

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH GENERAL RAY ODIERNO

SUBJECT: THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

MODERATOR: ANGELA GREILING KEANE, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

LOCATION: HOLEMAN LOUNGE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

TIME: 1:00 P.M. EDT

DATE: TUESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2014

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**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press Club. My name is Angela Greiling Keane. I'm a reporter for Bloomberg News and the 106<sup>th</sup> president of the National Press Club. We are the world's leading professional organization for journalists committed to our profession's future through our programming with events such as this while fostering a free press worldwide. For more information about the National Press Club, please visit our website at [www.press.org](http://www.press.org). To donate to programs offered to the public through our National Press Club Journalism Institute, please visit [press.org/institute](http://press.org/institute).

On behalf of our members worldwide, I'd like to welcome our speaker today and those of you in the audience. Our head table includes guests of our speaker as well as working journalists who are Club members. And if you hear applause in the audience, I'd also note that members of the general public are also attending, so it's not necessarily evidence of a lack of journalistic objectivity.

I'd also like to welcome our C-SPAN and Public Radio audiences. You can follow the action today on Twitter today using the hashtag NPCLunch. Now it's time to introduce our head table guests. I'd ask each of you to stand briefly as your name is announced.

From your right, Herb Jackson, *Bergen Record*, Washington correspondent; Gene Tighe, reporter with the *Hexagon Newsletter*; Jim Michaels, military writer for *USA Today*; Feola Geiger [?], senior writer for the United States Institute of Peace; Patrick Host, a reporter with *Defense Daily*; Katherine Skiba, Washington correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*; Colonel Andy Rohling, special assistant to General Odierno; Alison

Fitzgerald, finance and investigative reporter at the Center for Public Integrity, and the chairwoman of the National Press Club Speakers Committee.

Skipping over the speaker for just a moment, Eric Meltzer, news systems specialist at the Associated Press and the Speakers Committee member who organized today's event. Thank you, Eric. Colonel J. P. McGee, executive officer to General Odierno; Jen Judson, editor, *Inside the Army*; Carlo Munoz, a freelance defense and national security reporter; and Thomas Young, a retired Air National Guard senior master sergeant and currently a novelist. (Applause)

When our guest today became the U.S. Army Chief of Staff back in September of 2011, his job was none too easy. Being the guiding force for U.S. soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, he had served nearly 37 years. General Odierno fought in Desert Storm, was a key commander during Operation Iraqi Freedom, then became the head of the U.S. campaign in Iraq and leapt to Joint Forces Command. Saddam Hussein was captured under his watch in 2003.

Now at the helm, he's fighting a war against sexual abuse in the Army, which has a higher rate than in other branches of the military. In a message to Army personnel he said, "The U.S. Army is failing in its efforts to combat sexual assault and sexual harassment." The general has also said sequestration budget cutting is making the fight against sexual abuse harder than ever. "From slowing hiring actions to delaying lab results which hinders our ability to provide resolution for victims."

The tightening of Washington's pocketbooks and higher than expected costs in Afghanistan, have added another dimension of difficulty for General Odierno. Even though the financial restraints are certainly being felt, his message to the soldiers was clear. He said, "I just need you to stay focused on what you do to train, to sustain your equipment, to develop leaders, to take care of our families. Do the best you can with the resources we give you," he said.

General Odierno has stood by President Obama's measures to shrink the size of the Army by 80,000 troops by 2017 while working to increase its capabilities. A native of New Jersey, General Odierno is married to his high school sweetheart and they have three children. He holds degrees from West Point, the Naval War College, the Army War College and North Carolina State University. General Odierno's son, retired Army Captain Tony Odierno, had his vehicle hit by a rocket propelled grenade in southwest Baghdad in 2004. Tony is now secretary of the board of directors of the Wounded Warrior project. Please join me in giving a warm National Press Club welcome to U.S. Army Chief of Staff, General Ray Odierno, who will proceed straight to questions and answers rather than starting with a speech. (Applause)

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** Well, thank you. It's an honor to be here. I thought it would be better during these times of lots of news that we'd go to questions and answers. Just an initial opening comment. Every day, I'm extremely proud that I have the opportunity to represent the men and women of the United States Army, 1.1 million in

the National Guard, U.S. Army Reserve, and the active component. Over the last ten years, there's been over 15,000 Awards of Valor given out to U.S. Army soldiers, nine Medals of Honor, almost 30 Distinguished Service Cross, 600 Silver Stars, and many other awards of valor because they did what we asked them to do; go and help provide security for this great nation of ours.

And it's important that we continue to think about that as we move forward and look to the future and what are our national security issues? What are the things that we have to be concerned with as a nation, and what is the Army's role in those national security issues? So I hope we'll have a good discussion on that today. We face many challenges today, whether it be budgets and balancing our budget, reducing the debt and what's the right level of funding for our military. We face problems, social problems, which was mentioned, such as sexual assault, sexual harassment. We are working the issues of suicide, the issues of taking care of our soldiers who have been wounded both with physical injuries and those that are non-visible injuries.

And that's something that we must stay focused on, not just today but for the foreseeable future. Because there'll be some soldiers who are impacted by this for many, many years. It's our responsibility to make sure that we continue to take care of them. So I hope we'll have an opportunity to talk about the future, talk about some of the key issues we're facing today. It's an honor for me to be here, and I look forward to the discussion. So with that, I'll turn it over for the first question.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** Thank you. We do have a lot of ground to cover. Let's start broadly since we're in a new year. What would you consider the most significant change we might see in the Army in 2014 considering the new strategic environment and the shift from conflict to peace?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** Thank you. So there are several things that you'll see in 2014. Obviously, at the end of 2014, we'll see a change as we come out of Afghanistan. We're still waiting on the signing of the agreement we call the BSA with Afghanistan and after that we'll make a decision on do we leave residual forces in Afghanistan or not. And that decision will be made in consultation, obviously, with the Joint Chiefs and the President as we move forward and the commanders on the ground in Afghanistan.

So with that, what that says is just a few years ago, the Army had over 250,000 soldiers deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. At the end of '14, it'll be much less number than that. So we'll be in a process of transitioning our force. So there's a couple of things, we're rebalancing to the Asia Pacific which is the defense strategic guidance that we developed at the beginning of 2012. But in addition to that, it is also about us staying engaged regionally. And the Army's pushing forward the concept of regionally aligned forces where we align our forces with the combatant commanders, whether it be in the Asia region, Africa, Middle East, Southern Command, in order to provide them the resources necessary for them to do what their job is. That's to prevent conflict, build security structures that allow us to be safe and continue to grow our economy as we move forward, allow us to help shape the environment for the future.

And then if necessary, and as a last resort, be prepared to win if that's what we have to do in order to protect our own security. Those are the things and the changes you're going to begin to see in '14. But this'll be a process that occurs probably over the next five, six years.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** Looking to Iraq, with the seizures of parts of Fallujah and Ramadi, much of the work that you've done that you've worked hard at has been turned back in Iraq. How do you feel about our role now in Iraq as we watch what's going on over there and try to figure out what's next?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** So first I would say obviously it's disappointed all of us to see the deterioration of the security inside of Iraq. I spent a lot of my life over there. From 2006, end of 2006, to September 2010, I was there as we continued to reduce the level of violence, in the sectarian violence that was going on. I believe we left it in a place where it was capable to move forward. We've now seen it, because of several political issues internal to Iraq, that security situation has now devolved into something that is, in my mind, concerning.

But this is not just about Iraq. In my mind, it's something we have to be cognizant of as you look across the Middle East; what's going on in Syria, what's going on in Lebanon, what's going on inside of Iraq. And it's this sectarian potential building up sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shi'a and then the exploitation of that by nonstate actors such as al-Qaeda and other organizations who will try to take advantage of this.

The biggest threat to our national security is this ungoverned territory becomes areas where we have terrorist organizations that become dominant and then try to export their terrorism outside of the Middle East and into several other countries including the United States. So I think it's something we have to watch. I think it's something that we have to stay engaged with politically, and it's important for us to make sure that people understand that we're concerned and I think you'll see us do that as we move forward.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** Can the U.S. keep al-Qaeda's expansion there at bay without having troops on the ground?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** Well, we have to wait and see. We have trained security forces to do that. I think the first alternative is for the forces that are there, that we have trained, to execute that strategy. One of the things that we did in Iraq, as well as we're doing in Afghanistan today, is train about counterinsurgency and how you fight insurgencies. And I think what we have to do is continue to work with the Iraqi Army and others to insure they understand the basic techniques of counterinsurgency. And so I think we continue to do that. We have a very small element on the ground that works in the embassy that has some expertise that can continue to help in these areas. And I think it's important that we do that.

It's also important that we continue to insure that we stay involved diplomatically, which we are, as we work through. We got to wait and see. I would say this is certainly not the time to put American troops on the ground. I think it's time for them to step up and see what they can do and we have to just wait to see and see if it becomes part of our national security interests to put people on the ground. But I think right now, our goal is to let them take care of this problem and we'll continue to work with them to try to solve this problem as they go forward.

But it is dangerous. The thought of al-Qaeda getting ungoverned territory is something that we have to be very cognizant of and as we continue to work with them, as they can conduct counterterrorist operations as well. And that's what we'll focus on as we move forward.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** You said you don't think we should send troops back into Iraq. But if we did still have troops there on the ground, could these seizures have been prevented? Did the U.S. blow the end game by removing all the troops when they did?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** Well, I would just say we can all be Monday morning quarterbacks on this. The answer is I don't know what the answer is. What I do know is, as I said earlier, is we provided them an opportunity. When we departed in 2011, the levels of violence in Iraq were the lowest they had been in a very, very, very long time. Their economy was growing, they were exporting more oil. They had a political system in place that appeared to be working.

But since those times, that political process has begun to deteriorate. Their economy actually has continued to grow because they continue to export more and more oil because they now have access to their oil fields, they have access to exporting that oil. So it's important for us to try to assist them in getting that political process back on track. And part of that is making sure they understand all the different factions inside of Iraq and we don't alienate factions. When you alienate factions, you tend then to provide opportunities for nonstate actors such as al-Qaeda and other terrorist elements to try to exploit that.

But I think that's the message that will continue to work as we move forward. But it's important to bring everybody into the political process, continue to improve economically and we can continue to assist them in understanding how you fight the potential insurgencies.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** Given the uncertainty in Iraq at this point, how do you answer questions from veterans and soldiers about the narrative of the time they spent there? There was a piece that was recently published by Paul-- I'm going to mispronounce his last name-- Szoldra who wrote a piece about questioning the service there titled, "Tell Me Again, Why Did My Friends Die in Iraq?" What do you say to people who are thinking along those lines?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** Well, first off, there's many of us who spent a lot of time in Iraq. There's many of us who have personal sacrifices inside of Iraq and Afghanistan. The bottom line is we raised our right hand in order to defend the constitution of the United States. And when we do that, we are prepared to go forward and do what is necessary, as we're asked to do, by our civilian leadership in order to provide security for this nation. That's what we did in Iraq. At a time when it was believed that we needed to go there, our military went. We were prepared, we went. I believe we left it in a way that enabled it to move forward. We eliminated a ruthless dictator, which we tend to forget about, an incredibly ruthless individual who, as I was there longer and longer and longer, the stories I was told by many different Iraqis to include their military, were actually gruesome in the life they had to live inside of Iraq under the leadership of Saddam Hussein.

So I just think you have to look at it in those viewpoints, that we raised our right hand, we did our job. We left it in a way that was important. It is incredibly difficult for us to deal with the lives that were lost, no matter what the cause is. It's difficult to deal with lives lost in Afghanistan. It's difficult to deal with lives lost in Iraq. It's difficult to deal with lives lost that are lost to a car accident of a military member or suicide of a military member because we're brother and sister in arms and there's a relationship there that's built that you'll never forget.

And so I can never explain properly to anybody when somebody gives their life. But the bottom line, what I do know in each and every one of those cases, they raised and volunteered to be in the military because they were proud to be part of the Army. They were proud to do this mission. They were proud to be involved with that. And many of them died doing the things that they wanted to do. And that's what I remember. I remember their service and their sacrifice. And I remember they dedicated themselves to something much greater than themselves personally. That's what the Army's about and that's what I remember even though I know it's very difficult as we look back at some of the sacrifices that were given.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** What sort of future do you see for Iraq? And besides the small staff left in the embassy, what sort of role do you see for the U.S. in that future?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** When I was over there and I used to have people come and visit me, I'd show them a map of the Middle East. And if you look at it, Iraq is right in the center of the Middle East. To the west is Syria, Jordan; to the east is Iran, to the south is Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, to the north is Turkey. It's in a strategic location inside of the Middle East. It's a very important location.

So for us, in my mind, it's an important country in the Middle East. We are still allies and partners with Iraq. We have to build on that partnership, we have to make it a partnership that allows us to build security in that region. And I think that's what we have to do. Right now, it's disappointing what's going on, nobody's-- but again, there's still potential. There's economic potential, I believe there's political potential and we have to continue to work hard to help them to reach a state where they can be a good, strong

partner of the United States in order for us to sustain the right level of stability. And I would be the first one to admit that today that's looking a bit shaky. But we have to keep working it very hard as we move forward.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** Looking over to Afghanistan as you prepare for a troop withdrawal there, what lessons do you have from the Iraq draw down to apply to Afghanistan?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** So I think even though we're very cognizant of the fact that Afghanistan is very different culturally, very different security-wise, difference between Iraq and Afghanistan, there are some parallels that are important. One is, I think, we have-- the military, the Afghan Army, the Afghan police today are showing signs that they are being very successful in handling the security situation. We turned almost completely over the security operation to them last year in April and they've gone through a very significant fighting season with the Taliban and actually performed very, very well. They've proven that they can do it. They've proven they have the leadership to do it.

The one thing that we have left to do, though, is we still have to help them in developing their institutions because it's about sustaining this for the long term, and so we have to help them in developing the institutions that help them to sustain an army through personnel policies, through sustainment policies, through developing leaders and their institutions because that's what makes it long lasting. And that's what we have to focus on now. And I think that's why we're anxious and hopefully we'll get the BSA signed so we start talking about the residual force, which their responsibility will be is developing the institution, is developing it so it can be a longstanding success story. And I think that's important that we do that, and I'm hoping that that agreement will be signed so we're able to move forward with that.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** How prepared right now are Afghan security forces to operate on their own and what hurdles stand in the way of them being successful in that?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** I kind of talked to some of that. I would just say I think they're very capable. The one area where they still are not quite right is the enablers, and what we talk about as enablers, is some cases aviation support, logistical support, leadership development. Those are the things that we need to help them with for the long-term sustainment of their military. What they've proven over the last ten months is their ability to be aggressive, fight the enemy, to continue to enlist soldiers even though they've had casualties. We're seeing a broad success in their leadership at the tactical and operational level. But really, what we have to do now is, as I said earlier, is build the institutions that allow them to sustain this over the long period of time.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** Looking to the issue of sexual assault, which you mentioned in your opening remarks, what are the plans to stop future sexual assaults in the Army and should trials be taken outside of the military chain of command?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** So, sexual assault is a complex problem that has to be dealt with on several different levels. The first, in my mind, there's a long-term issue of culture. It's a culture that, frankly, everybody understands it's simply not acceptable and it will not be tolerated, whether it be in the military or anywhere else. I'm concerned about the Army, that it will not be tolerated in the Army. The best way to insure that it's not tolerated is the chain of command's involvement in enforcing the standards and policies that we have today. That includes the Uniform Code of Military Justice. That defines how we discipline the force, how-- People around the world would say the U.S. Army and all of the military, United States military, is an incredibly disciplined force. That's one of our great strengths; our ability to train, our ability to execute and execute complex problems.

We have to put that energy towards solving this problem. By taking away a tool that I think is incredibly effective to us, which is the Uniform Code of Military Justice, is a mistake. What we need to do is hold the leaders accountable who are not using the tools we have given them such as the Uniform Code of Military Justice, to solve this problem. Don't take the tool away. What we have to do is hold those accountable who aren't using the tool properly.

The chain of command is the essence of who we are. My experience tells me I trust the chain of command, I trust our commanders. That doesn't mean 100 percent of commanders are doing the right thing. And those who are not, we have to hold accountable. That's what we have to do. We have to make sure we are taking care of our victims. We are providing them the resources in order for them to move forward, that they don't become victims again and again and again. And what I mean by that is not a victim of sexual assault, but a victim of the process.

And we have to put procedures in place that insure that doesn't happen, that we protect our victims, that we take care of our victims and everybody understands about how we take care of our victims. And the best way to do that is a strong chain of command. This is a problem throughout our society. It bothers me that in the U.S. Army, we should be the ones who can solve this problem. We've dedicated ourselves and we'll continue to dedicate ourselves to this.

We've had an increase in reports of sexual assault. I predicted that, I knew that was going to happen because people are understanding now we're taking this seriously. And many of the reports that have been increased are ones that happened five years ago, four years ago, six years ago. People are now understanding they can come forward. It's not perfect yet, we still have a long way to go. And the pressure we're getting is good because that will help us to continue to make sure that we stay on point to solve this problem.

For me, as a Chief of Staff of the Army, this is fundamental. As a soldier, we're supposed to have complete trust in each other. For us to be successful, we have to trust the person on our right and our left. It doesn't matter if it's a male or a female. It doesn't



matter the color your skin, it doesn't matter your religion. We have to be able to trust each other. And as long as we have sexual assault and sexual harassment, that goes against the fabric of who we are. And that's the trust that we have to have to sustain ourselves. So we have to get after this problem, and we will continue to go after it as we move forward.

It's also important because of talent. I want the best talent in the military. And in order to get the best talent, I got to create the environment that allows all of our soldiers to be able to maximize their potential. The number of females serving is growing. And we got to make sure that we create an environment that allows them to be successful that they can maximize their potential so we can utilize their talent so we can continue to be successful as a military. And to me, that's critical to us as we move forward.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** You mentioned culture change in this area is necessary. To what extent does military culture where women historically were not equal to men contribute to the problem?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** Well, there's lots of things that contribute to the culture problem. I remind everybody that we get people from all different backgrounds. When somebody comes into the Army, we get people from different fiscal backgrounds, we get people from different family backgrounds, we get people from different religious backgrounds, we get people from different parts of the country. We represent the United States. So what's important to us is as we bring them into the Army, they have to understand what are the norms of the Army culture? And we have to make sure that they start, from the day they step into the Army, that we have a different culture and that we're going to enforce that culture. We're not going to tolerate those who don't. We're not there. But that's what's key. And it's got to start from the time you come in to the day you leave.

And it really is, in my mind, about understanding that. Because many people come from very-- one of the things I learned when I came to the Army, I was really naïve because I was very fortunate. When I grew up, I grew up, as was said, in northern New Jersey. I had a strong family. I had a mother and father, I had uncles, aunts, I had grandfather, I had-- who cared about me, who made sure they nurtured me, who set me in the right path of moral and ethical values. Not everybody comes from that background. It took me two or three years in the Army to figure that out because I was sheltered.

You know, many of our young men and women who come in the Army maybe has one parent, maybe has no parents, maybe comes from dysfunctional backgrounds and we have to mold them into a force and a culture that allows them to succeed. And we have many success stories that I could talk about. That people from those backgrounds today are very successful. But we now got to make sure we do that as a culture. My guess is, and I say this all the time when I go around and talk, there's probably 10 percent of the Army today that still believe that women shouldn't even be in the Army. I want to identify them, tell them they're no longer-- that's not the kind of person we need in our Army today because that's not who our society is. That's not what our country represents.

You always could have that, but what you have to develop is a culture that doesn't tolerate that kind of an attitude. And that's what we have to work towards as we move forward.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** The Defense Department sexual assault response panel is holding two days of hearings this week. Why aren't those hearings open to the public and to the press?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** I don't know. (Laughter)

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** When you find out, you can get back to us.

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** I'd ask that questions of Congress, I think they're holding the hearings.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** Speaking of women in the military, the Army and other services have been ordered to lift the ground combat exclusion for women. When do you expect the Army will open Ranger school and some other schools that remain closed to women? And when they do, will the curriculum or requirements for the courses change?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** So, last year the Secretary of Defense, Secretary Panetta, signed an order that says there is no more exclusion of females from any-- there's no restrictions on females serving in any duty assignments within all the services. As part of that, we were given a period of time that I have to report back at the beginning of January of 2016, the end of 2015, I have to report back on how we're going to do that. So what we're doing now is we are going through a very significant process on how we will integrate women into all MOSs within the Army.

We have taken outside expertise, inside expertise, we are developing common standards and it's really basically four branches that are affected; artillery, engineers, armor and infantry in the Army. And we are now developing those common standards and figuring out what they will be as we begin to integrate women into those MOSs and specialties.

And by the end of '15, I then have to report out to say yes we are going to integrate them in all those. I got to be able to make an argument of why we shouldn't. My view is we're heading in the right direction and we should be able to integrate by the end of '15. The other thing we're looking at is we're looking at the initiatives that it takes in order to set them up for success. How do we shape this in such a way where we just don't throw women into these jobs without the right preparation? And what I mean is not preparation of the individual, but preparation of having the right leaders in place, having mentors in place, having an environment that allows them to be successful? So we're doing work to study that.

And as we move down this process, and as we open more positions to women, we will then review the schools that are open to women. But the one thing I will say, that I've been very adamant about, is we will not reduce standards. The standards will remain the same. And all the women that I talk to do not want the standards reduced. They want to be standards based, and we're working our way through. And that's why it's important that we study this and get it right.

So I think we're on the right path. We've opened up, actually, some artillery jobs that were not open already, this year to female officers and to female soldiers. And we'll begin to do that slowly over time as we work our way through this process.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** Looking to spending challenges, can you comment on how sequestration, the shut down last year and general partisan bickering, have affected military readiness?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** So, there's several issues with sequestration. Let me first talk about the shutdown. The impact of the shutdown, frankly, has been on the, in my mind, the morale of our civilian workforce who's been dedicating themselves to the Army, to the Navy, to the Air Force, to the Department of Defense for some time. Because there's two things that happened based on sequestration. Originally started out as a 12 day that went to a 6 day furlough. And then right after, immediately after that, we had a shutdown. So, they've lost their confidence based on the security that they've had. And we got to regain that confidence in our civilian workforce. And so that's one of the challenges we have with sequestration.

Now, let me talk a little bit broader about the readiness issues. So, there's two issues with sequestration. First in my mind, from my perspective, is that the ramp of it, in other words the up front reductions where that was part of sequestration, made it impossible to properly manage in running the enterprise of the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, and I'll talk for the Army. Because of the large-- you got to remember that our budget is based on really three major things: people, our ability to modernize ourselves, and our readiness. And there's lot of things under readiness, there's several things under modernization such as capital investment and other things that we do. And you got to keep those in the right balance.

Sequestration forces us to go right out of balance because I can't take out people fast enough to get the dollars to put into readiness and modernization in order to keep that balance. And so what is created in the Army is we have about a three year window, '14, '15, '16, where we're really out of balance. So our readiness and our modernization programs are taking the hit because I can't take people out fast enough. We're taking out about 20,000 a year. If I go higher than that, it costs me more to take them out and so we start reducing the savings that we're gaining from the people. So that's the dilemma that we have.

So what it did is it impacted our readiness in '13. Now, the agreement that was made in December, a bipartisan budget agreement, helps us significantly in '14. So it

buys back-- it gives us money to buy back some of the readiness. '15, it's a lower number. The problem is that's great for '14, and I'm thankful that we've gotten that money. But if we don't sustain it, we're going to go right back to where we were in terms of this problem between the balance of N strength, readiness and modernization. And so we got to keep that.

And right now, if we go to sequestration, I can't get that in balance until about 2020. So what that does is that gives us a period of about six years of vulnerability because of this imbalance that we have. And that's the struggle that we're having right now as we work our way through this. And that's my concern.

Now, I will just say on top of that is I believe the sequestration number is too low, because I believe it doesn't allow us to do the things in this world as we watch it every day, continues to have significant uncertainty. And the American people expect us to respond if something goes wrong, and we will. But, the costs will be is the soldiers that we send will not be ready like we want them to be. Or we might not be able to sustain an operation for as long as we need to because we don't have the numbers.

So up until 2020, it's a readiness issue, a modernization issue. Past 2020, it's a size issues. Are we big enough to do the missions that we'll be asked to do? And I'm a bit worried about that number in the end, especially in the Army.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** For that N number, is the Army still planning to have its N strength at 420,000 given the budget situation we're in now with the signed bill?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** So, there's no decisions made on that. We'll continue to work that. What we have done is we have-- the Army's going to move to 490,000 by the end of '15 instead of '17, we've sped that up. And the reason we've sped that up is to better balance the readiness and modernization a little bit quicker. And that equals the 20,000 a year that I talked about.

As I stand here today worried about-- we started at 570, we're about 527,000 or so. We'll be down to about 510,000 by the end of this year. And then by the end of '15, we'll be down to about 490,000. And then we'll have to make decisions on where we go from there. And we are constantly working that internal right now to the building as we look at the resources that will be made available to us.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** The National Guard is advocating for an expanded role saying that it can provide combat troops at a fraction of the cost of the regular Army. And, of course, General Grass is our next speaker here at this podium in two days. What is your view of this proposal?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** So first is the Army, for many years now, is structured to be complementary. And what I mean by that is you have an active component that has a certain capability. You have a National Guard that has a certain capability and you have

a U.S. Army Reserve that has a certain capability. The capabilities are not interchangeable. There's a reason why the active component is more expensive. It brings you a higher level of readiness because they're full time. They are trained and ready to do things at a higher level because they spend every day focused on that.

Our National Guard, who's done an incredible job in the last ten years, trains 39 days a year. And that covers personnel training and so when you're talking about integrating organizationally, it takes a bit longer. So they're not interchangeable. So, to say that the National Guard's cheaper, they're going to replace the active component, it's not true. And the active component can't replace the National Guard. They bring us a capability that allows us to operate in the States. They are complementary to each other. So it's about getting the right balance between the two.

In the 2000s, when we were involved with two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, we increased the active component. And the percentage of it was 51 percent in the active, 49 percent in the reserves, which includes the National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve. As we get finished with our reductions, which are mostly almost all coming out of the active component, we will go to 54 percent in the reserve component and 45 percent in the active. We think that's about the right percentage that we need to go forward and meet our national security needs.

So what that means is as we go forward, and if we have to go lower than 490 in the active component, we will have to take a percentage out of the Guard and reserve as we move forward. And we're still working on what those numbers are. But it's about keeping that right percentage, about 54 percent in the reserve, about 46 percent in the active. And based on the analysis we've done, which is quite substantial, that gets us about the right level of active readiness. It also gives us the ability for the National Guard to respond over longer periods of time and it also allows the National Guard to continue to be responsive within their own states. And we think that's about the right balance.

Now, if we have to go to the lowest numbers, which is full sequestration, nobody agrees with those numbers, but that's based on the budget levels that we were given. And as I mentioned earlier, I think they might be a bit too low. But we'll still work our way through that. And this will happen over the-- it's not something that happens tomorrow. This reduction will continue to happen between now through the end of this decade as you move forward.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** The proposed cuts to military pensions have been, of course, a lightning rod on both sides of that issue. Tell us if you make the cuts that have been proposed to recent retirees who are not yet of retirement age, is that breaking a promise that was made to those people when they joined the military?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** So the issue of paying compensation is a big issue and it's an important issue. I'm not going to discuss specifically what was passed in the last bill, but I want to talk about pay and compensation in general terms. So the way I would describe this is that back in the late '90s and 2000s, there was a pay gap between those

serving in the military and those with equivalent education levels, experience, et cetera, in our civilian sector. So everyone has worked very hard to close that gap. And I would argue, in fact, we have closed the gap. In fact, in some cases you could argue we've exceeded that.

So it's time for us to look at pay and compensation to make sure it's in line and something that can be sustainable. I believe that if we continue along the path that we're on, that the cost of soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, will be at such a level that we'll have to even reduce our N strength more because we can't afford them. And so what we're trying to do now is do something that's reasonable. We're not cutting pay and benefits, we're trying to reduce the rate of growth of pay and benefits. And so we're looking at packages that will allow us to do it. But it's got to be a comprehensive package that does this.

What I worry about is we can't be piecemealed because we got to understand what the total impacts are on our soldiers. And is it enough for us to keep the all-volunteer force? So it's important that we look at it as a total package. We are attempting to do that. And we're still working our way through it. But it's something that you have to be very careful about how you do this, because what you don't want to do is under-- what you don't want to do is undercut the foundation of an all-volunteer Army or volunteer Navy or volunteer Air Force. Because it could have significant impacts as we move to the future. So you got to look at this very carefully, and it's something that has to be really done in a very comprehensive way and we are looking at that as the Joint Chiefs, and our hope is to put together a package that is one that will sustain all-volunteer Army, but will be fair to our soldiers, our retirees, our families. But also understand that we have to reduce the costs as we look to the future.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** What do you think of Chairman Issa's proposal to link rolling back the cuts in military benefit increases to being able to end Saturday delivery at the postal service? Is it a wise move to link the future of Army benefits with the future of the postal service?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** I concern myself with what I just said, is taking care of our soldiers and our families and our veterans and our retirees. And my focus is on insuring we do that properly. So, I have not thought about it being linked to anything else. What I'm worried about is making sure we have the right compensation packages for our men and women who serve and make sure that we're able to sustain an all-volunteer force that enables us to sustain the level of national security that's necessary for our country.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** Looking to Asia, what is the Army doing to support the defense strategic guidance call for a rebalance in the shift in the Asia Pacific region? And what does that mean for other regions, especially the Middle East?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** So, what a lot of people don't realize is today, as I stand here, we have about-- somewhere between 84 and 88 thousand soldiers assigned to

the Pacific command. That's quite an investment that we have in the Army. That's available to the Pacific commander in order for him to prevent conflict, shape the environment within the Pacific command. And we're doing that through a variety of ways. We're doing that through rotational presence, we're doing that from building partner capacity, we're doing that from building relationships throughout the region through several different exercises that we do on a regular basis, and we're going to continue to do that.

What happened, though, is in the years of the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan, many of those soldiers that were assigned to PACOM were off in Iraq and Afghanistan. Last year, we stopped that so they are all now back in the Pacific region conducting these proper operations. That's our rebalance, as we call it.

I mentioned quickly before about our concept of regional alignment of forces. What we will do is those units that are assigned to our forces command, which is most of the units in the continental United States, they will be then aligned with CENTCOM, they'll be aligned with AFRICOM. They'll be aligned with other areas in order for them to be used in order to support those combatant commander's missions. For example, today we have about 2,500 soldiers in Africa based on the region aligned force concept. We have 45 soldiers who's been there now for several weeks at the embassy in Sudan providing security for the embassy.

Those are the kind of missions we will use with the soldiers we have from the continental United States, using them in an expeditionary manner in order for us to move forward in building security capabilities around the world. The example I like to use I about three or four weeks ago, we deployed a 15 man platoon commanded by a female to Ethiopia to conduct training and humanitarian assistance activities.

Those are the kind of things that we will do to continue to support combatant commanders as we come out of-- we have rotational forces currently in the Middle East in varying places in the Middle East. We will continue to support that as long as there's a requirement from the combatant commands. And what we're doing with regional line forces, we're allowing them now to become experts in that region so they understand what they're getting involved with and are better able to execute the missions that are given.

So we have significant soldiers assigned in the Pacific which helps us with that rebalance. We'll use forces that are in the continental United States in order for us to continue to help us engage in very key areas such as North Africa, such as places in the Middle East which will enable us, in order to continue to provide what's necessary for them to prevent conflict in the future.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** How do you resolve the conflict with the marines related to the Asian pivot?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** There is no conflict. I mean, I find this very interesting. This is a Washington thing, it really is. This is a Washington thing. So gosh, I mean, marines and Army can't operate in the same--? What we've been doing in Afghanistan and Iraq for 12 years. This is about utilizing the capabilities of every service to accomplish a mission. This is not about Army versus Marine Corps. This is about us utilizing-- we have very distinct assets, they have very distinct assets. It's about making those available to the PACOM commander for him to execute his mission.

We don't base the size of the Army on our regional aligned missions. It's based on our ability to respond in case we have to win in a war. That's what our size is based on. So this is a Washington thing. So this is not a competition between the Marine Corps and the Army. This is about providing the capabilities that we each have to support the combatant commanders who were given the responsibility to maintain security around the world.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** Can you comment on the deployment of a cavalry brigade that was announced to Korea today? Does this represent a permanent increase in Army commitments to Korea or a temporary increase or just replacement of forward based units?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** So, what's going on is as we are coming out of Iraq and Afghanistan, so one of the decisions we made in the Army is we are restructuring our brigade combat teams. What does that mean? So during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, we went to two battalion, maneuver battalion brigades. I don't want to get too into the weeds here. But we did that mainly in order to meet our requirements in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the past, we've always had three battalion brigades which through all the analysis that we've done allows us to do the things that we need to do.

So what this is doing, we have a two battalion brigade in Korea. So this rotation of this battalion is rounding out this brigade to be a third battalion in the brigade like we were doing in the rest of the Army. And we'll continue to rotate those units in and out of Korea. So this is something that we've planned for a while. It's something that we're executing now. And it allows us, then, to make sure we're consistent as we apply the resources of our Army, not only in Korea, but in other places around the world.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** I want to be sure to talk a little bit about China before we run out of time. You've expressed your concern about cyber security threats from China. And, of course, China has declared a new air defense identification zone. Can you talk a little bit about your concerns there and what the Army's role will be in addressing those two issues?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** Well, what I'd like to do is talk about cyber in a more general aspect. I think it's an important topic. You know, cyber is cyber operations, cyber defense, is important as we continue to move forward. In some cases, you could consider it a new form of maneuver. What it is, is it's a relatively, now, inexpensive way to attempt to impact issues around the world. And I'm not going to point fingers at China or



Iran or Russia or anybody else, but it's about a capability that people can now exploit in order to try to gain advantages.

And from a military perspective, it's about how do we use that in order to-- how do we understand that to protect our networks, protect our systems, and how does that impact future warfare? Because it is going to impact future warfare and we have to understand that.

From a national issue, I'll just say this is about our ability to protect our financial networks, our infrastructure, and it's an important issue. And we have to recognize that this is a new form of people attempting potentially to influence what's going on in the United States. So I think it's incumbent upon us to improve our capability. In the Army, we stood up an Army cyber command, we are reorganizing ourselves. We are going to stand up a cyber center of excellence soon and we are doing this in order to create the capabilities and expertise to deal with this.

We already have some significant capability, but we are going to expand it as we move forward. But as you know, as you're watching playing out every day, there's some very important and fundamental legal and policy issues that have to be worked through as we continue to deal with this new threat. And so for me, that's probably the most important thing.

In terms of China and the establishment of what they consider to be a sovereign fly zone to China, again this is about us working and working through some very difficult issues in order for us to insure that we sustain a level of security that's necessary for us and in the best interests of our allies and in the best interests of building strong relationships with China so we maintain a level of security that allows economies to continue to grow. So this is something we just have to constantly work with them and constantly work with our other partners in the region as we move forward.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** We are, unfortunately, almost out of time. But before asking one last question I've got, just a couple of housekeeping matters to take care of. First of all, I'd like to remind you about our upcoming speakers. On January 9<sup>th</sup>, we have General Frank J. Grass of the National Guard. We will follow up with some of your questions, I'm sure, with him. On January 10<sup>th</sup>, we have Joseph Boardman, the CEO of Amtrak. And on January 15<sup>th</sup>, we have Christine Lagarde, the head of the IMF.

Secondly, I would like to present you with our traditional National Press Club coffee mug.

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** Thank you.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** You're welcome, thank you.

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** You can never have too many coffee mugs, I just want you to know that. Thank you very much.

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** Never. Thank you. And one last question. We try to end on a lighthearted note. So I am told that you are a big New York Giants fan and that you--

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** That's not lighthearted right now. (Laughter)

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** Eli Manning preceded you a couple of years ago as a National Press Club speaker. I wanted to know if you have any lessons learned from your Army service, strategy, drone strikes, anything, that can help-- that you can use as advice for the Giants?

**GENERAL ODIERNO:** Well, first off, I actually am very close friends with Tom Coughlin, who's the coach, and I've also had the opportunity to know and get to know very well Eli Manning. They have some work to do. The only thing I'm positive of is we did beat the Redskins twice this year. I know that's not saying much because you got to live on whatever you got here. (Laughter) But what I'll say is I think actually we saw some great leadership by the leaders of the Giants during very difficult times. They played hard right down to the last game, even though they were out of it, and I think that will help them as they move forward. And that's the kind of spirit that we have in our Army as well. We'll continue to fight until the last possible minute in order to be successful. So, I'm confident the Giants will be successful next year. Thank you very much. (Applause)

**MS. GREILING KEANE:** Thank you, General, for coming today. I'd also like to thank our National Press Club staff including our Journalism Institute and broadcast center for helping organize today's event. Finally, here's a reminder. You can find more information about the National Press Club on our website at [www.press.org](http://www.press.org). You can also find a copy of today's program on there. Thank you, we are adjourned. (Sounds gavel.)

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