

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB HEADLINERS LUNCHEON WITH
US ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL MARK MILLEY

SUBJECT: SECURITY CHALLENGES AND ARMY READINESS

MODERATOR: MYRON BELKIND OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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MYRON BELKIND: [sounds gavel] Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press Club, the place where news happens. I'm Myron Belkind, the 2014 National Press Club president, and a former foreign correspondent and Bureau Chief for the Associated Press in India, England and Japan. And I now teach journalism and the importance of accuracy at George Washington University School of Media and Public Affairs.

Before we get started, I want to remind our in-house audience to please silence your phones if you haven't already done so. And for our viewing and listening audience, please feel free to follow the program on Twitter at #NPCLive. And for our C-SPAN and Public Radio audiences, please be aware that in the audience today are members of the general public, so any applause or reaction you hear is not necessarily from the working press.

Before I introduce the head table, I want to recognize two very special tables on my right, your left, in the audience, which are comprised of members of the National Press Club's American Legion Post 20, which was founded on November 22, 1919, one year after the signing of the Armistice that ended the First World War, and for many years was associated with General of the Army John J. Pershing, who was an associate member of the National Press Club and who served as the 10th Army Chief of Staff. Legionnaires, led by Post 20 Commander and NPC member Jim Noone. Please stand and be acknowledged.
[applause]

Now I'd like to introduce our head table. Please stand when I call your name. And to the audience, please hold your applause until all the head table members are introduced. On your right, Kevin Wensing, retired U.S. Navy Captain and a member of the NPC Headliners team that plans these events; Brendan McGarry, Managing Editor of *Military.com*; Lisa

Matthews, Vice President of Hager Sharp and co-chair of the NPC Headliners Team; Ellen Mitchell, defense reporter for *The Hill*; Scott Maucione, defense reporter for Federal News Radio; Yasmin Tadjdeh, reporter for *National Defense Magazine*; Josh Rogin, columnist for the Global Opinions section of *The Washington Post*.

Skipping over our speaker for a moment, Erik Meltzer, a member of the NPC Board of Governors, a Senior News Production Specialist for the Associated Press, and the NPC Headliners team member who coordinated today's luncheon. Thank you Erik. Jim Michaels, military reporter for *USA Today* and former Marine Infantry Officer; Amanda Macias, national security reporter for CBS Radio, who comes from a military family; David Majumdar, defense editor for the *National Interest*; and Alfredo Diaz, retired Army Master Sergeant, a veteran of Vietnam, Iraq and Panama, and Vice Commander of the American Legion Post 20. [applause]

I'd also like to acknowledge briefly additional Press Club members responsible for organizing today's event: Betsy Fischer Martin, John Donnelly and Lori Russo; and staff members Laura Coker and Lindsay Underwood.

With just over one million active duty and reservist soldiers, the Army is the oldest and largest of America's armed services. Its fiscal 2018 budget request is about \$166 billion, including proposed war spending in the context of a roughly \$639 billion total Pentagon budget request.

The Army faces a host of challenges today, and President Trump added a new challenge yesterday with his tweets barring transgender people serving in the military. And in case you are not aware, we have some breaking news update on that story, which is the news that a little while ago, as we were preparing for this lunch, Marine General Joseph Dunford, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Staff, and who spoke at the National Press Club a few weeks ago, sent a note, wrote a message to the Chiefs of the services and senior enlisted leaders that the military will continue to "treat all of our personnel with respect." And two key paragraphs that I will read out:

I know there are questions about yesterday's announcement on the transgender policy by the President. There will be no modifications to the current policy until the President's direction has been received by the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary has issued implementation guidance.

In the meantime, we will continue to treat all of our personnel with respect as importantly given the current fight and the challenges we face, we will all remain focused on accomplishing our assigned missions.

General Joseph Dunford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The Army's ranks enlarged after 9/11. Then they shrank after the Iraq and Afghanistan drawdowns. And now they have begun to inch back up. The Army wants to be sure though that if the units are larger that they are also properly trained and equipped. The

Army and other services have said their readiness, their preparedness to fight is not up to standard. To improve the situation, the Army wants more money, but everyone agrees it needs to be well spent.

The Army has had trouble in particular executing large weapons acquisitions, and billions were spent on the Crusader, Comanche and future combat systems programs, for example, with much less to show than had originally been planned.

The Army is battle hardened today, but it has mostly waged one particular type of war, counterinsurgency. While tomorrow's fights may be markedly different in character, to stay ahead of the curve the Army is focused on keeping pace with rapid technological change. General Mark Milley is keenly aware of all these challenges, and is in the midst of addressing them.

General Milley became the 39th Army Chief of Staff in August 2015. Before that, he led Army Forces Command at Fort Bragg in North Carolina. He has held multiple staff and command positions in eight divisions and in Army Special Forces units throughout the last 35 years. He has deployed to multiple theaters of conflict.

He graduated and received his commission through the ROTC program from Princeton University. He holds master's degrees from Columbia University in international relations and the US Naval War College in national security and strategic studies. He's the recipient of numerous military awards, including the Bronze Star. They are too numerous to mention, but just look at his chest to see the wide range. [laughter]

General Milley is a native of Winchester, Massachusetts. He and his wife have been married for more than 30 years and have two children.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in a major, big welcome from the National Press Club to Army Chief of Staff General Mark Milley. [applause]

GENERAL MARK MILLEY: Thank you. I love coming to the National Press Club and getting headline news read to me as I'm sitting right there coming out of my Chairman. That's great, I really appreciate you doing that, Myron. So thanks, thanks for the opportunity to be here.

I don't know how many of you know it, but Myron is also a veteran himself. Served in Vietnam as a young man. PFC Belkind; he was on General Westmoreland's staff in the early years of Vietnam, '64/'65/'66 timeframe. So thank you, also, for your service. [applause]

But thanks to all of you for being here. I'm really here to talk about the New England Patriots and how they come back 28-3. Or if we want to go Red Sox, or if we want to talk the Bruins. Recent other news, probably not a good topic right now. Just kidding. No, I realize everyone here is keenly interested in that which goes on around us, and I'm a soldier, a public figure, Chief of Staff of the Army. As you hear Myron say, significant budget, a lot of soldiers, a lot of men and women of our nation. And I feel an obligation to explain what we

do, why we do it, and answer questions for the American people. And the American people oftentimes get their view of us, the Army or the military, through the media. It's not exclusively through the media, but it's one of the mechanisms, and I have an obligation as the Chief of Staff of the Army to do that. Within the bounds of classification, I'll be happy to do that.

What I want to talk today about, there are really four topics. I've got about, I think, 20 minutes or so, and then we want to open the rest of it up to Q&A. And I won't be able to talk in depth in 20 minutes on many of these topics, but I'll throw them out there. And if you have follow-on questions, I'll be happy to do it.

I want to give you at least my view, one man's view sort of thing, of the security challenges that we, the United States, and, as a subset, we, the United States Army are being challenged with around the globe today.

Secondly, I want to tell you a little bit about your Army and the current state of readiness, and what we prepare for.

Thirdly, I want to talk a little bit about the future.

And lastly, I want to throw out a couple of myths about military operations that I think anyway are worthwhile discussing.

But I do want to reiterate one thing up front. It's this issue of the transgender news that came out the other day. And I want to reiterate what General Dunford, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had said. I know there's lots of questions out there, but the military is the military, and we operate off of certain processes and sets of orders, et cetera.

So, to date, walking in here, I have yet to receive implementational guidance, implementation directives from the Department of Defense, General Mattis. And we grow up and learn to obey the chain of command, and my chain of command is Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of Defense, and then the President. So we will work through the implementation guidance when we get it. And then we'll move from there. And to my knowledge, the Department of Defense, Secretary Mattis hasn't received written directives yet.

So I know there's a lot of churn out there about what was said the other day. But that's where we are right now, and General Dunford's exactly right; we'll act when we receive directives through the proper chain of command channels. And then we'll evaluate what we have and move out from there.

In the meantime, he's exactly right. And it should be no surprise to anyone, but the entire force, the entire chain of command will— always has, will today and will tomorrow, and always should treat every single soldier, sailor, airman, marine, coast guard with dignity and respect for their service in the cloth of our nation, bar none.

So that's where we stand as of today. I'll be happy to field whatever questions may be on people's mind later on it, but that's about all I'm going to say about it because that's kind of where I'm at right now on that, okay?

But let me shift gears to some other things. I want to talk about the global strategic environment very briefly. As of right now, we define some of the challenges globally, we use a mnemonic four-plus-one. There's a lot of ways to describe security challenges. You can talk about them functionally, such as maritime challenges or cyber challenges. There are other types of challenges; people say the economy, other says climate change, et cetera.

Within the Department of Defense, at this time, broadly speaking, we're defining them – and it's not the only way to do that, and we recognize that – by a set of nation states, four of which we're talking about, and then one broader challenge, which is nonstate actors, which are terrorists. And I'll walk you through each one of those. And we do recognize there's other ways to define security challenges. But it's those security challenges today that we design the size of the force, man, train, equip the force, the joint force.

But I say all of this with a caveat because Secretary of Defense Mattis is leading us, all of us, the senior leaders of the Department, through a very detailed, rigorous, strategic review, a global strategic review. And I would expect that we'll probably complete that perhaps some time maybe in the fall. And then that may, or may not, change how we view the strategic challenges.

But at this point in time, the way I look at them is through the lens of four nation states and one group of nonstate actors. And the nation states are Russia, China, North Korea, Iran; and then the nonstate actors are what I would call violent terrorist organizations, violent extremist organizations. But you know the groups, there's a whole potpourri of them – al Qaeda, Taliban, ISIS, al Nusra Front, and a whole wide variety of other like type groups that seek to do damage to US national interests.

Let me start with what is clearly the most capable of them, which is Russia. The way we, or the way I look at challenges, strategic challenges or threats is capability and will. And there's a lot of subsets and categories. And that's a pretty conventional, by the way, look; that's a pretty normal, standard look for people in the military of any country, really, is capability and will. And with Russia, it is clear that Russian military capability is significant, and in fact it's the only country on earth that represents an existential threat to the United States because they have the inherent capability of nuclear weapons – and we do, too, by the way – that can strike and destroy the United States of America, its government and its people.

So by definition, they have extraordinary capability. Other countries have nuclear capability as well, but only Russia has the actual capability to destroy the United States. So by capability, they're significant. In addition to that, their conventional capability has been modernized significantly in the last, call it, five or ten years or so, maybe 15.

Then you get into will, and that's a much more subjective. The capability piece, you

can do the math, add it up, figure it out. But when you get into will or intent, that gets quite subjective. And there, you're dealing with a higher order of estimates and judgments. All we know for certain from behavior is that Russia has acted aggressively externally to its boundaries in places like Crimea and Georgia and the Donbas region of the Ukraine and elsewhere. We also know that they operate and try to undermine things like elections in European countries and other countries. We know that there's a variety of cyber activity that goes on and a variety of other sorts of non-military direct action pressures that are done. So, a very sort of aggressive state.

And then you ask yourself why – why are they behaving like that – and you'll get all kinds of debate and all kinds of arguments. And then you've got to try to figure out how to handle it. But I would argue – and this is me now – I would argue that the Russian leadership is a pretty rational actor. They operate off of traditional cost/benefit, as they perceive it. And it is my belief that Russian aggression, if you will, or further aggression can be deterred through the proper use of tools, and that Russia does undermine the United States' interest in Europe and elsewhere. But there are also areas of common interest, and Russia is a state, because of its power in the system – and it is a great power – Russia's a state that the United States needs to carefully and cautiously and with deliberate forethought work towards common objectives, and then prevent undermining of our interests. And that's a delicate balance, and we've done that before, and we'll have to continue to do that. And that'll involve assuring our allies and partners and deterring further aggression. But I believe that with proper methods and leadership, et cetera, that that can be properly managed.

China is a different strategic situation. China is a rising power, a significant rising power. And I would argue that in China's case you're looking at a country that, since Deng Xiaoping's reforms of 1979 and over the last 39 or 40 years, China has advanced really significantly in terms of economic development. They were clicking off at 10% GDP growth a year; they've slowed down to 7% the last couple years.

But it is probably – and this is open to argument, I suppose – but probably one of the most significant, if not *the* most significant economic shift in global economic power in the last five centuries, really since the rise of the West and the industrial revolution. The Chinese economic growth over the last 40 years is really, really, really significant.

What does that mean? Historically, when economic power shifts so significantly, military power typically follows. And I believe that we're seeing that today, we're seeing a significant increase in the capabilities and capacities of the size and strength of Chinese military capabilities. And then you get back to will and intent – What's their intent? What's their purpose? What are they trying to do? The Chinese have been actually fairly transparent about that. They have a thing that they call the China Dream, and their intent is to restore their historical 5000-year role to essentially be the most significant power in Asia, and they want to be at least a global co-equal with the United States. And they want to achieve that by mid-century. And they're very transparent; they write books about it, they put articles out there about it. They would like to do that peacefully if they can in what they call a win/win strategy. And if they can't do it peacefully, that's why they're building that military.

So stand by. China is not an enemy. I want to emphasize that. Neither is Russia for that matter. Enemy, for me, for people like me in uniform, enemy has a very specific definition, and that is a group of people or nation states that you are currently engaged in armed conflict with. That's the word enemy. Sometimes words like that get used too loosely. Neither China nor Russia are enemies; we are not engaged in open armed conflict, and we want to keep it that way.

Competition is one thing. Even if it's adversarial, even if there are some things below the level of conflict that happen that are not necessarily savory, but there's a big difference, there's a giant difference between open conflict and those activities below open conflict. So competition without conflict is probably a desirable goal, especially with those two countries, given the size, capacity, capability of those countries.

So that's kind of where we're at with them. China also, by the way, is a very rational actor, extremely rational; perhaps one of the most rational actors in the system. And I believe that through, again, proper leadership engagement and deterrence and assurance measures, that we can work our way into the future without significant armed conflict.

But these are unanswered questions, and we won't know until we get there. But that's my estimate at this point.

When you get to Iran, you have a different situation. Iran's desire for a nuclear weapon has sort of been put on pause; we hope for good, but we're watching that very closely. But even if it is, we can say with certainty that Iran consciously and with malfeasance of forethought tries to undermine US national security interests in the Middle East. And they do that through asymmetric means and a lot of terrorism and support of terrorist groups.

So we are always in a posture relative to Iran to support our friends and allies and partners in the region, and to be very, very wary of Iran.

The fourth country, I think, is the one that's in the news a lot, and rightly so, which I think is the singlemost dangerous threat facing the international community and facing the United States right now, today. It's a near-term, very significant threat, and that is the threat of North Korea. I don't want to go into a tremendous amount of detail on it; much of it is classified. But it is clear, based on what happened over the July 4th weekend that North Korea has advanced significantly, and quicker than many had expected, their intercontinental ballistic missile capability that could possibly strike the United States.

More to follow, but the time has shortened significantly. And North Korea is a significant threat. The United States policy for many, many decades now has been, the objective has been that North Korea will not possess nuclear weapons and they certainly won't possess nuclear weapons that will strike the United States.

We're trying a wide variety of methods in the diplomatic and economic sphere. We, the military, fully support those. We want those to succeed. There is still time left for that to

succeed. This is the pressure campaign that you read about in the media. And we are fully in support of the Secretary of State and the Department of State and their efforts to bring this to a peaceful resolution.

However, time is running out a bit. So North Korea is extremely dangerous. It gets more dangerous as the weeks go by. So we'll see on that one.

And the last one is the violent extremists or terrorist organizations. I think, frankly, you've got a certain situation in Afghanistan, you've got a situation in Iraq, you have a situation in Syria, you've got one in Yemen and Libya, West Africa. And each one of those has different factors and analysis, and every one of them is slightly different in some way. So you can't group all of these things into one.

However, I would suggest that we are in a very, very long struggle against violent extremist organizations, terrorist organizations that have a very radically different view of the world than we do. And they consciously want to kill Americans, undermine American interests; also kill all their locals and friends and partners not only in the Middle East, but elsewhere.

So we, the military, are committed to help in that effort. Our basic approach to that is to work by, with and through our friends and partners in the region, to increase their capabilities, and try to reduce terrorist threats to where local police forces and local intelligence forces can manage those at a local level.

And you see what's playing out against ISIS, which I think has been quite successful to date. And I think that we will destroy the organizational entity called ISIS. It will disperse into some other form, but its current form of the caliphate with its very, very actually traditional organizational structures, that is likely to be destroyed in the not too distant future. But they will disperse. All of these organizations can morph, amoeba-like, into different forms. And they are all dependent upon a very radical ideology which ultimately will have to be destroyed mostly by the peoples of the region, to destroy that ideology.

So that's sort of the world in a really nutshell, as fast as I could do it. And I know there's a lot of unanswered questions in there.

But let me shift gears real quick to Army readiness. You heard Myron talk about the Army. We don't have a small Army, but the question on size of forces – Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines – it's a relative question, it's not an absolute question. It's a question of, what do you want it to do? How big do you want it, is relative to the tasks you want it to do.

The United States military is a global military, and we have been, for sure, since the First World War, and with absolute certainty since the Bretton Wood agreements at the end of World War II, which established essentially the international order, the rules and regimes by which the world runs today. So for seven decades, the world has had a certain set of rule sets emphasizing things like free trade, international commerce, things like democracy, the, quote/unquote, liberal world order, things like human rights. There's a whole, wide variety of

things out there. And then you've got institutions that it rests upon – the United Nations, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization – all these things that were developed many years ago. And that is essentially what people very quickly refer to as the world order.

One of the significant roles of the United States military for seven decades has been to enforce that world order, to maintain it, to maintain its stability. And that's in our interest because in the first half of the last century, there was a bloodletting unlike any that had ever occurred in the history of mankind. Between 1914 and 1945, 100 million people were slaughtered in the conduct of war. And that's a horrible, horrible nightmare. My mother and father both served in that war – my mother in the Navy and my father in the Marines. And he hit the beach at Iwo Jima where 7000 Marines were killed in 19 days, 34,000 wounded, 22,000 Japanese killed on an island that was two miles by four miles. There were millions of Chinese killed in battle and murdered. If you want a real trail of tears, go to Eastern Europe and see what happened in Belarus and Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania. It's horrific. Nine out of every ten Jews that lived in Poland weren't alive in 1945. One out of every three males that lived in the Ukraine or Belarus were dead by 1945. It's a horrific picture that occurred.

And those people who were in leadership positions in 1945 said "Never again, we can't keep doing this, this is insane." They said the same thing in 1815 after the Napoleonic Wars and they set up the Concert of Europe. And that worked well for 100 years, for one century. They kept the long peace in Europe, more or less; there were a couple of minor flare-ups – the Crimean War and the Austrian War, and a few other wars. But there wasn't a continental-wide war, until 1914.

So we tried again in 1945 to set up a system that would try to maintain global peace and prevent war between great powers and great power states throughout the world. That system is under stress, intense stress, today. That system is under stress from revolutionaries and terrorists and guerillas. It's under stress from nation states that don't like the rules of the road that were written, and want to revise those rules of the road. That system is under very intense stress. And we're at 70 years now, and that system has prevented great power war similar to what occurred in the first half of the last century.

So the question is, how big an Army do you want? How big a Navy do you want? Well, how much do you want that system? How much do you value that system? Is that system worth preserving, or not? Therein you get to the size and scope of your armies, navies, air forces and marines. And, rightly or wrongly, fairly or unfairly, the role of the arbiter of that system has defaulted to the United States for seven decades. There are other countries, 60 or 70 of them or so that have allied themselves with their militaries to us, and they make significant contributions. But it is the United States that's been the leader with that system.

So the status of the Army as part of the military force that help maintain the stability of the world: We're a global military and we're a global army, and we've got right now today about 180,000 soldiers in the United States Army, active duty, Reserve and National Guard, deployed in about 140 countries around the world helping to stabilize that system. That's a significant amount of US forces. Not all of them are in combat; most of the ones that are in

combat are Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and elsewhere. But around the entire globe, 180,000. That's not a small number. That's about 20% or so of the Army as a whole, the total Army. The active Army is less than 500,000 right now.

So based on the tasks that are required, I believe that we need a larger Army. And I know others, my teammates on the Joint Staffs, also think the same of the Navy, Air Force and Marines, because of the tasks that are required. It's not just some arbitrary number. We've done the analysis and we think we need to be bigger. And we need to be stronger and more capable, which brings me to the future.

So very briefly, there's a couple of drivers. First of all, you're never going to know exactly what the future brings. It's my belief that we are in a fundamental change in the nature of the character of war. Not the nature of war, but the character of war. The nature of war is political. War is a political act. It's an act in which you impose your political will on your opponent through the use of violence. That's what war is. And war is always dealing in the realm of uncertainty. It's always dealing in friction and chance. It's dealing in human will. It's dealing in a lot of areas that are not particularly well measured. And that's the nature of war.

But the character of war, the way you fight a war, the weapons you fight it with, that does change, and it changes frequently. And there's a lot of different drivers for it, and it's changed many, many times in the past. I believe that right now we're going through a fundamental change in the character of war, how you fight wars. And there's a couple of things that are driving that:

One is societal, urbanization. So right now, we have a significant growth, and it has been going on for, call it a century, century-and-a-half, of urbanization. But now the curve is going exponential where we think that by mid-century or so, 80 to 90% of the earth's population, which is projected to be about eight billion people, will be concentrated in highly dense urban areas.

So what does that mean? That means that armies in the past have been optimized to fight in rural area, gently rolling hills, perhaps the sands and deserts of different countries, and we've been suboptimized to fight in jungles or mountains, and we've been suboptimized to fight in urban areas.

What that means, then, the urbanization of the global population, if war is politics and politics is all about people, then the probability is that future battlefields are going to be in urban areas. In fact, it's not a probability, it's a real certainty. You just saw a minor preview of it played out in Mosul.

So it's my belief, then, that the United States Army and probably most armies will have to optimize to conduct combat operations in urban areas. And that's significantly different when it comes to things like the size of your organization, how you command and control, how you move, how you move through streets. What are the weapon systems? What's the elevation of guns? What's the explosive power, the backblasts of rockets that you

fire? All of those characteristics change when you shift the terrain from the open country of Northern Europe or the deserts of the Middle East to highly dense urban areas. And it requires significant and fundamental change. That's an example.

But also, there's a whole bunch of other factors that are driving change in the fundamentals and the character of warfare – things like technology. We are witnessing, we are on the leading edge of a significant revolution in robotics, is my belief. And I believe that we are seeing those in the commercial sphere more and more. We've already seen them in limited use in military operations; people call them drones, unmanned aerial vehicles. The Navy is moving out pretty quick with unmanned sea vehicles or maritime vehicles. The land domain is much more complex and complicated and difficult to deal with. But eventually we will see the introduction of wide-scale robotics.

Artificial intelligence, IT; all areas of move, shoot and communicate are being impacted very, very rapidly right now by technology, at a speed and a scope unlike anything we've seen in history.

So the combination of terrain and the combination of technology is significant, and I believe leading to a fundamental change in the character of warfare.

And I know Myron wants me to stop and start going into questions. And I'll do that, but let me throw out five myths of war that are very, very prevalent and probably more prevalent right here in this city than anywhere else.

Myth one: In my view, myth one is that wars will be short. There are wars that have been short in the past. But they're pretty rare. Most of the time, wars take longer than people think they will at the beginning of those wars. So always be wary of the "wars will be short; this will be quick; this will be a little dustup; we'll achieve victory real fast." Be careful of that one. Wars have a logic all their own sometimes and they move in directions that are highly unexpected. So be careful of the short war myth.

Second is, you can win wars from afar. Look, wars are about politics. That's what they're about. They're about imposing your political will and they're about people. And I can tell you with a high degree of certainty that human beings can survive horrific things from afar. When my father hit the beach at Iwo Jima, he was told all the Japanese defenders were dead. Those Japanese defenders underwent 66 consecutive days of unrelenting, around-the-clock, 24/7 bombing from the United States Army air forces and Naval air forces.

At D minus four, four days prior to execution and hitting the beach, we rolled up a fleet of 400 Naval vessels. That's almost twice as big as the United States Navy is today. For one island. And they bombed that island with shells for 96 consecutive hours. There's no eight square miles of the earth that has ever received as much ordnance as the island of Iwo Jima; almost all the Japanese survived. Life wasn't good; they were drinking their own urine, they never saw the sunlight; they were deep buried underground. They were happy campers, I get it. But they survived. And they were ideologically committed to their cause and they survived to the point where they could kill 7000 Marines when they hit the beach.

Look at what ISIS has done for almost six months in Mosul. They're losing. They got pounded. But it took the infantry and the armor and the special operations commandos to go into that city, house by house, block by block, room by room to clear that city. And it's taken quite a while to do it, and at high cost.

What I'm telling you is, there's a myth out there that you can win from afar. To impose your political will on the enemy, it typically requires you at the end of the day to close with and destroy that enemy up close with ground forces. And I'm very wary of the "win from afar" myth.

Third myth: Special forces can do it all. I'm a proud Green Beret, love special forces. Special forces are designated special forces, with that name, for a reason. They are special. They do certain special activities, typically of a strategic nature. They are highly trained, highly vetted. But the one thing they are not designed to do is win a war. They can do raids, they can train other countries; there's lots of other things they can do. Winning a war in and by themselves is not one of their tasks. And there's a myth that you just throw special forces at it and it's magic dust and it works. We love it because they're highly trained, highly vetted, very quiet, not in the news; it's great. But winning wars is not in their job jar, by themselves.

The last two: Armies are say to create. They are not easy to create. There's a myth that you can just bring kids into the military, march them around a field a little bit, six, eight weeks of training and, boom, you've got an army. Wrong answer. It takes a considerable amount of time to build armies, navies, air force and marines, especially in today's world with complex weapons systems.

And the last thing I'd throw out there is the myth that – and we in uniform sometimes propagate this myth – armies fight wars. We don't. Armies don't fight wars. Navies, air forces, they don't fight wars. Nations fight wars. It takes the full commitment of the entire nation to fight wars. We can do a raid real quick, that's one thing. But war is a different thing, and it takes a nation to fight and win a war.

So I'll stop there. That's probably a little longer than you wanted, but that's what you got. [applause]

MR. BELKIND: I always tell my students, General, that it's not the length of a story or the length of a speech, it's the content. And speaking objectively, you gave us a hell of a lot of content, and we appreciate it.

Now for a few questions. As you mentioned, we still have a few questions on the transgender issue. I'd just like to ask as follows–

GENERAL MILLEY: Let me turn to my answer. [laughter]

MR. BELKIND: Has the Army faced problems with having transgender people serving in its ranks?

GENERAL MILLEY: I mean, look it, I'll be candid. There's a variety of issues. I was telling Josh here, this is a complex issue, and there's a variety of challenges out there that we have to deal with. And we've been working through it. But this is not clean-cut either way. So the short answer to your question is, yes, we've had to deal with problems. We don't get it in the media, we deal with it professionally, quietly, with dignity and respect for the individual and the institution.

MR. BELKIND: Did you have advanced knowledge that the President would be issuing the ban via Twitter yesterday?

GENERAL MILLEY: I personally did not, but nor would I have expected to. And I notice that's been in the media out there. Like I said up front, it's a chain of command thing, and I render my advice through the chain of command, which in my case, I'd render it up to General Dunford and Secretary Mattis, and they would render it back to me. So no, personally, no; the President didn't say, "Hey, Mark, I'm doing this." No, he didn't do that. But nor would I expect him to do it, nor is there any kind of requirement to do that.

MR. BELKIND: How did you learn of the President's decision?

GENERAL MILLEY: Same way everyone else did. I saw it in the news. But again, some people are trying to make this out as if that is particularly unique. If I had a nickel for every time I read decisions in the news over the last 10, 15, 20 years, I'd probably be a pretty wealthy guy right now. So it's not particularly unusual to read about things in the media. That's why in my office I have six screens and I've got the scrolls going every which way. I'm always looking for the breaking news things; hmm, did I know that?

People can say what they want about the media, but the one thing you are is fast.
[laughter]

MR. BELKIND: And accurate, I hope.

GENERAL MILLEY: Accurate sometimes, but fast. [laughter] Fast all the time.
[applause]

MR. BELKIND: What have been the main challenges so far in integrating women into the infantry and other combat arms?

GENERAL MILLEY: This is a point, a bit of pride actually. We did a lot of intensive study, a lot of analytical rigor on how to do this. And it took us three or four years of intense study. We studied other armies, we did experiments, we did pilot programs, all kinds of inside-baseball stuff that we did.

And today, the execution of that policy is actually working well, to date. And what I had recommended and what we were granted was, I said— I recommended to do this, women in the infantry. There others who disagreed, but I recommended to do women in the infantry

or special forces in armor. And I said, "Give me three years, 36 months. Now that we've done all the analysis, let me have three years to run this and see its impact on readiness and our warfighting capabilities. And if I see a decrement in readiness and warfighting capabilities, I will be the first one to come back to you, Secretary of Defense, and tell you we need to change, this didn't work; it was a great idea, but it didn't work," sort of thing. And that's kind of what we're doing.

So we're in the first 36 months. Thus far, it seems to be going okay; it's working well. But again, I comment on that because a lot of preparatory work went into doing that. We have our first woman infantry company command in the 82nd Airborne Division. We've got a variety of women commissioned as infantry officers. We've got a variety of enlisted and NCO that are spread out.

A couple principles that we put in place: I wanted to narrow the focus because it is still an experiment. So for 36 months, I wanted to narrow the focus to Fort Bragg and Fort Hood, two of our biggest installations, and that's where the women are being assigned, and it gives them a variety of options to be in infantry, armor or special forces at those two bases.

And then I also insisted that we have leaders first. So the sergeants and lieutenants had to go into units first. Female sergeants and lieutenants had to go into units first.

And the third one is that, it's sort of a mantra, is that the military should and is standards-based. So there's standards of performance, there's standards of conduct, there's standard of fitness, and there's medical standards. And if you're meeting those standards, then pass, go, collect 200, and move out. And if you don't, then you're going to do some alternative, either MOS within the military or we'll get you out of the military. But it's a standards-based military, and you rise to the level of success based on your merits sort of thing and your performance. That's inherent in the wearing of the uniform and we're very strict about it.

So that's where we are. And right now, the women that are in the infantry have met the standard of the United States Infantry. And it's going okay. The numbers are very small. And frankly, I expect they will be small for many years, if not forever. The Canadian army has had women in the infantry for 30-plus years. They have a very, very tiny percentage of women.

But it doesn't matter how many want to do it; I don't think they should be denied. My personal opinion is no one should be denied. If you meet the standard, drive on. If you don't, try something else.

MR. BELKIND: Could you say a few words, sir, about continuing efforts to reduce sexual harassment in the Army, and how that is going.

GENERAL MILLEY: It's a challenge, it's hard. The numbers have come down, which is good. Reporting numbers have gone up. Reporting in the sense of the way the system is designed to indicate that women have— and it's not just women, by the way, there

are guys who get sexually assaulted as well. Victims have greater confidence today than they say they did four, five years ago in the chain of command and the victims advocates and the results that'll come of it.

Is it perfect? No, not by a long shot. There's still sexual assault, there's still sexual harassment in the military. We've only got 15, 16, 17% or so of the military are women. Although West Point's last class that just got admitted, I think, is 23% women. But there's no excuse for any of it.

To me, it has to do with good order, cohesion, discipline. I think of it as blue on blue. I don't know if you're familiar with that term. I think of it as fratricide. If I was to go out and, say, conduct a live fire range or I was in a fire fight with the enemy, shooting your fellow soldiers by accident is not a good thing. And serious consequences happen to chains of command where you have fratricide in training or in combat. But in training, live fires as an example.

Well, if you go out and sexually assault someone, that's fratricide; you're beating up on your own unit. So there needs to be, and there is, very, very serious consequences to it, not only to the individual, but to the chain of command. And if a chain of command has significant multiple of these types incidents in a unit, that speaks volumes about the good order and discipline of the force. And every commander knows full well that they are responsible for everything the unit does and fails to do, and they're responsible for the good order and discipline of their unit. And if they have an ill-disciplined unit, then you probably need a new commander.

So some of this stuff is pretty straightforward, at least for me. There's no room for it. There's no excuse for it. And there is no tolerance of it, period. That's just the way it is, it's the rules, sort of thing.

MR. BELKIND: According to the question that's been submitted here, it quotes Defense Secretary Mattis as saying in response to the question, What keeps you awake at night? And he replied, "Nothing, I keep other people awake at night." Do you feel the same way? Does anything keep you awake at night? [laughter]

GENERAL MILLEY: Yes, General Mattis. [laughter/applause] No, he's— I've known General Mattis for a long time, and of course many people have, he's a national figure, et cetera. But this nation is truly blessed, actually, to have him as our Secretary of Defense. He's a remarkable individual. He's tremendous, he's competent, deliberate, he thinks things through. He's very, very squared away, this guy.

And he promised us that he'd give us 400 calories a day and three hours of sleep, and that's exactly what we get. [laughter] No, he's great. And he works hard. And he's utterly dedicated to the defense of this nation. And no, he doesn't keep us up at night in that sense. But his quote is a great quote.

To answer your question, no, there's nothing— do I toss and turn every night? No.

That's the literal answer. But to take your question more figuratively, the one thing I'm worried about, frankly, candidly, this situation with North Korea is very serious. It is a very, very, very serious situation. And not only for the United States and South Korea and Japan, but for China, for Russia, for the global community. It's a very serious situation, and it's not going in good directions.

MR. BELKIND: Those of us that are old enough to remember, remember the Korean War. What would you envision if there was a ground war with North Korea? What would it encompass? What would it look like?

GENERAL MILLEY: Let me use descriptive words rather than kind of specifics because obviously we have plans and kind of different things that shouldn't be talked about in public. But a war on the Korean Peninsula would be highly deadly. It would be horrific. I think General Mattis said it'd be, I think he used the word catastrophic or horrific, or something like that. And it would.

If you think about it, you've got a city of Seoul, 25 million people or so in the greater Seoul metropolitan area, 10 million people in the city itself. North Korea has a wide array of conventional artillery and rockets across the border. They've got a sizeable conventional force. They've got a sizeable chemical capability, not even including the nuclear weapon piece.

Do I think that North Korea's military would be destroyed? I do. I think that the United States military, I believe, absolutely, that the United States military in combination with the South Korean military would utterly destroy the North Korean military. But that would be done at high cost in terms of human life, in terms of infrastructure. There's economic consequences to a war in the Korean Peninsula. There's a whole wide variety of consequences.

War in the Korean Peninsula would be terrible. However, a nuclear weapon detonating in Los Angeles would be terrible. And there's some real—the comment that's been out there, "there are no good options," is a very apt comment. At this point, for lots of reasons, and we can go back through 25 years of history with dealing with North Korea, but the fact of the matter is, we are at a point in time where choices will have to be made, one way or the other. None of these choices are particularly palatable. None of them are good. The consequences of doing nothing is not good. The consequences of accepting them with a nuclear weapon that can strike the continental United States is not good. The consequences of armed conflict is not good. The consequences of a collapsed North Korea is not good. There's a wide variety of scenarios.

So the idea of the downsides of all these options are bad, that's true. They are. That doesn't relieve us of the responsibility of choice. And we are going to have to make conscious decisions that are going to have significant consequences. And I'll just stop there.

But it's not going to be a pretty picture, I can tell you that. It'll be very violent.

MR. BELKIND: Going from northeast Asia to south Asia, we have some journalists here from the subcontinent, one of whom asks: Because of tension between China and India, on the Indo-Chinese border, do you have any comments on a possible USA role in that region?

GENERAL MILLEY: We're monitoring it. We're tracking it. But no, role, not that I'm aware of, other than to try to encourage both parties to deescalate and reduce tensions.

MR. BELKIND: Six months into the administration, there is still no Army Secretary. What are the consequences of that, and how does it affect your job?

GENERAL MILLEY: We have an intent to nominate a guy named Mark Esper, his name's out there. We had two nominees, both withdrew for a variety of reasons. It's best to have a Secretary. There are a variety of authorities that come with having a Secretary.

But having said that, the way the system is built, no one man is indispensable, so to speak. So Bob Speer was designed as the Acting Secretary, and he has been since the inauguration. He's done a wonderful job, and he's doing a great job. Granted, he's an Acting Secretary, but I was an Acting Chief of Staff for a period of time, too. So we're all acting in a sense that all of our timelines are always constrained, limited, any time you're in an appointed position in government service. Bob Speer's been doing a great job for five or six months. I would argue that not having a, quote/unquote, full-fledged Secretary of the Army certainly has not been catastrophic. The professional civilians, the Department of the Army civilians have stepped up and done a tremendous job, and that includes Secretary Speer.

We'll work through it. I think it's better to have one than not, but it's not catastrophic not to have one either.

MR. BELKIND: We have two questions similar, tied together, about tank warfare. With Russia preparing to have its new tank, the T-14 Armata, enter service in 2020, do you worry at all that the United States or its NATO allies may be at a disadvantage? And should there be an increased focus on tank warfare and modernizing our fleet of Abrams? What technologies would you like to see developed?

GENERAL MILLEY: I have an entire group of people digging deep into just that issue of, quote/unquote, new tanks, sort of thing. It's beyond a new tank; it's a new family of vehicles in mechanized war.

So let me go back to the basic question of, have tanks and mechanized war and conflict between ground armies, has that gone the way of the dinosaur? In 1914, there were guys around who were three and four stars who adamantly adhered to the role of the horse Calvary. And then the horse Calvary ran into machine guns and things didn't go so well in 1914 for the horse Calvary. So are we sort of at that point in history where perhaps mechanized vehicles are going the way of horse Calvary and going the way of the dinosaur? I don't think so. But I am skeptical enough to continue to ask that.

We have a good, solid tank today, the M1 tank. And the M1 tank that you see today visually looks exactly like the tank from 1980 when I was Second Lieutenant. It is not exactly the same thing. The insides of that thing and the firing mechanisms, the engine compartments, the armor, et cetera, that's all been upgraded and modified over the years.

Having said that, we do need a new ground armored platform for our mechanized infantry and our tanks. Because it's my belief, at least in the foreseeable future – and call that out to, say, 25 years or so – there is a role to play in ground warfare for those type of formations. And the tank we have today, and the Bradley, for that matter, came on line in 1980; I've been in the Army 39 years, that's 40 years ago almost.

So I do think we need to do that. And what are some of the technologies? There's active protective systems, there's reduced crews with automated turrets. But the real sort of Holy Grail of technologies that I'm trying to find on this thing is material, is the armor itself. Because if we can discover a material, and we've got a lot of research and development going into it, if we can discover material that is significantly lighter in weight, that gives us armor protection, that would be a real significant break.

The last piece of technology is, we've been using kinetic or powder-based munitions for five centuries. And there are advances in non-powder kinetics, such as railguns, lasers, et cetera.

And then the last piece is robotics. Every vehicle that we develop, we probably need to make sure it's dual use so that the commander on the battle at the time has the option of having that vehicle manned or unmanned. They can flip a switch and it can be a robot.

So those are some of the technologies we want to see get built in to ground vehicles, not just tanks.

MR. BELKIND: We have a little traditional presentation, and then we will have a light question at the end to conclude.

GENERAL MILLEY: A light question.

MR. BELKIND: I think you'll like it. General, while you have received many medals and awards during your distinguished military career, we have something we feel is very special to present to you today to mark your visit, something that many other national and international leaders – including the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a few weeks – received when they have spoken at the National Press Club, and they proudly display in their offices, and please do let me know the next time you go into General Dunford's office, if you see the coveted National Press Club mug.

GENERAL MILLEY: Thank you, Myron, thank you. [applause] And I was in his office just the other day, and I did not see it. [laughter] He was actually drinking out of it, he uses it all the time! [laughter]

MR. BELKIND: General, for our concluding question, which is, as I say, by tradition, given in a lighthearted manner, we have an anonymous source. We don't like to use anonymous sources, but they tell us that you are a big Boston Red Sox fan.

GENERAL MILLEY: Yes

MR. BELKIND: So what do you think about the Red Sox cutting third baseman Pablo Sandoval, and will it affect the chances of winning the World Series this year?

GENERAL MILLEY: It will have no effect. We will win the World Series. [laughter/applause] Is there one on the Patriots?

MR. BELKIND: No. General, you played ice hockey at Princeton.

GENERAL MILLEY: Correct.

MR. BELKIND: I'm pleased that our researchers get things right. Back in April 2016, when you were visiting Fenway Park, you said you were supposed to get drafted into the NHL, the National Hockey League. If you had to choose, where would you have signed?

GENERAL MILLEY: [laughter] I did play; when you're 16 and 17 you actually have dreams. My brother convinced me I was good enough to play in the NHL. I never was, but I always wanted to. For some reason I think they drafted a different guy named Milley and they forgot my name, so I didn't make it. But if drafted, the Bruins, absolutely. How could there be any other team?

MR. BELKIND: Ladies and gentlemen, a warm thank-you to our guest of honor, General Mark Milley. [applause]

GENERAL MILLEY: Thank you.

MR. BELKIND: One final request: the General has another important engagement, more important than the National Press Club, I take it.

GENERAL MILLEY: I don't know what I'm doing, I have to ask my people.

MR. BELKIND: We're told he has to leave promptly, so could you just remain seated for about 30 seconds while the General leaves? And once again, thank you all for coming to the National Press Club, where I think it was demonstrated, thanks to our guest of honor today, that this is the place where news is made.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are adjourned. [sounds gavel]

[applause]

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