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WEBINAR

HOW THE ARMY IS ADAPTING TO GREAT POWER COMPETITION

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: Good morning, everyone and welcome to Brookings and this event today with General James McConville, chief of staff of the U.S. Army. I'm Mike O'Hanlon with the Foreign Policy Program. And, General, it is a real privilege for us to welcome you to this virtual Brookings event.

Let me say right up front as well that we will look forward to audience questions maybe in the last 20 minutes or so of this hour long conversation. And you can send them in at events@Brookings.edu. Again, that is events@Brookings.edu.

But, first, before we get into discussing the state of the U.S. Army today and its preparations for great power competition, let me say a brief word of welcome to General McConville. He is a native of Quincy, Massachusetts. Massachusetts has certainly had a good run in the top tier of the Pentagon of late, with General Joe Dunford, General Mark Milley, and General James McConville. By the way, I'm not going to ask General McConville whether he's happy or sad that Tom Brady won the Superbowl with a different team. That's the ultimate Rorschach test on asking Boston sports fans about where their loyalties really lie. But we'll spare him that one today. We do want to talk about many other issues concerning the state of today's Army in terms of readiness, in terms of its people, but also certainly in terms of its vision for the longer-term and for modernization.

General McConville is extremely well suited to this task, not only because of his long and distinguished career in the Army with deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere, but also his technical expertise. He has a master's from Georgia Tech, which you don't see every day among U.S. military leadership. Also he is a helicopter pilot by training and background, and so has a considerable amount of background with one of the Army's main six priorities for modernization, which is the future vertical lift, in terms of his core competencies and expertise as a soldier himself.

And so, General McConville, I just wanted to again thank you very much for being with us today, sir. We look forward to the conversation.

GENERAL McCONVILLE: Well, thank you, Michael. It's great to be here with you today. And you mentioned two great generals from Boston. General Joe Dunford and I actually grew up in the same neighborhood together as kids. I like to say we used to play army together. He'll argue he was playing marines at that time. And very proud of what he did for the country, along with General Milley.

Just one thing I would like to highlight as we start, today is Congressional Medal of Honor Day in the Department of Defense and just want to say to all those heroes, we stand on your shoulders and try to strive every day to live up to the legacy that you left us. And just very, very proud of all those who've gone before us. And we do strive to live up to your legacy every single day.

So great to be here with you.

MR. O'HANLON: General, that's a wonderful comment. And it leads in I think to maybe our first topic that I wanted to ask you about today, which is the people of the Army and of course the soldiers, their families. You've talked also about veterans and those who had served before. But I wanted to ask you about the state of the Army. I want to tip my cap personally to everybody who is now a year into COVID, as well as all the other challenges that have been facing the Armed Forces. And by most of the metrics that I can see, things are looking pretty good in terms of recruitment, retention. There have obviously been some concerns in the last few months with some of the issues of violent extremism and linkages to various parts of our society. And that's a challenge for any large organization. So you may or may not want to comment on that too.

But I wondered if you could just take stock of the people of the Army today and specifically the kinds of trends that you've seen over this last year as we've been facing this major COVID crisis in the country, which of course has all sorts of disparate effects on the workforce and on your ability to recruit and retain.

So if you could please speak to that a little bit, sir.

GENERAL McCONVILLE: Yeah, sure, Michael.

You know, we often talk about the fog and friction of war and, you know, in some ways we're in war in the United States right now and we're fighting this invisible enemy that we call COVID. And, you know, it has had a traumatic effect on our country. When we look at those unfortunately who have passed away due to COVID, the numbers are just terrible. So what I've been very, very proud of, our people. The United States Army. When I talk about people, as you said, it's our soldiers from all three components, it's our Department of the Army civilians, it's our families, and it's our veterans and retirees. They all have been affected by this, but they have continued to do their jobs. And, you know, in the military, in the Army specifically that I know about, is we can't telecommute to combat. So we've got

to continue to recruit, we have to continue to retain, our families continue to deploy overseas and around the country. You know, we bring in 130,000 soldiers about every single year. And so we have to recruit them. Our recruiters have done incredible work making mission and we're very blessed that young men and women still want to raise their hand and serve their country, even during these very difficult times.

And so we've had to change the way we actually recruit. We had to take a pause in training, but we're back up to full scale and we really didn't miss a bit after the pause of how do we actually bring soldiers in, make sure their parents know we're going to take care of them while they're going through COVID. And we had to put measures in place to do that. And we've been able to train our soldiers during initial military training, advanced individual training, and then move them out to their respective divisions and posts that they're going to. Our combat training centers are still going on, they're still conducting that large scale ground combat operations that we need to do. And we are still in Afghanistan, we're still in Iraq, we're still in Syria, we're still in Korea, we're still operating in Europe, around the world, and reassuring our partners and working very, very closely.

So I didn't talk about the fact that not only are we fighting COVID in the Army, our soldiers, our medical professionals have gone in hospitals around the country and provided that additional support to help these communities fight COVID. Right now we've got multiple teams out there doing vaccinations and it really —- you know, gone off that to help defeat the COVID.

So I couldn't be prouder of what our Army is doing right now. You talked about some issues that we're concerned about. We're certainly concerned about sexual harassment, sexual assault, extremism, and racism in the Army. And those are the types of behaviors that we're going after. They break down the cohesion of our units and they impact readiness. So we are at all levels getting after those type of issues.

But, again, I'd just like to say that I could not be prouder of our Army today.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you.

I wanted to really build on some recent papers that you've put out and I know are a big priority for you. And one came out just last week, which was the concept of multi-domain operations and preparing the Army for the future of great power competition. There was only one small typo. I thought you should have published it on March 17 instead of March 16 and then it could be the St. Patrick's Day

paper and would be known that way forever. But leave that aside.

You have a lot of eloquent thoughts in that paper about preparing for long-term great power competition. Before we get into some of the specifics, I wanted to ask how should I understand that paper relative to the last half dozen years of various initiatives? Because, as you well know, and you say it in the paper, you're building on ideas that have been to some extent put forth before. Going back to the latter Obama years, we had the Third Offset and then we had the National Defense Strategy of Secretary Mattis in the Trump administration, the Army and Air Force have been pushing multi-domain operations for a number of years as an integrating concept, trying to expand the battle space in multiple dimensions and over a longer range.

How should I understand this new paper relative to the those? And, by the way, have we made any meaningful progress yet from those earlier initiatives, or do you find yourself frustrated that it's been hard to really get this whole show going the way you'd like?

GENERAL McCONVILLE: Well, you know, there's that old adage that generals are always trying to fight the last fight or fight the last fight better. I think in the Army right now what we're doing is trying to prepare to win the next fight. And hopefully we don't have it because we're so prepared. And it's really about peace through strength. And it's about developing a military, developing an Army, that has the ability to compete below the level of armed conflict, and also has the ability to deter those who could wish us harm in some situations.

So what we're recognizing is there is great power competition that's different from what we've been doing for the lats 20 years. Many of our officers and noncommissioned officers that have served for the last 20 years have been involved in irregular warfare, counter insurgency, counter terrorism type operations, like we've seen in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Syria, and they've done that extremely well. But we recognize the future is great power competition. The pacing country is China, and we're certainly concerned with Russia. But what I try to tell people, great power competition does not have to mean great power conflict. And quite frankly, it can't be. And we've got to find out how we co-exist. And I believe, getting back to peace through strength, that peace comes from a whole of government effort. Quite frankly the military is in support, diplomacy is very important, information, operations are extremely important, economic operations are extremely important. And the military is there to support that.

The strength also comes from strong allies and partners. And when we talk about competition, it's about working very, very closely with our allies and partners throughout the world. And my experience as the chief has been with them, that's the type of relationship they want. They share the same values, they share the same belief of the world order that they want, which is a free and open world order where everyone can prosper. And that's what we're committed to doing.

MR. O'HANLON: Building on that point, I liked what you just said about — and it's also what Chairman Milley told me in an interview we did with him last fall — about how competition is distinct from conflict. And the first is maybe inevitable and maybe even at some level okay. The second is absolutely to be avoided at all costs with a nuclear armed adversary, if at all possible. And yet you need to have the robust deterrence and capability for wanting to be able to do that.

I wanted to explore a little bit more how you feel trend lines have been going with great power relations in the last six or eight years, because in the document that the Army released last week there is a statement that — you're quoting some other joint document, basically saying that it seems likely that the world will continue to sort of fray and there will be centrifugal forces and a less strong global rules based order over the next 20 years. Do you see that as inevitable or do you see the possibility that with, much what the Army is already doing today, that we could actually sort of maybe put a cap on the fraying and maintain a little bit of cohesion to this rules based order?

I'm just curious, before we get into specifics on modernization and things like that, how you see the overall international environment evolving.

GENERAL McCONVILLE: Well, I think there's opportunity there, you know, for us to support the diplomacy, but I think in the military it's our job to really plan for the worst case. What's the worst situation that's going to happen. And then you can hope for the best situation. But I think there's opportunity out there for diplomacy, to work with allies and partners and work with our competitors and find out a way that we can co-exist because we need to. We all have very strong military capabilities and I think we need to recognize that. And I don't think it's good for anybody to have that type of conflict. So we need to be able to work that out.

But from where I sit as the chief of staff of the Army, I believe our role is to provide a very strong Army that works very closely with our allies and partners, to provide a position of strength from

which we can accomplish diplomacy.

MR. O'HANLON: Now, on the issue of the global order — and I want to get into some of the specifics in your document about modernization priorities, but I'm curious, you talk in that document as well about operational tempo and we talked earlier about the state of the Army and the state of families. And I guess my question boils down to is the Army operational tempo today at an acceptable pace, or is it too much? And I think it's important for us all to have some sense of the answer to that question from your vantage point as we think about future questions, like the size of the Army, the Army budget, the future of the deployment to Afghanistan, the future of U.S. military presence in other places around the world, and whether we're — you know, obviously the Army is working very hard, but my question is, is that a pace that's sustainable and that in some ways generates benefits because some soldiers — most soldiers want to deploy a certain amount and a certain amount of overseas engagement is healthy for preparing readiness until it becomes too much.

So how close are we to that crossover point where it's too much?

GENERAL McCONVILLE: Well, we find the Army is extremely busy right now with all the deployments and COVID even makes it much more challenging. Everything is hard in COVID. You know, you're very concerned about the health and welfare of every soldier that may be deploying or going through training, you're very concerned about the families. We have some forces that are really high deployment type forces, and we certainly want to lessen them. We're going to a new model in the Army, which is a regionally aligned readiness and modernization model that is going to allow us, you know, to modernize the Force and give predictability in how we're doing that. Many of our systems that we're developing right now — we're very pleased with the speed that they're coming in. So over the next two, three, four, five years, we're going to be fielding major systems. And we have to have a predictable time schedule to do that. So that's coming into the Force right now.

When we talk about end strength, a lot of people want to talk about what the Army's end strength should or shouldn't be. I'll tell you, we're a little over a million for the total Force, we're at 485,000 for the regular Army force, which is the same size of the Force that we were at 9/11. So at least as I talk about budgets and I talk about the future, from a chief standpoint I think the size of the Army is about where it needs to be. I'd like to see it bigger, but I also have got to recognize tradeoffs and, you

know — we don't have the budget yet, but a lot of people are saying that you shouldn't anticipate having a much larger budget than you have. So what we're doing is prioritizing what needs to get done. And I believe that we must transform the Army for the next 40 years. And I make the argument every 40 years I think the Army needs to transform. It did in 1940 when General Marshall sat in my seat for World War II. We used a lot of those systems and weapons systems really up to the 1980s when I came in the Army. We did a major transformation in the late '70s and '80s. That's where AirLand Battle came in, that's when we stood up our combat training centers, and we had our Big Five modernization efforts. And what we've done over the last 40 years is incrementally improved our systems. And I make the argument, when you start running out of letters, you need to get new systems. And that's where we're at right now.

And what I want to try to do is set the stage for the chiefs that are coming after me, for the next 40 years, and reset the balance not only on, you know, the modernization priorities, but it's also the type of doctrine we're going to have. We're standing up new organizations, we're doing things with talent management. All these come together to give us the Force that we need that's going to provide the strength that we need for the next 20, 30, 40 years in great power competition.

MR. O'HANLON: That you for that historical perspective, because that's very helpful for me to frame the next question. You mentioned the Big Five successes, you know, things like the Abrams Tank in the 1980s, and then which carried on and were modernized and upgraded. And then of course, at a time when you were out in the field primarily, the Army struggled. And sort of its next Big Five sort of floundered through the '90s and into the early 2000s, capped off by the Future Combat system. Now you've got six priority areas of modernization that I know that you and former Secretary McCarthy and Ester, and General Milley when he was Army chief, that you developed together. These include the future vertical life.

But I wondered what's the key that is making you optimistic, as you just mentioned, that you're seeing promising early results? Is the Army trying to make more small incremental progress within each of those six categories? Is that what sort of got you back on track? Or do you think that you're poised now to really bring in big new platforms and to maybe repeat the successes of the 1980s with those Big Five, but at a different more modern scale?

GENERAL McCONVILLE: Well, I think what's different now is — well, first we stood up

futures command. And what we have moved from what I would suggest is industrial age linear acquisition system to more of a cross-functional team system that allows us to work very, very closely with — so what I would suggest is the way we used to do it is we would spend a lot of time trying to determine what the requirements were. Very prescriptive. And I looked at some of the previous acquisition programs. It would take us five to seven years to get the requirements right. And it would be very prescriptive document that we would put out to industry and we would go through a competition and then maybe developed a system over the five to seven years long or so. You'd be sitting at 15 years and technology had changed a whole bunch during that time frame. And you may end up with something that's just not right for where you're at.

What I'm seeing now is we're working very closely with industry and we're putting out documents that are characteristics. This is what we think we want with a characteristics document. So the process becomes come back to us with an initial design and we get an idea of what industry can actually do and then we can draw down from — you know, maybe there's 100 people who come back with an initial design, we get down to 10. Then we say come back with a detailed design and we've upped our characteristics and now there may be five. And we get an idea of what they can actually do, we adjust our characteristics, and then we're down to select maybe to two. And now we have them built a prototype. And when you get a prototype you can really start to get your requirements right because you're not in the unobtanium. You didn't ask for something that can't be done.

All along the way you're having soldier touch points and you start to realize that maybe that requirement that should be air droppable from 80,000 or should be able to go under water for 90 — we don't really need that. In fact, if we had known that was going to add two years to schedule or hundreds of millions of dollars to cost, we would have taken that out. But industry's trying to do what we told them. So what we're seeing is we're driving before we're buying, we're flying before we're buying. And I'm very, very impressed with what I'm seeing with industry. You know, we're going to field hypersonic battery in 2023. I mean a lot of these systems happen very, very quickly. We're talking two, three, four years and new aircraft that are flying right now that are going to be — you know, in less than 10 years, which is pretty amazing.

So we're very, very happy. We're finding when industry invests along with us, they're

very, very effective in how they use their funds, and so we're pretty excited about where we're going and what's happening.

MR. O'HANLON: Now, on those six areas of priority — and I think I remember them all. There's certainly long range fires, there's future ground vehicles, future vertical lift, the network, the soldier, and then air and missile defense. And the beauty of those six is that even a Brookings scholar can remember them. But the down side potentially — and I wanted to ask you to comment on this — is that when you add them all up it really does sort of encompass almost everything in the Army. And your document, your paper from last week, also talks about sustainment and logistics. And so that's almost like seventh priority. And I wondered if within that list of priorities if you have a top two or three so that you know how to, as chief, really prioritize your own concern and not let his list become all encompassing. And therefore if you don't prioritize — if you prioritize everything, you prioritize nothing, so to speak.

So I wondered, within that set of categories, do you have one or two or three that are the most important to you?

GENERAL McCONVILLE: Well, you know, if you take a look at the six priorities, and we also as we take a look at how we tie them together, so from where I sit is long range precision fires is extremely important. We think we need to have that. And when I look at all the areas, that is moving out very quickly.

So we're going to have the capability basically for anti-ship capability, we're going to have the ability to suppress air defense systems at a very, very long range, we're going to have the ability to do strategic counter fire, we're going to have the ability to do anti-access area denial capabilities. So I think that is very, very important. And some of my colleagues, you know, the General Dan Allen and some that came before me — and H.R. McMaster has talked about us being out-ranged, out-gunned and, you know, so. Part of that is in the future we're not going to be out-ranged, we're not going to be out-gunned. We're going to have those type of capabilities, which we think is really important.

I think the ability for the next generation combat vehicle. You know, the core of the United States Army is ground combat. And the ability — you know, the Bradley served us well, but I think we have to replace the Bradley in the future. And that is what the next generation combat vehicle is all about. That will be very, very different, how that operates. And also the idea of how we do manned,

unmanned teaming on the ground. We do it in the air right now, but in the future we're going to see a lot more on that ground and taking advantage of the artificial intelligence and autonomous systems that are available.

Something else that we're developing, two aircraft right now for future vertical lift, and what's pretty incredible is how fast they've done that and they are flying right now. And they're relatively new concepts of how we're going to get after the range and speed that we need.

And then the big idea for the United States Army, it really kind of flows from — you know, we're looking at we know we need speed in the future, we know we need range — and that's distance of weapons systems, but it's really about convergence and how we bring all these systems together to get what we call decision dominance. You know, the fact that we're going to — you know, the technology is converging, unlike it was before. So you can quickly takes senses, multiple senses, bring them back into an integrated battle command system, and then use an artificial intelligence, quickly determine what is the right shooter to engage that target, is something that we just did in Project Convergence out at the Yuma Desert. And what we were finding is previously we were getting lethal effects in tens of minutes, now we're getting them in tens of seconds.

So those are the type of things that we're going to go after. And when I talk to industry I say the same thing. You know, we have a prioritization of the programs. Now, ideally what I'd go is I'd like to stay with a 31 + 4. I'll go back to other legacy systems that we may not incrementally improve in the future or we're spending money so there's that — there will be that time when we say, hey, we have to move from legacy to the new systems and we'll do that. But those are where we're going, and cost performance and schedule does matter. You know, to me success is in the hands of a soldier. And we're not going to have long drawn out programs that we can't get to our soldiers.

MR. O'HANLON: And that helps another question which I had in my mind. It's about the defense top line. I know this is a tough question to talk about in the sense that the Biden team is still getting established and they haven't done the five year plan, but we hear this question on Capitol Hill a lot already. You know, is the Pentagon budget already too big, what about, you know, what Secretary Mattis and General Dunford had proposed when the NDS came out, that we needed 3% to 5% annual real growth indefinitely, but now that seems to have ended.

How can the Army cope with a potentially more austere — or maybe let's just say flat budget top line environment going forward? If you have to choose between let's say quantity and quality, so to speak, or readiness now versus modernization for the future, or what part of the Force is active versus what part is reserve component, do you have any initial instincts at a sort of almost a philosophical level? Because I realize that programmatically you're not going to make these kinds of proposals until you're told what your guidance is. But at a philosophical level, do you have any instinct about where you make the tough choices?

GENERAL McCONVILLE: Yeah, I do. I think first of all, you don't buy more structure and people that you absolutely need. Because that's where the expense is. So I think we've already kind of made that decision. When we do our analysis and — you know, the chairman, Secretary Esper before us — and I was in full agreement — I would have a bigger sized Army if I thought we could afford it. I think we need it. You know, I really do. I think the regular Army should be somewhere around 540-550. I mean if we take a look at the size of the Army during the peak times during Iraq and Afghanistan, the regular Army was about 570,000 and we had 150,000 National Guard and Reserves on active duty. So that was about 720,000. So we're sitting right now at 485,000. There's other things I'd like to do, but what I kind of have looked at is I've already probably had to give up the growth that we're going to have planned in the Army because — if we do go flat line. So that is kind of on the table right now. We're probably not going to grow the Army, even though I'd like to more because end strength is something we have to take a look at.

If you take a look at readiness, it's — you know, I have got to make sure that every soldier, no matter what component, goes into combat ready to do the mission. That's where the predictability in the model becomes really important. You make sure that the highest level of readiness, the amount of brigades that awe need to do the mission. Now, you start to take risk in that maybe you don't do as exotic type exercises, you might be able to get the same type of training at the CTC, you may not rotate the Force as much overseas, you might look at using our pre-positioned stocks more forward rather than actually bringing the whole system over there. So there are some things we can do to make our training more efficient and more effective. So that's kind of the other bucket you have to go to.

And then when you go to the modernization bucket of funds and resources, I am

committed, the Secretary is committed right now. And each secretary before me, from Secretary Esper to Secretary McCarthy to Secretary Whitley is –– everyone believes, and I believe strongly –– that we must transform and modernize the Army now. So we've got to do that. We're three years into it, I think we've got some really good programs going. We probably need about two or three more years of good solid budgets. And I think that's something we have to do.

So we're committed to making that happen, we're working very closely with industry and saying we've got to keep these programs and cost performance and schedule. We're also taking a look at our legacy systems, that some systems we're just not going to be able to continue to buy because we want to modernize the Army. And those are tough decisions and we're aware of that. But we're going to have to make those decisions in the future.

MR. O'HANLON: Just one more broad question from me and then there are a number that are coming by email that I'll ask in just a moment. But as I read the Army paper last week on multi-domain operations in great power competition, I appreciated the tension, the intellectual tension between two ideas and I wanted to ask you to comment. And I think the fact that there was tension in the paper was good because in the real world there is often forces pulling in multiple directions.

On the one hand you talked a lot about wanting to react rapidly, win the first fight, be decisive early on, not require a big logistical build up, like in Desert Storm. Recognizing a future enemy may not grant us that opportunity, and so you need to be able to be responsive and effective and lethal early.

On the other hand, you realize you may not get that choice because a lot of your paper was about how units at the smaller scale level may have to operate with their command and control disrupted, they may have to operate essentially on their own to some extent or with minimal integration with other units because you're not going to have the ability to just deploy a quarter of a million of them all together into one place. And I like that because frankly my view of warfare is –– first of all, in American history we don't usually win the first battle, to be blunt. I mean historically. And then secondly when militaries have built plans that required winning the first battle, it often created a preemptive dynamic, which was dangerous. Let's say the Germans in World War I with the Schlieffen Plan, where you had to go first or you lost. And that put pressure on policy makers in a crisis to choose war rather than, you

know, crisis management or negotiation.

So I wanted just to ask you to comment on that penchant. And I guess the way to put it to you in a specific question is do you really think the Army is likely to have the luxury, if you will, of winning that first fight, or being able to be decisive in that first fight? Or are you really putting your eggs in a number of baskets where you realize we may not get that opportunity as much as we would prefer to?

GENERAL McCONVILLE: I think that's a great question because in a perfect world we would know where we're going to fight and we'd have a plan and we could actually have a calibrated force posture such that we would have exactly the right troops in the right place at the right time. But history has shown us we usually don't get that right.

So what we're trying to do is figure out the best way to provide options. And that's why we have what we call in the Army calibrated force posture. We have some forces that are stationed forward, they're permanently there, we have some forces that are rotational, we have some forces that are — the actual equipment, which takes a long time to get there, is pre-positioned forward. And this is where the relationships with allies and partners becomes so important because we can work with them and we share the same interests and they provide a certain amount of military strength. They also provide us access. If you're going to go somewhere, you usually need an airfield or a port if you're going to be able to conduct some type of operations and then you're going to support those operations. So that becomes extremely important.

So the tension becomes, how do you go beyond being what I would say a one option commander? If you only have one way in or one place you can go, you probably haven't set up the command that you're supporting or the national command authority you want. What we want to do — and this is where the joint force comes in, this is where the combined force comes in, is what we want to do is provide multiple options. So if they shut down one port, they shut down one airfield, they take away this one capability, you're not sitting here saying we have no options. We have multiple options. And this presents multiple dilemmas to our competitors. And I think that causes them to pause and think, maybe we don't want to take this action that we were thinking about because there's multiple ways that we can impose costs on them. And it may be a diplomatic cost, it may be an information cost, it may be an economic cost, or it may be a military cost, but that is how I think you most effectively compete in the

world today.

MR. O'HANLON: Outstanding. Well, thank you. I really enjoyed my opportunity to ask you questions.

And now I'm going to start to bring in some of those we're getting from a lot of the audience. And, again, events@Brookings.edu. There may still be time to sneak in one or two more, but I've got a bunch.

So the first one gets into specific modernization priority of long range fires, and is asking I guess maybe for a little bit more detail, including to what extent might the Army be collaborating with the Marine Corps with its artillery and anti-ship accounts, as well as the Navy's ongoing investments in long range munitions. But also anything more specific you might want to add if there's a program or two that's of particular interest to you in the long range fires category.

GENERAL McCONVILLE: Yeah, I'll start at the top, which is really the strategic long range fires, which is a hypersonic missile capability. We're working very closely with the Navy on that system. And, again, all the services are sharing certain amounts of technology, but that is going very, very good. We did a recent test that was very successful that we published the results on. Very long distance and very precise capability. We'll be doing more tests coming up over this next year and into the future. And we anticipate the first battery being in place. We picked the commander, we're putting a team together, and that battery will be fielded in 2023. And that is going to be part of our multi-domain task force with the strategic fires capability.

The second is a mid-range capability, which we're working right now both with the Navy and the Marine Corps, SM6s and Tomahawk capability from a land based capability to give us, again, a mid-range capability, but also an anti-ship capability, which allows us to provide commanders an anti-access area denial capability like some of our competitors have done against some of the systems. And, again, that's 2023 capability that's coming in. The systems are already set. We already use Tomahawks, we already use SM6s, so it's just a matter of configuring them for the system that we're going to use. And the Marine Corps is using some — we're working with them with some of the technology, whether it's autonomous vehicle capability or JLTV capability as they develop their systems. And then the precision strike missile system, again, is coming on board. That's about a 500 kilometer capability. And we're

seeing that work very, very well. And then at the tactical level, the extended range cannon, you know, we're seeing 70 kilometer shots with precise capability.

But what's more important is how we tie all those systems together as part of the joint and combined force. And using sensors and space and everything else to bring them together so we can have precision targeting and we can hit moving targets, we can hit ships and do those type of things. That's what really the big idea with the long range precision fires is.

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent. And speaking of sensors and integration and command and control, there's a questioner that really wants to ask if there are any other areas we should see services merging their efforts. Because the question begins with what you've been writing and talking about with the Army and Air Force efforts on Combined Joint All-Domain Command and Control, CJADC2. In the old days, about a half dozen years ago, we saw the Navy and the Air Force pushing AirSea Battle, which was then renamed Joint Concept for Maneuver in the Global Commons — Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons — so that acronym maybe doomed that concept to the dustbin of history. But I guess the question would be to what extent are those efforts overlapping and is the Navy still part of Joint All-Domain Command and Control under this new name. And are there other areas of joint effort where we should see opportunity for two or more services to really collaborate together, even in places where that's not yet happening as much?

GENERAL McCONVILLE: Yeah, I think it starts with the Joint All-Domain Command and Control system. And I think all the service chiefs, we've all talked — General C.Q. Brown and myself actually we signed an agreement saying that we're going to come together on JADC2. We actually added "C" because we're very cognizant of the important role that the combined force plays. And we're doing a lot of interesting command and control things with our allies and partners. We're doing what we call a big warfighter exercise where we'll have a U.K. and French division operating with our corps, so we think that's very important.

But getting back to CJADC2 is we've stood up a laboratory at Aberdeen that we're calling the Joint Service Integration Laboratory. And really what we all recognize and all the chiefs recognize is we've got to be on the move, data machine to machine. That is the secret. It seems kind of boring and maybe even (inaudible), but if you want to get the speed that we're talking about, the range and the

convergence, it's machine to machine interface moving information very, very quickly. And what that laboratory allows us to do is to practice it. You know, you bring in the communications for a certain airplane with a certain ground system and you get the people that are experts in that and you figure out how do you just move information back and forth in a very efficient way and how do you introduce maybe artificial intelligence or some other capabilities where you don't move all the information, you just move the amount of information that you need. And how do you move away from gateways and translators that will actually have latency?

So a lot of the type of things we're trying to get to is how can you just link in all these systems. All the service chiefs recognize that, but at the same time all the service chiefs recognize we're starting from baseline, where we're at right now. We have our radios, we have our command and control systems, how do we bring them together in the most efficient and effective way that allow us to do what we need to do. We've had this discussion with the Air Force. You know they're bringing together thousands of airplanes that can talk to each other, is a different task from what the Army has to do with over a million systems on the ground that have to pass information.

So how do we scale that? How do we take a look at that where a system that works fine for a couple of thousand airplanes may not work fine for a million vehicles and systems on the ground? And we may not need as much information. So that is what we're bringing together. All the service chiefs are committed to making this happen and it's just a matter of really the tough, hard work of coming together and working with the systems to make that happen.

MR. O'HANLON: There's a question about Europe and NATO and Russia. And, by the way, one thing I liked in your paper last week — well, one of the many things I liked, was that you did not forget about Russia. And even thought today you've said, as many do, that China is the pacing threat, my own interpretation of Vladimir Putin and certain other Russian leaders is they are more disruption in their instincts about how they want to change the global order than the Chinese may be. The Chinese, as I interpret — not putting words into your mouth — but they want to flex their muscle and expand their influence. The Russians to me seem like they're more likely to want to overturn something like NATO.

So I'm glad you stay focused on Russia, but the question is really how do you feel about our presence now in Poland, is it adequate? Of course President Trump last year talked about reducing

presence in Germany and moving some of it further east. In a sense that was building on previous activity that had already happened, because I know the Army had really built up a lot in Poland. And of course President Trump was criticized for doing that partly to send a message against Germany, but in military terms there's actually a valid question I think about whether we've got too much in Germany and not enough yet in the eastern part of the NATO territory.

So how do you feel about the Army posture in Europe?

GENERAL McCONVILLE: I think the Army posture right now is we're pleased with where we sit. You know, we have General Chris Cavoli now as a four star. And what we've done is we've taken U.S. Army Europe and U.S. Army Africa together and combined those into a four star command. And that puts General Cavoli in a position that allows him to really work very closely with the senior leadership in Europe to bring together a team. And we've also stood up the V Corps. We brought that back again because what we found is many of our allies and partners want to work closely with us and many will bring certain capabilities, but they need to tie into some type of command and control and structure. And that's why the CJADC2 becomes really important because some countries may have a couple of brigades, so they may have a brigade they want to — or they have certain fires capability, especially in NATO, that they want to contribute, but someone has to bring that together.

And one of the things that is kind of a change, and there will be critics out there on our — you know, when you're going to do large scale ground combat operations, you really have to start setting a theater, you have to look beyond the brigade combat teams. You know, we start talking about doing strategic fires, that's not going to be done at the tactical level. You've got to have the appropriate command and control structure in place that can plan those type of operations.

So I think where we sit right now in Europe, there is a posture review going on. We'll see how that plays out and we will provide best military advice. But the systems that we have in place, the relationships that we have both with the Poles and Romanians is very strong. And as we take a look at the future, you know, we position multi-domain task forces there, or how all those systems can come together, that's being discussed right now and we'll see how it plays out.

MR. O'HANLON: By the way, any comment on the other NATO presence in the Baltic states? I know that's not primarily a U.S. mission, but the so called enhanced forward presence, the

multinational battalions, one each essentially in each of the three Baltic states. Are you happy with that? I mean some of us on the outside view this as probably adequate, but basically a trip wire force, not really a defense force per se. I'm not sure you want to use those words, but do you feel okay with having a grand total of some 5,000 NATO troops in the three Baltic states combined, or would you like to see us consider making that more of an integrated combat brigade, as one alternative, or maybe just adding more people as another?

GENERAL McCONVILLE: Well, I'd probably defer to General Walters and General Cavoli on the posture. But like overall what I think is the strength becomes from the strong relationship between the whole of all the allies and partners together. That's where I think the strength comes from. Everyone is in this together and the fact that if we're united in purpose then you have the ability to show strength and then you have the ability to impose costs if that is necessary.

But I think that's all worth taking a look at. I think that's part of — the new administration will do a posture review on where we're at and what we want to do and we'll have the opportunity to give best military advice into that discussion and then we'll see how it plays out.

MR. O'HANLON: There's a question about Congress and Congress' support for your modernization priorities. And you've been very eloquent in explaining them to us today, but I wondered if there were certain areas — and the questioner wonders whether there are certain areas that you are having a challenge, either conveying the importance of a given mission to the Congress as you see it, or meeting other kinds of resistance.

So what's the biggest challenge to getting your modernization priorities funded by Congress?

GENERAL McCONVILLE: Well, I think what we have to do is show that first of all, you know, that the programs we have fit into the overall joint warfighting concept. I mean it's — you know, everyone is taking a hard look at how much money we're spending on a whole bunch of areas around the country. So we are in a competition for resources in that everyone is trying to figure out how we get the security we need for the country in the most efficient and effective way. And so as we take a look at what the joint warfighting concept is, as we take a look at how we're going to compete globally, what I think we all — all the services owe is here's how we help meet the national security goals and here's what it costs

to do that. And then when we have programs, we've got to make sure that they're on cost performance and schedule. And what we can't have is — you know, you don't want bridges to — we don't want programs that don't — you know, to me success or what winning looks like is whatever weapons system we develop, it's in the hands of soldiers and makes a difference. And we've got to make sure we do that.

So what I've seen so far is Congress is supportive. If we can make the argument and we can show that we are developing and fielding our programs in the most efficient and effective way and they support the overall concept of the joint warfighting concept and where we're going to make the country safe.

MR. O'HANLON: I realize I've got another regional security question. This one is about Korea and you're probably going to want to say that General Abrams should handle this or Admiral Davidson. But still, since we are speaking and the question came in, in regard to North Korea and its firing off of two ballistic missiles yesterday — also you talked about large scale exercises and the importance of those versus small squad exercises. So how do you see these missile launches? Any immediate comment? And also do you feel that it's crucial for the U.S. and ROK to go back to the big exercises that we used to have, or do you think there are ways, at least with minimal military effect or, you know, consequence to be able to do a number of smaller exercises and keep competence and keep readiness that way, if that facilitates a diplomatic process?

GENERAL McCONVILLE: Yeah, I think I agree with you. I think it's probably best for General Abrams to take that one, or even at the national security level.

But here's the thing about the exercise. You know, it's a balance. And what we have to do is — this is everywhere — when we do an exercise we have to be thoughtful to understand that even if it's a tactical exercise, what are the strategic impacts of us doing that. And then you've got to figure out is the cost of doing that — or is that the best way to do it. We've got to make sure that we can provide really credible and ready forces. And in order to do that, you have to practice, you have to train. No football team would go into the Superbowl and not practice, not run plays, and make sure. So we have to do this. That's what really training is all about, it's deliberate practice.

What you have to figure out is, okay, where do you do that, how do you do that, how do you get that capability. And that's what we do really around the world. Do you have to put 50,000

soldiers on the ground in and orchestrate them to get that effect you need. Ideally, if you could you would, but you may not be able to do it because of resources, you may not be able to do it because of cost, you may not be able to do it because of just the strategic impact. So how do you get that?

And I think what General Abrams has to carefully weigh is he knows he has to train, but he also knows that at that level there's a strategic and diplomatic impact that he has to take into consideration.

MR. O'HANLON: There's a question about this concept of decision dominance that you've got in your paper. And the question from one of our friends, Sydney Freeberg, who's known for colorful ways of putting questions, is this phrase, however desirable, a little bit of sort of FCS talk, FCS style hubris. Where, in other words, you're sort of expecting or hoping for too much, and really we'd be better off just being able to preserve much of our existing command and control against peer adversaries that might really try to take it down.

So rather to aspire to decision dominance at an even more pristine level, we'd be better off just aiming for resilience in a more minimal level of command and control.

GENERAL McCONVILLE: Well, I think when I take a look at it, we don't want to aim low as far as — but we don't want to aim too high either. What I'm trying to do is find that sweet spot. And as we develop a command and control system, you know, I believe — and we use an acronym — we use an acronym for everything — like a (inaudible). So what is the primary way that we would like communicate really to give us the edge. We want to have overmatch, we don't want to have a fair fight. And we take a look at some of our competitors, the way to deter is to make sure that they take a look at what you can do to them and that influences their behavior and compels them to maybe not do something that they want to do.

So when I look at how we get the overmatch that we need, it really comes down to the whole discussion on we need to have the speed of our systems, the speed of the decision making. We've got to be able to operate over very long ranges, because that's the way a lot of this anti access area denial systems work. And where we are now, which is different than future combat systems, is I think the technology is in a different place. And the things that we're talking about are here already. The speed is there. I mean if 20 years ago we were talking about having an iPhone — I mean I've actually talked

about that. You talk about back in the day if I had told you —– I talked to my soldiers, I said okay, if a lieutenant came into me 20 years ago and said hey, I got this great idea, we're going to be taking pictures with a phone, I'd be looking at that phone going, well, that's why you're a lieutenant, you can't figure out –– you know, how will you take a picture with this phone that we used to have on our wall 20 years ago. So technology is changing very, very quickly and I think we need to take advantage of it if we want to have the edge that we want.

We don't want a fair fight, we don't want to go person on person, we want to give our soldiers the technology that gives them so much overmatch that no one even wants to take them on. If it doesn't work the way we want —– and that's why we plan for the worst —– if the communications go down, that's why you have highly trained disciplined and fit forces and lethal forces that can operate when these systems do go down. And that's all part of the primary alternate contingency emergency type plans that you build into our organizations.

So if you have a system where everything is just working perfectly and you've got tremendous overmatch and someone takes that down —– and we'll certainly do things to make sure it's cyber protected, then –– but if it doesn't work, we're still going to go, you're still going to have to do things, and that's where you start to go to your back up plans, and you want to make sure you have a backup plan.

MR. O'HANLON: There's a question about roles and missions. And you talked about long range fires. And of course you get pressure in both directions. Sometimes you're asked to work with the other services and borrow from their technology, sometimes you're accused of trying to move into another service's traditional portfolio, and there are questions in both directions in the chat function today.

So how do you figure out when you're going to do something like more long range fires from the ground against a ship? How does the Pentagon work to decide of the U.S. Army should be part of the provider for that capability?

Also air based defense. I know it's another area where General Brown in particular is very interested in collaboration. And there sometimes the concern is that the Army, and frankly everybody else, is not able to do enough, partly because the technology doesn't really seem to match the threat yet in the absence of compelling directed energy, missile defense, or other new generation

capabilities.

So long range fires and on base defense, are these two areas where you feel comfortable with the Army's new roles or traditional roles? Is there a need for a new roles and missions kind of bargain?

GENERAL McCONVILLE: I mean I think the vice chairman came out and talked about that. You know, we're taking a look at the future and I've had some people say well why are you into the long range precision fairs capability. We've had the discussion even as we looked at it, and part of multi-domain operations is how do you penetrate. You know, how do you penetrate some of the systems that we're seeing. You know, especially when you take a look at what some of our competitors have done with anti-access area denial. They put up very elaborate air and missile defense systems, they've put up very elaborate anti-ship capabilities and they're basically trying to expand themselves. And some have built their own islands and they have done certain things to give them more depth and range and those type of things.

So from a military standpoint you have to say, okay, so how do we penetrate, disintegrate, and then have the ability to exploit in a combat type operation. Then you look at it from a joint force, who's going to do what, who has that role. And the argument that we have is that you want to have multiple options to do that. My experience — and I've flown Apaches — from the air side is you never want to present on dilemma to a competitor or an adversary, because they can deal with that. You know, if you have multiple dilemmas, then they have to kind of think about it differently.

So take a look at long range precision fires. That can certainly suppress air defense, which could open up a gap if we needed to put, you know, aerial maneuver into a place. And I use the example of what General Cody did at the time during Desert Storm with Apaches. And I know other people were mentioning there were other aircraft that came in a different way, but as far as — it was a penetration mission, by way of example, in which two radar sites were taken out that were providing early warning. That's just an lustered example of how we need to look in the future. But having done deep operations with Apaches — we used to do them a lot — deep is very relative. You know, 60 kilometers, maybe 100 kilometers, very different than the ranges we're talking now. But as you spread out the operating area that we're at, it really comes down to the ability to respond.

I look at long range precision fires and say hypothetically someone shot the inter-ballistic missiles at you, one of the ways to deal with it is to use air and missile defense and actually bring those systems down. The other way maybe to deter them is realizing that if you shoot at us, we have the ability to respond maybe quicker with hypersonic capability or some other type of capability that may compel you not to take on that situation up front.

So I think what we're all taking a look at is as we're going to be operating cross-domain and we're going to have to kind of figure out how we do that, and I think that's where the CJADC2 system all comes together.

MR. O'HANLON: So very last question, and I'm combining two from the incoming emails, and it returns to the question of end strength. So, sorry to finish on that note, but of course it may come up once or twice I'm guessing in the congressional testimony and other discussions in the months to come

And the two questions come from sort of opposite directions. One basically sympathizes with your challenge of wanting a larger Army basically says how do you prioritize? If you have to cut a little bit, how do you prioritize within your existing Force structure so that you keep things that are very prominent in your new paper and new vision, such as the security force assistance brigades, the multi-domain task forces? And, you know, where do you cut?

The other question is why do you think you need such a big Army in an era where most of the kinds of threats we're talking about are not really about holding, seizing, and dominating large swaths of territory? And with Russia and China, presumably, they're simply too big for that ever to really be an option anyway at whatever size Army. So what in your gut tells you need to have an Army of more than 500,000 active duty soldiers?

So if I could, I'll put those two questions to you to wrap up, General.

GENERAL McCONVILLE: Yeah. Well, I think what drives end strength — and I won't get — you know, because — I mean we do analysis at our level, we take a look at all the different plans that are out there and when forces need to be available and what we need to do. And that kind of drives you to a certain level of what size force that you have. And you also take a look at what is the historical usage of the Force. You know, I mean because you can say, well, hey, we don't think we're going to do

this. And, you know, I've only been doing this 40 years, but most of the things I've gone and done in the military, they weren't anywhere near on our — some of the planning that we had where we thought we were going to do things.

So I think what we have to do, and this is really for the nation, is figure out what is the acceptable size of risks that you're willing to take. And you talked a little about us losing the first battle. I don't want to lose the first battle. I mean where we want to be is — we don't even want to have the first battle because we're so strong no one wants to fight us. And you have to put troops on the ground to compel people sometimes not to do certain things. You know, you just — and to go back into — I don't want to get into the you can bomb people and do all those different type things, but we're seeing that sometimes it takes — and many times it takes — you have to put troops on the ground, soldier, Marines, and — to show that you are serious about what we're trying to do.

No one wants to have a great power war or any type of war, but the best way to maybe have one is if you're not ready. So I think we need to have the best force that we can afford. And, you know, from a chief's standpoint, our job is to give best military advice. We'll get a top line of whatever that is and then what I have to do is make recommendations on the size of the Force, how ready that Force should be, and what type of Force you want for modernization. And the thing I want to be careful about is it's easy — not easy, but there's always that tension about not modernizing the Force because you're living in today. And that's a delicate — but I owe it to the soldiers that are going to come after me, the leaders that are going to come after me, to give them the Force that they need so they don't lose the first battle in the future.

MR. O'HANLON: That's a very, very encouraging and convincing statement to conclude our session on today, General. So I just want to thank you from the perspective of Brookings, myself, and all the listeners. And I want to thank everybody in the U.S. Army family, all the great people you mentioned earlier, your soldiers and the active and reserve component, their families, the civilians, the retirees, the veterans.

So best wishes to everyone. Happy spring. May this be a spring that helps us emerge from COVID and I hope everybody stays safe in the meantime.

And, again, thank you all. Best wishes. Signing off from Brookings.

GENERAL McCONVILLE: Thanks, Mike, for having me. Good to see you.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you, General.

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