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Presenter: Secretary of the Army Francis J. Harvey

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Defense Department Special Briefing on Iraq and Afghanistan

STAFF: Well, good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

Q Good morning.

STAFF: Today we have an opportunity to let you interact with the secretary of your Army, Dr. Francis Harvey, who has recently returned from a trip into theater, in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As this is his first time with you, I would ask that when we get to questions and answers, that you identify yourself and your news organization so he can get to know you better.

Mr. Secretary, please.

SEC. HARVEY: Good morning. I'm going to begin with some opening remarks, and then I will be glad to take your questions.

This past Sunday, I returned from a visit to Afghanistan and Iraq. I went there to talk to soldiers and commanders to see first-hand how operations are going, and to make sure our soldiers have what they need to do their jobs. I'm pleased to report that our soldiers are well-led, well-trained, and well-equipped. They continue to play a central role in providing security, facilitating stability and reconstruction, and increasing the performance of Afghan and Iraqi security forces.

Since its liberation from an oppressive regime and the successful elections in January, the Iraqi people are now on their way towards a free and democratic society. Significant security challenges remain, but there is no doubt that Iraq is moving in the right direction.

One of our primary missions is to build Iraqi divisions and brigades that are capable of conducting independent counterinsurgency operations. The strategy of an Iraqi armed forces taking the lead in fighting the insurgency is well under way. To date, we have trained and equipped over 145,000 Iraqi security personnel organized into 96 battalions -- 52 army, 44 police; and another 50,000 are either in training or awaiting training. These battalions are engaged in operations across Iraq, both in concert with coalition forces and independently. As proof of their growing capability, an Iraqi brigade recently assumed responsibility for a large portion of Baghdad, a significant milestone in the history of the new Iraqi army. Equally encouraging, the Iraqi army is having no difficulty recruiting. Young Iraqis are turning out by the thousands to join the army and help defeat the

insurgency.

We also continue to make great progress on reconstruction. By the end of March, we will have over 2,200 projects started in Iraq with a total value of over \$4 billion. These contracts now employ over 43,000 Iraqis. By September, we will have started almost 3,000 projects, with a total value of \$9.4 billion.

I'm optimistic about the future of both Iraq and Afghanistan. It is important to note that our successes in fighting the war on terrorism are being accomplished at the same time the Army is undergoing its most extensive transformation since prior to World War II. Our modular formations underscore the solid progress we have been making and are making in making our Army more expeditionary, joint, rapidly deployable, and adaptive.

In closing, I want to emphasize that none of these achievements would be possible without the continued superb performance of our soldiers -- the centerpiece of our Army. The nation and the free peoples around the world sleep better tonight because of the willingness of our soldiers and their loved ones to endure hardships so that others might have a brighter future, specifically, a free and democratic Afghanistan and Iraq.

I will now be happy to take your questions.

Yes, sir?

Q Secretary Harvey, Will Dunham with Reuters. What's your sense of whether the Army, the Army Reserve and the Army National Guard will meet recruiting goals for this month, and more broadly, for fiscal '05? And what's your level of -- (inaudible) -- what's your level of concern --

SEC. HARVEY: Excuse me. Would you repeat that? Somebody coughed. I couldn't hear you.

Q What's your level of concern about the recruiting problem?

SEC. HARVEY: Good. Be glad to answer that. Let me just say upfront that the view I take is that recruiting and retention are a package, because what we're really focused on is people strength of the Army.

And before I answer the recruiting part of it, let me just say that retention is exceeding all our goals, both in the active, and it's near 100 percent -- it's over 100 percent in the active; it's near 100 percent in both the Reserves and the Guard. So, retention-wise, we're doing quite well. Statistics show particularly for units that have deployed to theater, the retention is actually higher than goal. So that's a good news story.

In terms of recruiting, the active component, through February, is at 94 percent of the goal, the year-to-date goal, the Reserves is at 90, and the National Guard, it's at 75. So, obviously, I'm concerned about the National Guard. I am cautiously optimistic about the Reserve and the active component. But we are doing -- certainly taking a number of steps to ensure that we make our goals.

Our goals for the year in the active component, for example, are 80,000 recruits. That's up from 77,000 in FY '04, which is a goal that we did make, and we also made a goal in 2003, which was 68 percent -- 68,000 -- excuse me.

So we are increasing the number of recruiters across the board; we've increased that by 33 percent. We've increased the incentives across the board. And we're really doing everything that we know how to do in order to meet our goals. It's March. I'm, clearly, not going to give up. At this stage we still have six months to go. And I've challenged our human resource people to get as innovative as they can. And even as we speak, we've got a number of new ideas which we'll tell you about as they unfold. So we're taking a lot of action. Again, cautiously optimistic; concerned about the Guard.

Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, Bob Burns from AP.

SEC. HARVEY: Bob.

Q I just want to follow up on the same subject. Is it true, as some have said, that you do in fact expect at this point to not meet the monthly goals for March and April?

SEC. HARVEY: The -- there is a forecast that we will not meet the monthly goal. But Bob, let me say this. You know, monthly goals are monthly goals. And you know, I come from -- my background's in private industry, and we're kind of a quarterly focused organization. It's good to have monthly goals. It makes everybody aware. But it's really the end of the year that counts.

So are we concerned? Absolutely. I'm very concerned and give it a lot of thought. And I'm a person that -- I'm not going to give up, and that's why I've challenged our people. Let's get more innovative.

And let me just say that they have been innovative. We do a lot of very innovative things that -- you know, that I would have never thought of myself in a hundred years. But I know well that you have to challenge the organization.

And we had a meeting actually right before I left for Iraq and Afghanistan, and I was amazed how many new ideas came out of that meeting. So we're going to test those and see if they work, and we'll let you know.

Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, you mentioned new ideas. Is one of the ideas that anyone in this building considering relaxing, changing, dropping the "don't ask, don't tell" policy? And if not, why not? Why, at a time when you're so challenged, you're meeting so many of these problems, are you turning away people who have skills that they might be able to bring to help this fight?

SEC. HARVEY: I know of no move along those lines, none, no move at all.

Yes, sir?

Q Mr. Secretary, Jim Miklaszewski with NBC.

SEC. HARVEY: Yeah, Jim.

Q A moment ago, you said that there are 145,000 Iraqi security forces trained and equipped.

SEC. HARVEY: Yes.

Q A few weeks ago, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Dick Myers said of that, there are only about 40,000 who are up to speed enough to go anywhere, do anything, in terms of taking on the insurgency and the terrorists. Did you get a better idea of that number, those that can operate pretty much at full capacity?

SEC. HARVEY: No, not specifically on that number. This briefing -- I met for three or four hours with Dave Petraeus, General Petraeus, and let me say that in terms of the -- who stands on their own and who is with coalition, we didn't discuss that in any detail.

But I can tell you this: that they have a strategy of -- one, of embedding selected officers, both field and noncommissioned officers, in Iraqi battalions -- so coalition forces, mainly our soldiers and our officers. And they have a program where they partner. They'll attach one battalion of the Iraqi security forces with one of our battalions. So that -- I think that particular approach is intended to help the Iraqis eventually to totally stand on their own.

But in terms of exact numbers of the 140,000, you know, I'm not really knowledgeable of that. And that's -- to me, that's a pretty difficult number to come up with.

Let me say that what the objective is and where they're trying to go -- and I think it's -- you know, from my point of view, I think it's an excellent strategy.

Q And in terms of Iraqis standing on their own, since the election we keep hearing these reports about, as you said, more Iraqis are joining security forces, more Iraqis are stepping forward and providing information and intelligence to coalition forces. And over the past few days, we've seen reports of more Iraqis actually taking up arms against the insurgents.

SEC. HARVEY: Yes.

Q Did you get a sense of how the Iraqis themselves -- the citizenry is contributing to the overall effort against the insurgency? Did you get any information on --

SEC. HARVEY: Well, I -- the same information you get. I met with some local officials in Mosul. And believe me, I was just -- their courage and determination was just inspiring. There are people -- the people that I met are really, really dedicated to defeating this insurgency and getting on with the business of democracy and freedom and prosperity and economic development.

So my limited exposure to Iraqi officials, I was very impressed with their courage. But I didn't meet with any.

Yes, sir?

Q Good morning, sir. My name is Tom Squitieri with USA Today. Following up on the issue of recruiting, two surveys conducted for DOD and the Army recently as well as independent polling by our paper and other media organizations show that one of the biggest challenges for recruiters are parents of the younger people who are being convinced by their parents not to sign up, for the reason they don't want to see their child possibly killed or hurt in the conflict. With all the ideas that you're brainstorming, about bonuses and all these other things and the things you don't want to tell us this morning, how do you deal with the fact that your biggest obstacle are parents?

SEC. HARVEY: Good question. And as you say, we do take surveys along those lines.

One thing we're going to be doing, without getting into the details, is we're going to be being very proactive to pointing out to recruits and their parents the value of serving the country. This is a theme the chief and I started in our testimony to Congress, that it is a noble calling to serve the country. I personally feel that way. I'm standing here before you because I wanted to serve the country. And that's what I wanted to do. This is actually my third career. And my motivation is, during a time of war I want to serve the country that has been so good to me. I want to return to the government, return specifically to DOD, that was very influential in my business success, and what I learned here at the department. So we're going to appeal to patriotism. We're going to appeal to the value of service. And we're going to do that in a very proactive way.

So I think those particular results are subject to change and they can be turned around.

Q Not to be argumentative, sir, but the same surveys that we cited show that young people already realize -- the patriotism issue is one they realize -- is what motivates them to even consider it. So it's not like they're not aware of that particular issue. And in fact it rates as one of the top reasons why they want to, especially in the post-September 11th atmosphere. So you have that awareness out there, that desire to serve, being trumped by the influence of parents.

SEC. HARVEY: I'm talking about getting that message to parents.

Q Okay.

SEC. HARVEY: I totally agree with what you're saying. We're talking getting that message to the influencers, including parents, including teachers, including -- yes, sir.

Q I'm Thom Shanker from The New York Times. It's fair to say that the major stress on the Army today is the high-level sustained deployments to Iraq. I'm not going to ask you what that number should be. I know that flows from the combatant commander. But as the senior civilian on the Title 10 side of the Army, do you have a number on the wall, Mr. Secretary, where you say if Iraq deployments can drop to this, we can sustain that without a permanent growth in end strength?

SEC. HARVEY: In terms of -- let me just clarify what you said. In terms of the troop strength in theater, that is clearly the responsibility and the authority of the president and the secretary. They make that decision. They and only they make that decision. Now, that decision, of course, is based on recommendations from the theater commanders, and certainly outside of my chain of command.

Q (Off mike.)

SEC. HARVEY: And that in turn certainly depends on conditions in theater. So any speculation in terms of numbers, I think, is not productive because these are decisions that are made by the president and the secretary based on conditions in the theater. So that's kind of my opinion on this issue or my response on this issue.

Q Well, what you do on the organize, train and equip require in planning? Certainly there must be scenarios, that if it's a sustained number in Iraq, we need to do this on the endstrength side; if it drops in Iraq to Level X, Y or Z, then that relieves certain stress and we may not have to do certain things on endstrength. Is that thinking not under way in your department?

SEC. HARVEY: As far as I'm concerned, there's around 140,000, 150,000 troops, and that's the planning number; that's what we plan for. We don't plan for anything else. That's -- we don't assume that it's going to go down. We don't make any of those assumptions. All the force generation, all the training and equipping, all the numbers that I talked to you are based on the current number.

Yes, sir?

Q Sir, Mike Mount with CNN. There's a DOD policy -- or I should say a lack of policy, of allowing a specific number of family members to deploy to a war zone at the same time. There's a woman in Maryland who's trying to fight that policy -- or change that policy because she had three sons that deployed to Iraq at the same time in harm's way.

Having been to Iraq now, talking with the ground troops, talking with the commanders and kind of seeing

what it's like there, what is your feeling about maybe amending the policy that would not allow family members -- a number of family members from the same immediate family to deploy into harm's way?

SEC. HARVEY: Into the theater?

Q Into the theater.

SEC. HARVEY: I don't think conditions on the ground warrant that quite yet. I would not recommend -- recommend families going to theater. You know, when I go, it's a little bit different --

Q I think he's talking about sibling -- a brother -- you know, two or three brothers all --

Q In the military in the same -- you know, the concern that, you know, that more than one family member -- more than one sibling could be killed.

SEC. HARVEY: Only having kind of two or three brothers -- not the parents visiting?

Q Yeah, correct. I'm sorry. There are like three brothers deploying to the same --

SEC. HARVEY: Yeah. As a matter of fact, we are looking into that. I just had an experience in Landstuhl -- without getting into the details -- along that line and we are looking into that, what you just mentioned; having more than one brother or sister in theater at the same time. Is that what your question is?

Q Correct.

SEC. HARVEY: Yes.

Q Can you expand on that at all, what you're looking at?

SEC. HARVEY: No, I can't.

(Laughter.)

Q You can't or you won't? (Laughter.)

Q Vince Crawley with the Army Times --

Q What is it? I know the answer; I'm not going to tell you? (Laughter.)

SEC. HARVEY: Can I quote somebody -- (laughs) -- can I quote my boss on that?

Q Yeah, quality of life issues. I understand that -- Army officials are telling us that because of wartime funding, the basic services at the installations are being cut by about 30 percent. Is that going to be --

SEC. HARVEY: Not true.

Q Not true?

SEC. HARVEY: Not true at all. As I think you may know, the well-being of soldiers and their families is my number-one priority. And we just -- in fact, there should be a release out today, that the chief and I decided together that we are going to -- we are going to issue, and have issued guidance for the FY '07 budget where

we're going to fund the so-called base operating support accounts and the sustainment, repair and maintenance accounts, the so-called SRM and the BOS accounts, as they say, at 90 percent and 90 percent, which is a significant change from past practice.

I'm also pleased to say that maybe a month ago, when I discovered that although we have a very aggressive barracks modernization program, which is going to take -- which is going to be implemented over the next -- it has been and will be implemented over the next four years, we still have at this time 20,000 substandard barracks, out of the 136,000 barracks. And we reprogrammed -- immediately reprogrammed, at my direction, \$250 million with my direction I want that cleared up this year.

I don't want any of our soldiers in substandard barracks, period. So that is going to go on in addition to the barracks modernization program, which is a longer range. So I think my management style is one that when we have a long-term program and somebody says, well, you know, you'll be in heaven in 2009, I say, you know, it's 2005; what are we going to do this year?

Q (Did you fix ?) the money problem?

SEC. HARVEY: We have reprogramming flexibility. We just took it from -- I just reprioritized, because we need to provide -- you know, we can't ask our soldiers to go in harm's way and then ask them to stay in substandard barracks. It's not going to happen on my watch.

Yes, ma'am?

Q (Name and affiliation off mike.) I wanted to ask you about the Army's plan to deal with ammunition plants and depots. That's been a problem for a long time, how to deal with the industrial capacity in the Army. Now with a BRAC round coming up, what is your view on what the Army should do at the ammunition plants and depots?

SEC. HARVEY: Well, there is one major ammunition plant, in Missouri, which has been expanded from something like 1 billion rounds -- I'm just giving you rough numbers -- this year. So it's capacity is going up.

We have at the present time, and we pay attention to this, capacity studies. We have eight depots and arsenals total in the Army. And we are knowledgeable of the capacity of each one of those. We are knowledgeable of -- and they're organized along product lines. So, for example, you take Anniston, and Anniston's involved in combat vehicles, in tactical wheeled vehicles. You take Tobyhanna, which is in Pennsylvania. It's more the electronics. So all these depots and arsenals have product lines. We look at the capacity of those and we understand what that is on a 24/7 basis. And by the way, most of them are currently working 24/7.

So we pay strict attention to that. We know what the baseload is. We know what the surge is. And for example, this year across that complex we're going to generate something like 19 million direct labor hours. Next year it's 25 million direct labor hours. So we have surge capacity within that and we pay very close attention to having that capability. So in any BRAC consideration, we take our ability to surge in the account, and also in the private sector.

So we have people that study that and understand that, and clearly we will not do anything to jeopardize our ability to surge in the future. It will be consistent -- any rearrangement or any moves along that line will be consistent with our ability to surge.

Q So you don't foresee any cutbacks coming up, significant cutbacks?

SEC. HARVEY: In the capability? I don't see any -- we are going to maintain the capability to be able to surge to -- in the 25 million to 30 million range. We're going to preserve that capability.

Yes?

Q Lisa Burgess for Stars and Stripes. Can you give us an update on the IRR call-up? We've gotten a lot of anecdotal spot evidence that you're getting no-show rates of 40 percent, and huge numbers of requests for waivers. Is that working out as well as you'd hoped?

SEC. HARVEY: The IRR call-up was certainly way before my time, so I'm not really up on the details of it. I did know that -- if I can recall correctly -- there was something like a call-up for 6,000 or so, which a couple thousand have showed up. But I don't really know the details. We can certainly get back to you about our success and our problems in doing that, but I'm just not knowledgeable of those details. But we'll get back to you on that.

Yes, Miss?

Q (Name off mike) -- from Inside the Army. You talked about during your trip to Iraq that 145,000 troops have been trained. I think General Myers had said this weekend that once 200,000 Iraqi forces are trained, the U.S. could begin withdrawing forces. And so when do you see the U.S. reaching that number of troops? And what does that mean when you say training, is that trained at the level of -- when you say training and equipped, at the equivalent of the level of training that these 145,000 soldiers have received, or is it -- you know, are they able to stand and fight on their own?

SEC. HARVEY: Let me just reiterate something I said before. The decision on troop withdrawals and troop strength levels is the president's and the secretary of Defense, certainly based on the advice of the chairman and the theater commander.

But having said that, as I said in my opening statement, there are 50,000 troops that are being -- 20,000 of which are being trained; 30,000 of which are in the queue to be trained. And I think the overall goal is to get between -- and remember here we're talking about both the army and police force. The objective is to get somewhere around 300,000. When and if there is a withdrawal depends on conditions on the ground. And again, that's the decisions of the president and the secretary.

There's training -- the training, just to give you a kind of a snapshot and overview of that, it's very similar to the training that we do. You do individual training, you do, you know, basic training, you do advanced individual skills training, and then you do training as a unit or collective training. So there's a whole series of training. As I said, we're going to have embedded advisory teams, we're going to have partnerships. And so there's, in a sense, on-the-job training. So there's maybe four stages of training and that goes on as a spectrum, and it depends on where you are in the spectrum. And then, it's not unlike the way we do it, although they don't have a Joint Readiness Training Center like we do, but it's a fairly realistic situation that they deal with.

So, you can rest assured one thing, the Army knows how to train, and they've proven it. We're the best Army in the world. And I guess I go back with my association with the Army to 1978 when I was here in the building as an assistant to the secretary of Defense, Harold Brown, at that time. And one of the takeaways -- it's still right here in my mind -- and I'd hear then, was that -- is that the Army really knows how to train. And as a matter of fact, they do a better job at training than industry does. So the Army really does a good job there.

Yes?

Q Sir, if I could just follow up, I didn't really get a response to the second part of my question earlier.

Given all the challenges this country is facing right now in the global war on terrorism, why isn't somebody reconsidering the "don't ask, don't tell" policy? You can take more people who don't have high school diplomas –

SEC. HARVEY: To my knowledge, it's certainly -- it's not within the purview of the Army to change that type of policy. To my knowledge, there's no consideration along those lines. I think that's how I answered it.

Q Do you think there should be?

SEC. HARVEY: No.

Q Why not?

SEC. HARVEY: Because it's a long-standing policy and I don't see any need to change it.

Yes, sir?

Q Carl Osgood with Executive Intelligence Review. One of your predecessors, about three years ago, had a plan for converting about 80,000 civilian positions to contract, as I recall. I'm wondering, what is your perspective on that kind of contracting out, both on the institutional industrial side and on the logistics side with the –

SEC. HARVEY: You know, I think it's basically a very good idea. What I have started, which I'd say the so-called mil-to-civ conversion is a part of, I've started to parallel with the major force transformation initiative, which I mentioned in my opening statements -- I've started a parallel business transformation focused on the institutional Army, focused around a technique called Lean Six Sigma, which is intended to reduce the cycle time, improve the output quality of administrative, manufacturing and repair processes.

It's essentially to take the work out of a process and to apply it both to a factory-type operation or repair, and also to a headquarters operation, like the Department of Army.

We are -- we've had an eight-hour session of that to all the key leaders, both on the Army staff and the civilian secretariat. All my direct reports are taking objectives to reduce and improve processes.

So we have a comprehensive program to really -- to reduce the cost of the institutional side of the Army, so we can free those resources up and apply it to our warfighters.

So I strongly support that. I've been doing process improvement for 25 years of my business career. It's been -- today it's called Lean Six Sigma. Back in 1982 it was called Quality and Productivity Improvement. Then we called it Total Quality Management. Then we called it Business Process Re-engineering. We've had several different names for the same thing. You look at the way you do business, and you change it for the better. And you do that in a continuous evolutionary fashion. And when you attain where you think you want to be, and you say that's world-class or near world-class, then you set another higher goal.

So that's going to be going on in parallel. That particular program was developed and kind of expanded out by my transition team. So we're all ready to roll that out.

And another tenet of that is that I'm going to empower our leaders to -- and hold them accountable at the same time. They're empowered to change their operations in terms of cycle time, quality and cost. And I'll visit them often to ensure that they're meeting their objectives.

Yes, sir?

Q Mr. Secretary, the proportion of African-Americans and women in the recruiting classes of recent years have been declining. I'm wondering if you're doing anything to reverse that trend -- those trends.

SEC. HARVEY: I'm aware of that. And you know, I don't really see it's productive to get into that level of detail. We're going to tailor -- as we say, we have a message that we think appeals to young people, and we have incentives to appeal to young people, to help them get educated. And I'm aware of your article, and I'm aware of the article -- the other article in the Post-Gazette, which looked at the -- those statistics in somewhat a different way. I didn't really see it as productive, getting into that level of --

Q You're changing your strategy, you're changing your advertising firms, you're changing the pitch of your message to that community --

SEC. HARVEY: Right. Right. Right. And if the G-1s of the world and the human resource people say that they're going to tailor that message that way to do that, that's fine with me. But I don't really -- I think it's more productive for me to be the person that is challenging everybody to get innovative, that is holding them accountable for these goals. And if there's a message that can be tailored to reverse that trend, that's a part of what we're doing. That's fine with me.

Yes?

Q And Mr. Secretary, going back to the message you intend to deliver to parents of potential recruits, I mean, do you -- this patriotism message -- do you intend to deliver that in a new advertising campaign? Is that what your thinking is?

SEC. HARVEY: That's a possibility. What I'm also thinking of is of giving the assignment to the senior leaders of the Army, to give them that assignment of talking and getting out and speaking to the civilian aides to the secretary of the Army. And I have a group of highly dedicated people called the CASA's, or civilian aides to the secretary of the Army-- to ask them to go to the local communities to talk the value of serving the nation, the noble calling. And I'm going to ask members of the Army Caucus in the Senate and in the House to do that. I'm going to ask the AUSA to do that. I'm going to be asking a lot of people that have a great deal of love and respect for this institution, know the importance of service, have served.

So I think it's going to be more of a grass roots. But if the -- you know, I use -- I like to say that if some advertising slogan or advertising approach -- if somebody suggests it, and I don't like it, that's probably a good thing -- (chuckles) -- because I'm one of those people that sometimes don't get what goes on TV.

So that will be part of it. But I think it'll -- I think it's going to be more grass roots. It's going to be more at the Rotary Club. It's going to be more at the Kiwanis Club. It's going to be out there in the heartland is what -- my thoughts. And we're going to flesh that out and develop it.

I don't want to talk about that, but you -- but that's our thought, because we're just starting along those lines. But that's my thought.

Yes?

Q Thank you. Mr. Secretary, Charles Hoskinson (sp) from AFP. If recruiting and retention does continue to be a problem, at what point would you be willing to recommend a draft?

Q Yeah! (Laughter.)

SEC. HARVEY: (Laughs.) Listen, the -- the "D" word is the farthest thing from my thoughts. The all-volunteer force has proven its value. Look at the performance of our soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. And believe me, they are -- it's just a motivational -- it's a motivational event to go over there. And by the way, you know, when you get over there, there's no difference between the active, the Reserves and the National Guard. The quality is high across the board. And, you know, you go into Tikrit and you -- the Multinational Division Northwest commander is a National Guard person. Under him he has active brigades. It's just -- it's seamless.

So that's the farthest thing from my mind. I don't see any need to do it.

Q Sir, on that point about --

STAFF: This is the last question.

Q Okay, thank you.

General, on that point about them being equally trained and equally able when they get over there -- talking about Reserve and Guard fellows -- and, you know, there's somewhere between 40 or 45 percent of the force over there is Guard and Reserve.

SEC. HARVEY: That's right.

Q And folks in this building say, but, you know, the Guard and Reserve is not stressed because we only have 40 to 45 percent; we haven't used the entire Guard and Reserve, yet, over there.

But could you definitely say at this point that all of those Guard -- Army Guard and National -- and Army Reserve forces that have not been used in Iraq or Afghanistan, are as well-trained and as well-equipped as the force there now?

SEC. HARVEY: Let me say this: We will never, ever send a soldier into theater that is not well-trained and equipped, period.

Q That's not what I asked, sir. I asked are they, you know.

SEC. HARVEY: But they will be. If they're not today, they will be when they leave. You know, all the National Guard units, the brigades, either go to the National Training Center or the Joint Readiness Training Center in Louisiana, and they go through exactly the same exercises. I was there for an exercise of a brigade of the 101st. And I'm going out next month to an exercise -- a mission, so-called -- this is the other MREs, these are the Mission Readiness Exercises, not the Meals Ready to Eat. There's an MRE at the National Training Center for the Guard. So they go through exactly the same training when they're deploying.

Q I realize that. But the point is that that number is sort of tossed out as a counterargument that it's not -- when you talk about over-stretched and stressed. But some of those units out there are not equal -- they are not equally trained and equally equipped at this point, so some of them would take a lot longer to bring up to the point where you would say they'd be ready to go.

SEC. HARVEY: Every brigade that went -- every National Guard brigade that went, the so-called enhanced brigades, the ones that are over there now, are well-trained and well-equipped. And there's -- you know, there's variations in model across, but generally the same and --

Q Yeah, but the 55 percent that haven't gone are not at that point. They would take a -- would they take a lot longer to train up?

SEC. HARVEY: No.

Q No?

SEC. HARVEY: As a matter of fact, you know, the troops that have -- the troops that have returned from Iraq, the active -- let's just talk about the active. Their equipment is being restored. They're not ready to go either. But when -- we have a cycle, and when they're ready to deploy -- and training, again, we have an excellent lessons learned. What happens in Iraq at day one is back in Fort Leavenworth in day two, and may be back in Fort Polk in day three. So training is a continuous --

Q Let me try it one more time --

SEC. HARVEY: Please.

Q -- because I'm not making -- I think I'm probably not making my question clear.

If tomorrow you had to activate the remaining 55 percent of those not yet deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, how long would it take them to be adequately trained and equipped to fight?

SEC. HARVEY: I don't see any scenario in which the remaining 55 would have to be deployed. So it's just a speculative question.

Q It is a speculative question, but it's speculative only because it goes to the question of getting an answer of how well those forces are trained at this point, how ready they are to go should they be needed.

SEC. HARVEY: All the Reserves and all the National Guard, as you know, train all the time. And my interpretation of your question is not that they're -- they're all basically trained. They're all trained in their individual skills. We're talking about unit training. And when they're ready to deploy, there is a cycle in which all units go to the National Training Centers before they deploy. It's a predictable cycle. So we're talking about unit training, not individual training. All the individuals have been trained. They've all gone through their advanced. All the officers go to their basic training courses, they all go to the intermediate schools and so forth. We're talking about unit training. And we'll never deploy a unit unless they're -- they have to be C-1. Their equipment has to be ready, their training has to be ready and their personal strength has to be there, and then they deploy.

Thank you very much.

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