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## Transcript

# The US Army in Transition

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**Dr Patricia Lewis:**

Well, welcome everybody. My name is Dr Patricia Lewis. I am the research director here for international security. And it's my great pleasure to be chairing this session with General Ray Odierno, who is the chief of staff of the US Army and has been so since September 2011. I need you first, before we begin, to undertake to switch off your mobile phones so that they don't interfere with the microphones and also put us off our train of thought. This meeting is not under the Chatham House rule, it is on the record. We are streaming live, and we have had questions in already from our Twitter feed, so we'll be taking some questions from outside this room. And at the end, General Ray Odierno has to leave promptly. And so what I would ask you to do is to stay seated while he leaves so he can get to his next meeting, if that's okay with everybody.

So, General Odierno, we're delighted that you're here. You've had 35 years plus of service. You've commanded units at every echelon. You've had duty in Germany, Albania, Kuwait, Iraq and the United States. And you've held a number of posts, including assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and you were primary military advisor during that period to Colin Powell and Condoleeza Rice. You have served as commanding general of the Multinational Force in Iraq, and subsequently of the US forces in Iraq from 2008 to 2010, and more recently you have commanded the US Joint Forces Command. And now you're the chief of staff of the US Army. It's a pretty impressive record, if you don't mind me saying so.

We are absolutely delighted that you've come to Chatham House to speak, and to speak on the record. I'm sure many people have many questions that they're burning to ask you. But we're going to give you your moment in the sun to put forward your views. We have an era right now of austerity, certainly in Europe. We have declining budgets everywhere. We have a shift in the US mission to the Asia-Pacific, although we've heard that before, have we not? So, I think what we need to understand from your point of view is how you see the future of the US Army, and within the broader context of US military and US policy, strategic policy. So we really look forward to hearing from you, and I ask everyone to welcome you.

**General Raymond Odierno:**

Well, thank you very much. It's great to be here. You know, it's interesting, we ran into each other – about a year ago, I guess it was, maybe a little less than that – when she was in Monterrey, California, and I was out visiting. I went to

the Monterrey Institute. One of the reasons I wanted to go to the Monterrey Institute was because we're trying to develop broadening experiences for our officers, where they don't just – where we don't just place them in military environments, we place them in environments that have a significant amount of broadening discussions and talks, and that's why I went there. And that's one of the reasons why I'm glad I'm here to continue that discussion.

First, it's great to be in London, although I'm only going to be here for about a day and a half. I just missed the Jubilee – I came in early this morning, flew in early this morning. But, you know, I do feel like I'm in London, it is raining just a little bit outside, so it makes me feel like I've been here before. So it really is wonderful to be here.

We are in a time of transition around the world. First, I would just talk about it in terms of the American Army itself. The challenge I have as chief of staff of the Army is that we have two pressing problems that we are facing today. One is that we're still engaged. Today as I stand here, I have 92,000 soldiers deployed on contingency missions around the world, about 69,000 in Afghanistan, another almost 20,000 in other parts of the Middle East and in Korea. So we are, in fact, engaged today. But I have to then consider that as I look to the future and what I need our Army to do – and we call it, 2020 is the timeframe we picked, it's about an eight to ten year timeframe that we think we have to look at on how we have to adjust what we do in the military, both from a joint perspective – Army, Air Force, Navy – but also from within the Army. So I'm spending my time talking and thinking and trying to create the path for the Army, especially as part of our joint force, as we move to the future, while we're still engaged in quite significant operations in Afghanistan. So it's a balancing act that we have to do. And it's one that we have to do because of what the environment is. So whenever I go anywhere I like to talk about the environment, because it's important for us to understand what the environment is today and what it might be in the future.

And the first one is, frankly, the fiscal crisis, or whatever you want to call it, both in the United States and in Europe, that we continue to see play out in front of our eyes almost every day. In the United States we have an additional problem with our debt, the fact that our debt continues to increase. So last August, as our Congress was talking about how we were going to raise the debt limit in the United States, they came to an agreement which we call the Budget Control Act, which talked about how we're going to balance the budget. And along with – in this time period, the President made a conscious decision to reduced DOD spending by just a little bit under \$500 billion over the next ten years. So we've now implemented that. In January and February

we submitted a budget that reflects this reduction in our military spending. And it affects each service very differently. For the Army, about 49% of our budget is about people. So when you talk about cuts, it's about cutting people. So we are in the process of reducing the size of the US Army by about 80,000 people in the active component. And we'll do that over about a five year period. We've already reduced about 15,000. And we're going to continue to do that over the next five years.

In addition to that, we still have – this Budget Control Act is still out there, where there might be additional force cuts if Congress cannot come to an agreement on how they will reduce the debt and balance the budget. And if that happens, that would be another \$500 billion reduction in defence spending, which could go into effect as early as January 2013. So the problem we have in the United States is not only additional cuts to our military, but these are not cuts that I can plan for because they are, frankly, what we call a salami slice – it's a 15% cut across every area, so we have no choice on where we come out. So there's some concern with us, that we've all testified that we think that if this happens we would have to fundamentally change our strategy. We have not discussed that yet. But that will be something that we'll have to look at as we move to the future.

Now let me talk about the environment that we face. I think that many of you are familiar with that. So we have the underpinning of these fiscal issues that we have to all deal with, and we have a responsibility to do that in the military. But let's look around the world and what we're seeing in the world. And part of this is – what I've learned, and what I think we've all learned from a military perspective over the last five or six years is this interconnection, this global communication capability that instantaneously information can be passed around the world, has impacted security and will impact how we think about how we have to provide security into the future.

And we saw this play out in the Arab Spring, whether it be in Libya, whether it be in Egypt, whether it be in Tunisia – you're seeing it play out still a little bit, today, in Syria. When we discuss this, we'll tell you that the Arab Spring is not over. I mean, it's just beginning. Because what they did is they were able to – in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia's instance – get rid of the old government, but they're still in the process of forming their new governments. We don't know what these governments are going to look like. We don't know, once they're formed, what impact that will have on the Middle East and the security within the Middle East. We just don't know. So we have to see, and we have to watch. So I call this a time of great uncertainty. So we have a fiscal problem, and we have uncertainty. We have what some would characterize as the

provocative actions of Iran, whether it's trying to gain nuclear capability – you know, they claim peacefully, or they're trying to create a nuclear weapon. I would also – their ability to attempt to try and influence many other regions in the world right now is something that is concerning to others in the Middle East. So we have to watch that very carefully as well. So there are many issues there that are yet unresolved. And ultimately it comes down to an Arab-Israeli issue, the Iranian-Israeli issue. Those are all things that are just so uncertain now, we just don't know what that impact will have on the security environment both regionally and internationally.

If I shift to the Asia-Pacific region, you know, you have the India-Pakistan issue, and then you have the Pakistan-Afghanistan issue – all issues that are very uncertain. You have India that's growing very quickly. You have Pakistan that has significant internal issues that they're trying to resolve. They have the issue with what's going on in Afghanistan. All of this creates uncertainty. And then you have the rising power of China. You have the fight for control of resources in the Pacific. What does this mean, how does this impact our future security? So all of these things really impact how we want to look to the future.

So based on this, and based on our reduced budgets, in the fall of 2011 and winter of 2012, we went through a security review. In this security review I felt it was unprecedented in the cooperation between the joint chiefs of staff, the chiefs of all the services, our secretary of defence and the president, where we went through several iterations over a two or three month period, to try to work through a strategy that we felt was looking forward into the future. We published several different things we'll continue to do, like deter and defeat, build partner capacity, safeguard nuclear weapons – there are several things internal to that. But the real major piece of it was a shift in priority to the Asia-Pacific. That doesn't mean we're abandoning other areas, it just means we have a shift in priorities to the Asia-Pacific region. And so we are now working through what that means and how we execute that over the next five years and how we will conduct that shift to the Asia-Pacific region.

What does it mean for the Army? Well, a couple of things. One is, what most people don't realize is the United States Army today has 66,000 soldiers assigned to the Pacific region. Most people don't know that. But what's happened over the last several years is they've been used to fight wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, so they have not been available to do what we call the shaping events that we'd like to happen in the Asia-Pacific region. So as we shift we will start to make sure we're able to employ all 66,000 we have there and then provide additional resources as necessary based on the strategies

that will be executed. So that's kind of what we'll do in a practical sense. But one of the things I point out to everyone, as you look to the Asia-Pacific region, is that seven out of the ten largest land armies in the world are in the Pacific. And in fact, 22 out of the 27 chiefs of defence in the Pacific region are army. And in fact, the most politically influential service in every one of these nations is their army. And yet, we have not fully engaged with that, with them, except on a few instances – Korea, Japan, some others – so this shift in strategy now gives us the opportunity to shift our emphasis on building relationships, building partnerships, and starting to re-engage with many of the Asia-Pacific regions.

So as we look ahead, our role and our vision is to be regionally responsive and globally engaged. And the strategy we've come up with is to 'prevent, shape and win' for the future. In 'prevent', I believe it's having credibility of your force. In order to prevent conflict – and credibility is built on capacity, capability, which is – capability is broken down into readiness and modernization. And the best way to prevent conflict, is what we want to do is we want to make sure that we don't have some of our adversaries miscalculate. What causes many of our problems are miscalculations. And so as we develop our force for the future we want to do the most we can to try to prevent miscalculations by senior people in other nations. So we want to make sure that we have a balanced capacity that enables them not to make some bad decisions or miscalculations.

I've pulled 'shape' out of 'prevent' because I think that's going to become so important for our future. One of the key things we're going to have to do is shape the future environment in several different regions: priority to Asia-Pacific; Middle East will be secondary; we'll continue to also develop and nurture our relationships in Europe, in Africa, and in South America. And we will do this by partnering, by joint exercises. And what the US is going to move to is a rotational force concept where, as we work with nations, we will rotate forces into different regions in order to work through and build strong relationships with our allies and partners in all these different regions.

An example – let me use NATO as an example. As we reduce the size of the army we are going to reduce our footprint in Europe. But as we reduce our footprint in Europe, we're going to be – we're going to assign a brigade to the NATO rapid reaction force, which we have never done before. And that force will be able to rotate in and out of Europe in order to do joint training, joint exercises, joint work with many of our NATO allies and partners. I see us starting to do this in the Asia-Pacific region as we work with some of our key partners, Australia and others, to rotate forces and to do multilateral exercises

with many different partners in the Asia-Pacific region. For the first time, our forces on the Korean peninsula have conducted operations off of the Korean peninsula in order for us to start to build these relationships. So these are the kind of things that we'll talk about.

But the other piece that we must remember is that what I call the 'military art' continues to evolve and change. So the other challenge I have is how do I address this change in the military. What do I mean? Well, ten or fifteen years ago when we talked about it, we always talked about the 'global commons', access to the global commons. We talked about land, sea and air. But that's continued to change over time. First space became a new global commons, and now I would argue cyberspace has become a significant new global commons. Everyone wants access to the global commons. Every nation – every nation-state or non-nation-state has access and wants uncontrolled access to space and to cyberspace. And we have to understand that as we conduct operations. And in fact, I would argue the movement of information and how you use information is becoming more and more important, and cyberspace is a way to do that. So as we conduct operations, some of the comments I make as I talk to our young leaders, is that a new art, a new form of manoeuvre, is how do we manoeuvre in cyberspace. How do we manoeuvre – information operations is another form of manoeuvre because of what an impact it has in the environment that we might have to operate in.

So these are all concepts that we're dealing with now as we look to change how we develop our army. First is, one of the things I'm most focused on is adapting our leader development programmes. In my mind, the most important thing I can do as the chief of staff of the Army is reinvigorate and adapt our leader development programmes in order to broaden their skills. When I was a young lieutenant and captain, it was the Cold War, and it was military operations. We didn't think much outside of the military spectrum. But in the last ten years in Iraq and Afghanistan, we've required our young officers to think much more broadly. You have to be very keen culturally, you have to be keen politically, you have to be keen economically, and you have to be keen militarily. And as I look to the future, it's going to get nothing but more complex. It's not going to get easier. As this move towards – as the impact of cyberspace, the impact of the interconnectivity of the global population – we have to understand that. We have to be able to understand the ramifications.

Some of the lessons – what are some of the lessons that we've learned and that we have to apply in the future? One is that in the future, in almost every operation, it's going to be very difficult for us or any other nation to do

unilateral operations. We believe all operations should be in what we call the 'joint, intergovernmental, interagency, multinational environment'. We call it JIIM for short. But we have to understand how you would operate within that environment, and so we have to train our leaders to understand that environment. We have to understand the limits of military power. Military power can accomplish only so much, and you have to understand what that is, and you have to understand when to apply it and when not to apply it, whether it's tactically or strategically. And we have to adjust on how we do that. So this also incorporates to us the importance of the civil-military relationship and the necessity, in all operations, to have cooperation of civil-military leaders as you conduct operations. In the United States we call it our interagency involvement: State Department, Department of Defense, Treasury, Justice all have to be involved as we move forward and conduct operations. And we have to get used to operating in that environment.

We've also learned, and as many of you have seen, is what we want to try to do, is we have to increase our ability to coordinate militarily between our conventional and our special operations forces. Over the last seven or eight years we've built a strong bond and relationship. We have to continue to nurture that relationship, and how we use special operations forces, how we use conventional forces, and how we build a synergy in order for us to move forward with that. So there's many other lessons, but those are some of the key ones that I like to talk about all the time.

So based on that, what are some of the characteristics that I think that we have to have in our future force? One is depth and versatility. What I mean by depth is we have to have the depth to respond to a broad range of threats. In my mind, what we have to be able to do for our national security leaders is provide them a range of options across a spectrum of both capacity and lethality in order to solve problems. Many of our problems can be solved at the very low end of the spectrum, through good civil-military partnerships and relationships. We have to understand that. Now we have to create options, a range of options for our national security leaders in order to decide based on the political situation which ones they choose to use. And I believe, with the depth and versatility – I have to build that into the Army, where we have the versatility and the adaptability to react within our formations across a broad spectrum of missions, whether it be humanitarian assistance, whether it be support to civil authorities, whether it be in an environment of irregular warfare, regular warfare – across that entire spectrum – counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism. So I have to be able to provide a range of options. So we have to build depth and versatility.



One of the lessons that really has struck home with me over the last ten years is about us understanding the necessity to be what I call 'discriminately lethal'. And what I mean by that is, as our society continues to grow, as it should be, the ability for us to reduce collateral damage, reduce civilian casualties is critical as we move forward. So we have to understand how we can be discriminately lethal, be accurate, making sure that in this very difficult realm we're working in, where in many cases your adversary does not have a uniform on, is not necessarily readily recognizable – how do we do this in such a way where we're limiting civilian casualties and collateral damage? And so, we're focused on that. Now, what I would argue, that the most discriminately lethal weapon we have is an American soldier, or soldiers in a broader sense. Because they have a chance to cognitively look, decide, and determine. And so these are some of the issues that we have to work through as a joint force as we move forward. So these are all the complex issues.

So as I move forward here, we're going to continue to reorganize the Army. We're going to increase our special operations force capacity, even though we're reducing the size of the Army. We're increasing our ability to do manned-unmanned teaming, with rotary-wing aviation, that's important and we're increasing our ability to conduct rotary-wing operations. We're looking at our force mix – what is the right mix of forces that we need, both – for us, force mix is a very complex issue. It has to do with whether it's heavy, medium, light forces, it has to do with conventional and special operations forces, it has to do with active component professionals, our national guard reserves, what's the right mix that we need there. What's the right mix of civilians, contractors, soldiers – all of those things we're taking a look at right now as I look to these characteristics that we want to have and as we look to the future environment. What's that right mix.

We also have to revolutionize how we purchase equipment. In the United States, and in the Army specifically, over the last ten or twelve years we've had some real issues in terms of money we've spent on weapons acquisition and the success of our programmes. One of the things that we have not been able to do is properly leverage the increase in technology advancements in the civilian world. And the greatest example is our networks. For the Army, one of our biggest investments is our networks. We're trying to have a network that goes from the highest levels of our authority down to the individual soldier so we can communicate rapidly, quickly, and be able to make good decisions. What we're now able to do is now leverage the technology that is moving so quickly. So for example, ten years ago when we started this, we developed a system for our soldier, and it was like 20 pounds,

and it was kind of like a computer that he would carry. Well now, we have it where he can carry an iPod and can communicate directly. But what we've had to do in our acquisitions strategy is be able to very quickly integrate new technology, because it's moving so quickly, especially in network, it's moving almost every year, every two years you have to make a significant correction because of the continued incredible progress that we're making in those areas. So we have to have a flexible acquisitions strategy that enables us to do this. And those are the other things that we have to look at as well.

And then, we're trying to reduce costs by having an integrated training environment. And what I mean is we're now mixing live, virtual and constructive. So what we're able to do now is conduct exercises, and a lot of it in a virtual realm which is very much close to reality. And in fact, with our young people today, it fits very well, because they're very used to operating in the computer environment. And so it enables them to make mistakes, it enables them to make very difficult decisions, it enables them to coordinate by doing it virtually. So that reduces our costs, it helps with our environment, and it helps with several other issues that we have. But we can't completely depend on that, so we have to mix in live training. And then we have what we call constructive training, where we can – we ran an exercise, I think it was in March, as we were preparing a unit to go to Afghanistan, where in this exercise we had people participating from Norway, from Germany, Kansas in the United States, Texas in the United States, North Carolina in the United States, in Washington, and in Norfolk, Virginia all at the same time. And that's what we call a constructive environment, where we were able to bring in all levels of command, from the highest levels of command down to the lowest, in order to do an exercise. That saves us money. For example, we're not travelling to be at the same location, we can now do it, we can now communicate across a broad range of places. And it's much more inexpensive and actually more effective because it's more realistic, because that tends to be how we operate anyhow, you're not right next to each other all the time, you're distributed across a very broad spectrum.

So let me stop there, and I can go on for another half hour or so, but let me stop there because I really do want to take your questions. So thank you, and I look forward to your questions. Thank you very much.