was 2.6 million people. So, if you think about a -- the city, I looked at the city, the size of Chicago, and we had 2,751 cases. You compare that to a city, you know, and then -- and then we've had 821 recover, so far. I mean, so, if you think about it, one third has

recovered already.

So, we're talking, you know, about 1,400-1,500, and, you know, tragically, we lost one soldier out of a million soldiers in the National Guard. That was, you know, very, very, very tragic. We have lost one soldier, and we have had some civilian and contractor type deaths within the -- but, you know, the numbers, I guess, one is way too many. You lose one person, but when you look at some of the threats that people see, you know, we, you know, we think our people are doing the right things to protect the force.

MR. O'HANLON: I'd like to ask a little bit more about how you're helping here at home. You both made some points about how the National Guard and Reserve are helping around the country, and I had a couple questions there. Then, Secretary McCarthy, I wanted to pick up on your earlier point about industry, which I think is very important, as we think about how this is affecting the entire defense community, and your efforts to prepare the armed forces for great power competition.

So, I'd like to come back to that pretty soon, but on the question of domestic response, I wondered if you anticipated any new additional needs that might arise in coming weeks and months, and I'll just tell you one of the things that's been on my mind.

A few weeks ago, we did a project at Brookings with some police chiefs, some retired police chiefs, and they were largely from New York City and the New York City area, where you already had 15 percent attrition to the police force, based on COVID-19, as well as self-quarantine, and Detroit, I think, was already at 20 percent attrition to the police force, and these gentlemen were worried they might need to ask the National Guard for help with policing, not just with logistics support and healthcare, where the Guard has been so admirable, and sort of, you know, is, inside of its skin, pretty comfortable with that kind of a mission, but policing, which, as we all know, is very different from soldiering, and the police chiefs were trying to think through how you could prepare soldiers, if necessary, and let me emphasize, this was all very hypothetical. I'm not suggesting that -- I don't want any viewer who's tuning in to think that this is somehow being actively considered by the U.S. Government, and I know you would correct me if I said that anyhow, but --

GEN. MCCONVILLE: We will be quick to do that, yeah.

MR. O'HANLON: I'm sure you will, and I'll let you do that in a second. So, I'll finish here by saying is there any contemplation about the kinds of missions that, hypothetically, might come next and how the Army would get its people ready for that?

GEN. MCCONVILLE: Do you want to take -- I'll give you a place --

MR. MCCARTHY: Sure. With respect to -- you asked about modernization, the total effort modernization, and then, ultimately, supplementing law enforcement, I guess, would be my words. Is that the -- those were the three?

MR. O'HANLON: We can come back to to modernization and industry in a few minutes. I'm more interested in the domestic response for COVID on this question, and just --

MR. MCCARTHY: Sure. Okay.

MR. O'HANLON: -- if you see anything else that needs to be done, or that might be needed.

MR. MCCARTHY: So, the one place the chief and I, and we should both comment here, is we're looking at the long view, and the scientific evidence will show you that, as we enter hotter temperatures and higher humidity, the virus's ability to travel and infect others is dramatically reduced. So, that, that's a great thing, but it doesn't mean it's over. As the cool weather comes back, it's ability to travel and transfer will be just as aggressive and as violent as it is today. So, you know, the -- what we're going to really push hard on is you're not going to get -- it's not a tactical pause. It'll still be out there. It may not be as prevalent in the summer months, but it can boomerang back, and that's where that discipline and that focus and vigilance, all the way until we kill it, until we find a vaccine and kill it, we have to be vigilant. So, that's the first thing.

As we described in our comments, thousands of Guardsmen, and Reservists, and Active Component are supporting this effort, and as -- how are you going to look at the long view, if you take units back and then are -- they have to be on a prepared order to go forward? Lots of conversations about that today, lots of hard looks at that. There will be capabilities that will have to be postured to

potentially support again.

On the modernization front, very proud of the industry, that they're pushing hard on this. We continue -- we're in constant communication with them. We've visited some of their locations to talk to their employees because some of them had challenges, and they had people on the production line get sick, and it calls into question why am I doing this? And as the Chief and I have highlighted repeatedly, we've got 191,000 people deployed, and we need that capability. We need that technical margin to win. We're in combat in the Middle East, in particular. So, we're in constant communication. We're trying to help these manufacturers to strengthen their balance sheets. If they have liquidity challenges, we can do progress payments. We're talking about small business loans. We're doing things to help them with their second and third tier suppliers, and it's helping them, but it's -- the question is: is the country going to continue to reopen and get back to work?

On the law enforcement piece, we -- there are some states that are looking at that. That'll ultimately be a decision that would be made by FEMA through the missioned assignments, I think, Chief, but the National Guard's job is to protect the community, not to police it. So, we try not to -- you know, we try not to involve ourselves with those domestic matters, but there's a very fine line that we try to keep, but, in particular, Chief, you should talk about the long view and some of the conversations that were --

GEN. MCCONVILLE: Yeah, I just touched, really, on the question, on the -- you know, from the Federal side, I mean, we've been asked that question before, and, like the Secretary said, hey, do you see the Army doing, you know, policing in those type, that I would say at the Federal level, we have not been asked to provide that capability, that, you know, we're here to protect the nation, not to police the nation.

Now, each state has, you know, its own National Guard, and depending on, you know, their legislation, different -- I've had -- I've talked to a lot of TAGs about this, and, you know, the Governors do have the capability under state activations and the authorities to do certain things with their Guard, and some of that, that could lead to policing capability, but at our level, we have not been asked to

do that, and, you know, we tend -- because, as you know, from (inaudible) stay away from those type of missions, but we haven't been asked to do that, and it -- you know, the National Guard is doing incredible things. I think we got 37,000 Army National Guards, right now, committed, and they're doing a whole bunch of things, and, you know, and if there is a law enforced, they tend to be on the support side, rather than the actual policing side.

MR. O'HANLON: That's very helpful, and let me just extend a personal note of gratitude for how much you folks are helping here at home, as well as abroad. Secretary McCarthy and also the chief, if I could ask you both about defense industry, and thank you for what you just added to your opening comments, but I wanted to probe a little further and ask where are your major concerns about the ability of the industrial base to keep up with the pace of the procurement and technology development that is so central to the National Defense Strategy, especially in this era of great power and competition. You said that you have -- people are watching the subcontractor base, trying to make sure it stays healthy. That's one of your concerns, but you also said most production lines appear to be open. Are you finding that some of the subcontractors are not able to keep up with the flow? Is that where your main concern is, as you look weeks and months ahead?

MR. MCCARTHY: It's the number one issue or concern that we have, is the supply chain. Second and third tier suppliers, some of these are small companies, 50-100 people, and you get a couple people sick, it could shut the whole company down, coupled with the fact of just the reliance on manufactured parts from other countries, Mexico, Europe, East Asia, or we don't -- we are limited in our ability to affect them in getting them back to work. It just calls into question a lot of these strategic industrial base issues, that we will have to look, have a relook, and have a very hard conversation with ourselves of how we're going to source these things in the future because I've had several top tier manufacturers ask me can you help us with a supplier in Mexico?

So, now, I'm going to the State Department, trying to get them to help us to get these people back to work. So, it presents challenges that are far beyond our reach and to influence. So, we're going to have some real heart to hearts with manufacturers going forward because, you know, when

we're developing 31 signature systems, over half of our procurement budget is going towards these new weapons systems, we've got to get them. We've got to put them into the formation. Much of our iron is 50 years old. So, that probably is the primary, and where we put the most energy because, to the points we've made repeatedly, it's remarkable. There's men and women all over the country, they're getting in the truck, and they're going to work, and they've got masks on, and they're fighting through it, just like everybody else. So, what we've seen is very encouraging, but the supply chain will be a challenge for us for months and months ahead.

GEN. MCCONVILLE: Yeah, we're still -- I mean, you know, we did a hyper sonics test, a very successful hyper sonics test. We've got other tests going on.

MR. MCCARTHY: Prisms are tomorrow.

GEN. MCCONVILLE: Yeah, and prisms tomorrow so, what you're seeing, Michael, is, you know, modernization continues, but they happen to do the same thing, you know, and we're talking to our testers. We're talking to our, you know, industry, you know, folks, on how to maintain the safety of their force, too. So, they have to screen. You know, even when we are down at JRTC, there's civilian contractors that are supporting the force, and they're doing the same thing. They're sheltering in place, when they're not working. They're coming in because they want to protect the force. They are getting screened, they are changing their clothes, they are washing their hands, and doing all those type things so they can get the job done, and has it slowed us down some? Probably for sure, but it hasn't stopped us, and we're continuing to move on with our modernization priorities.

MR. O'HANLON: I just have one more question about COVID-19, which, understandably, has dominated most of hour, but then I actually want to use the last 15 minutes to get back to the broader agenda, of the National Defense Strategy and what you've been trying to do, both of you, with the Army, including in your previous jobs, when you were Undersecretary and Vice Chief. I know there were a lot of longstanding projects and ambitions, but before I do ask about that, I wanted to ask about recruiting and retention, and my guess is that you're going to do pretty well with recruiting and retention.

For one thing, you have such an amazing organization, but also that, in this kind of an economy, of course, this is a different kind of recession than we've seen before and there's a lot of effort to help people directly at home, and some people, you know, are receiving as much money as they were making in a previous job, even if they're unemployed now.

So, it's a little different kind of recession than we've had, and we all hope and pray it's very temporary, but, normally, in recessions, recruiting and retention are somewhat less challenged for the military because you are a reliable paycheck for those who are high enough in ability and motivation to be willing to join the U.S. Armed Forces. I wonder if I'm right about this so far. From what you've seen in statistics, and what you also just believe in your gut, do you expect that, for all the problems you've got, that probably recruiting and retention will not be high on your list of exacerbating and worsening problems, due to COVID-19, or am I missing something?

GEN. MCCONVILLE: Let me start with retention. You know, right now, you know, we're having -- you know, we made our retention for the year. We're actually well over retention, you know, and as you would expect, many folks that were leaving are deciding to stay, just because it's the uncertainty, and those type things. So, we are very, very comfortable where we are in retention.

Interesting enough when recruiting, you know, when it was 3.9 percent, people said you couldn't recruit in an environment where, you know, unemployment was so low and we were competing -- we were -- actually were way ahead. You know, we're about 4,000 or 5,000 ahead, for the year, and we gave them a very high mission. We actually give them a higher mission than they actually -- you know, we don't -- we just don't like to broadcast this, but we usually get -- at the beginning of the year, we give a much higher mission than we really need, just in case attrition turns out to be a lot worse, so we don't end up, the end of the year, and say, hey, we said this number, you actually need to get 5,000 at the end. That doesn't work real well. It's much easier to say slow them down at the end. You know, you're just still out there at the last month, we'll move over till next year, or they'll go one month later, and that allows us to get close to the number we need because, really, what drives it is interesting.

So, what we're seeing right now is retention is really good. Recruiting, you know, is

coming along, and we're just waiting to see, you know, how it's going to play out, right now. It's pretty much -- it's okay. It's not -- it's not like people are running to join the Army. I think a lot of people are just waiting. They're just sheltering in place. It's like a snowstorm. You know, it's like a 60-day snow storm and they're just waiting for, you know, how -- what's it going to look like when it, you know, during the summer, and I think that a lot of people are getting to see soldiers doing a lot of different things, which is really interesting.

If you take a look at where we're doing most of our work, it's in the Northeast, which, historically, is where you don't see a lot of military, and, so, it's an interesting opportunity for us to -- for people to see what the military can do, and hopefully they'll join. So, I think it's -- you know, we're pretty much on track, and we'll have a better idea, in about a month or two, how this plays out.

MR. MCCARTHY: Yeah, if I could only add, Michael, I think it's for -- for me, it's not recruiting. It's where will the budget be. To your point you made before, this is a, basically, a self-inflicted recession because we turned the economy off, but then we're going to turn it -- as you're turning it back -- and I think we just lost him.

(Connection lost)

GEN. MCCONVILLE: Hey, Michael, did we lose you?

MR. MCCARTHY: Yes, we did lose Michael.

MALE SPEAKER: How was that (inaudible)

GEN. MCCONVILLE: Okay, can we try a reconnect?

MR. MCCARTHY: Yes, we are.

MALE SPEAKER: Hey, do we need to move into the Secretary's Office?

MR. MCCARTHY: I think it's their side. It's --

GEN. MCCONVILLE: Yeah.

(Connection lost)

MR. MCCARTHY: -- recall the 2008 and '09 financial crisis, a very similar set of circumstances that required a Substantial Recovery Act, in the form of investment over a trillion dollars

during that timeframe, and what it did was compress budgets in the following years, and ultimately leading to the Budget Control Act. Inflationary pressures will bring that back to us, and these are challenges we are thinking about now, as we look at the fit up, and whether or not this will pressurize Army budgets in the '23-'24 timeframe, which are very critical to us in our modernization efforts and increasing our talent management within the force.

So, we are watching that very closely, and we know that that is a challenge that's out in front of us. Chief, why don't you -- do you want to close us out, here?

GEN. MCCONVILLE: Yes. Thanks, Mr. Secretary, just some things -- one of the things that -- the questions that Michael asked that I just want to kind of -- kind of end with. He asked us, you know, have we learned some things about -- as we went through this process, some of the capabilities we needed or didn't need. What I can say is always -- you know, there's always been a discussion on, you know, what do we provide, you know, the insurance policy capabilities? You know, we tend to keep stockages of protected equipment, you know, in large numbers, never thinking that we would need to use that amount.

I was very, very surprised at how much we have contributed to the fight and also needed. Our reserve hospitals, we have 15 -- people call them field hospitals, in the Reserves, and they have done an incredible job, not only serving the community, but the way were able to stand up our Urban Augmentation Medical Taskforces, came out of those combat hospitals, and they were agile and adapt enough to leave in place the medical professionals that were fighting COVID in their communities, and still create 15 of those medical taskforces that are on the front lines fighting right now, and I can't say enough about our Army National Guard, what they have done.

I've seen them go into nursing homes. I've seen them go into veterans' homes and save lives, every single day, and what they're doing for their communities is absolutely amazing, and, you know, sometimes, when you have adversity, when you have tough times, you see the very, very best of people, and I think that's what the Secretary and I have seen. You know, we have well over 150,000 soldiers spread out around the world, and they are doing the mission in Afghanistan, in Iraq. They're on

the front lines in Korea, and yet we've seen incredible commitment, even from those who have retired that want to come back on active duty, help out the communities, help the nation beat this COVID virus, and I am confident that with the approach that we're having, the whole governor approach, and everyone coming together, we will prevail, and we will defeat this virus. Thank you.

* * * * *

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2020

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
1800 Diagonal Road, Suite 600
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190