

Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT

Event

**“Landpower Dialogue: A Conversation with Secretary
Christine Wormuth & General Randy George”**

DATE

Tuesday, September 19, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. ET

FEATURING

Christine Wormuth

Secretary of the U.S. Army

General Randy George

Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army

General Robert Brown

*President, Association of the U.S. Army,
Former Commanding General of U.S. Army Pacific*

CSIS EXPERTS

John J. Hamre

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Tom Karako

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Transcript By

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John J. Hamre:

I'm not going to start until you guys sit down. (Laughs.) It's protocol, you know?

Good morning, everybody. Thank you. Glad to have you here. Welcome. This is our inaugural session for the new Strategic Landpower forum. And I'm so glad we finally have a landpower forum, you know? For I guess maybe six or seven years we've had a seapower forum, and that's good but we need the other half here. And it is really terrific that we're able to do that.

This is being made possible by two groups, really. First of all, our partnership with AUSA. I've long had an admiration and tried to work closely with AUSA. Of course, Bob Brown is going to be here. He'll introduce our speakers. Carter Ham – my friend Carter Ham is here. He led AUSA so well for so many years. And it's really great that you're both here, and I want to say thank you for – thank you for coming.

You know, it's – it should be obvious why we have a landpower forum. You know, one of the few advantages of getting – being an old fart in Washington is that I've lived through 45 years of people saying we've had the end of landpower; we don't need it. How many – how many people have heard that story, you know – you know, armor is dead and all that kind of stuff? I've listened to that for 45 years, you know? And now we're watching this obscene war – you know, there's no other word for it – this obscene war launched by Russia against Ukraine, and we now come to realize the fundamental reason; why do you have an army? It's because to carry out the political directions of your government. It's about – it's about sovereignty. It's about how you exercise your sovereignty. You don't do that in cyberspace; you do that on the ground, you know? And we're going to follow that.

And we're seeing old truisms, we're learning them again. Artillery, isn't that becoming a powerful message to us again? And we're seeing new truisms. Drones, you know, ubiquitous knowledge about the enemy, you know? I mean, this is – this is an astounding new world that we're in. We're going to explore these things in the Landpower series. And so, I'm really grateful for the opportunity we have to do that.

I do want to say special thanks to the real people that make this possible. It's our friends at General Dynamics. And Jim Pasquarette and Mark Roualet are here, and I want to say thank you for making it possible for us to host this series and event. We're going to – we're going to benefit greatly.

My role is ornamental, and the real role is going to go to Bob Brown to introduce our two speakers. I do want to just say welcome back to

Christine Wormuth, Secretary Wormuth. We've been working colleagues several times in the past, and so nice to have her back here.

And one last thing. I got to – I got to get this out of my system. When are we going to get confirmations going in the Senate? This is nonsense, total nonsense. (Applause.) I was talking with General George. He enlisted right out of high school, 42 years of service to this country, put himself in harm's way, and we're jerking him around and every other general officer for no good reason. It's time to end this. OK, I feel better. (Laughter.)

I want to say again thank you to Bob Brown. I mean, Bob is – of course, he was a very successful general officer, but what he's really known for is having been a thousand-shooter at – for the – for the Black Knights at the Academy, huh? This is – you know, to heck with all that leading troops in the field; he was – he was a basketball star. But, Bob, thank you for leading the Army – AUSA. Thank you. And come up here, and let's get this going for real. Thank you. (Applause.)

General Robert
Brown:

You know, somehow you get better as you get older in sports. I really wasn't that good, but it's – but it's all good. Thank you, Dr. Hamre. You know, thanks for those opening remarks. So, spot on. I really – how can I follow that?

So just briefly, we really appreciate this partnership and the chance to get this essential topic out there, and it is so key. And as you mentioned, you know, folks are always looking for the neat, precise solution, but landpower will always be critical. People live on the land. Land is key. And so, we're just grateful that we will be able to have this great dialogue diving into current issues and future issues with key leaders, civilian and military leaders.

I also want to thank General Dynamics for sponsoring this. Wouldn't happen without you. So, thank you very much.

And my role to really – to introduce our speakers. And if I did their long bio, we'd probably miss dinner because it's so impressive. So, I'm going to do a short bio. But we could not have two better leaders to kick off the Strategic Landpower Dialogue with Secretary Wormuth and Vice Chief of Staff General Randy George. Without question, we're very fortunate to have these two leaders during the – one of the biggest transitions in the history of the Army, and certainly in 40 years. And their full bios are on the CSIS page, and so if you want to look those up during the event you certainly can.

Secretary Wormuth was sworn in as the 25th secretary of the Army on May 27th, 2021. She has over 25 years of experience working on defense and national security policy as a career civilian and presidential appointee. And notably, Secretary Wormuth served as undersecretary of defense for policy from 2014 to 2016. She also has extensive experience outside of government, including as director of International Security and Defense Policy Center at the Rand Corporation. And she even served previously, as you heard here, as a senior fellow right here at CSIS. So tremendous experience.

General Randy George is a native of Alden, Iowa. And you heard 1982 he enlisted, but then later went to West Point, was commissioned from the United States Military Academy in 1988 as an infantry officer. He's commanded at all levels, from company up to corps – commanded I Corps – and has deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, Desert Shield, Desert Storm as well. He's also served in multiple key staff roles and assignments in both joint and Army organizations, and served as a fellow on the Council on Foreign Relations as well. General George holds a Master of Science in economics from Colorado School of Mines and a Master of Arts in national security and strategic studies from the U.S. Naval War College. He assumed duties as the 38th vice chief of staff of the Army in August 2022 and he's nominated to become the next Army chief of staff. And we certainly hope, you know, that that moves forward at a faster pace – (laughs) – as before.

So, I'll turn it over now to Dr. Tom Karako, who will lead this essential conversation. Tom, over to you.

Tom Karako:

Well, thank you, General Brown. And thanks again to Secretary Wormuth and General George for being with us today. This is our first kickoff event. We couldn't have done it with better senior leaders.

Now, the Army is a big organization. We've got a lot to cover today. As we were talking in the back, the Army has a lot of people, and a lot of things can only be done by the Army. I have a lot of questions, but I would also, again, invite folks online to please submit them. And then, through the magic of resilient Army networks, they'll come straight to me, and we'll have them here on the iPad. So, thanks again for being here.

We want to start with a broad, general question that we hope will kind of lead to every event in this series, and that is a simple one, which is – or seemingly simple one: What is your view of the role of landpower within the joint force, both today and in the force of 2040?

Secretary Christine Wormuth: I think, Tom, I mean, both Dr. Hamre and General Brown, retired, said it very well, which is land is the domain where people live. You know, we have not yet figured out how to get to Mars. We have not yet figured out how to live underwater. So, people live on the land. Sovereignty of nations is generally decided on land. And landpower, as a result, I think remains extremely relevant today.

And we see that in Ukraine, obviously, where, you know, neither side has achieved air superiority, you know, and you see ships being sunk. Most of the fighting, and the fighting that's going to be definitive, is happening on the ground.

And I think when you think about the Indo-Pacific, a different theater, you know, landpower will be very, very important in terms of enabling airpower and seapower.

So, there's no question in my mind that landpower remains incredibly relevant. And I think when you think about 2040, probably what you'll see that will be notably different than what we're seeing today, although there are – the roots, I think, are already starting to form – is much more ubiquitous use of unmanned systems, of autonomous systems, of systems using artificial intelligence. I think you'll – by 2040, we will see multidomain operations in full bloom. You know, so that's how I see it, at least, looking ahead.

General Randy George: Yeah. I would just repeat the same thing that Dr. Hamre and the secretary were talking about. I don't think – historically, I think we've seen that in combat all the decisive actions happen on land, and I think the Army will continue to be a big part of that.

The other thing I would add is for the Army really what you get is scale, and I think that that's what you need anywhere. And we have a lot of discussions – we just met with all the four-stars here over the last couple weeks and are having this discussion, but the Army is going to handle problems at scale, whether it's logistics – we're the ones that fight at echelon, so whether that's battalion all the way up to corps, in theater. That will be the Army. Same for integrated air and missile defense.

And then you brought up long-range fires. I think what's important, it's very, very hard to kill land-based long-range fires and hiding in the clutter. And I – and I think that's an important thing to note.

Dr. Karako: Well, I want to come back to that in just a moment. But let me, first of all, set the stage beginning with modernization. You know, back in 2017 General Milley then kicked off the big-five modernization priorities – six

modernization priorities. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about kind of the status of those, how you see perhaps some of the prioritization between your modernization priorities shifting. How would you – how would you characterize that?

Sec. Wormuth:

I feel very good about where the Army is on our modernization program. I mean, you know, General McConville and I, and now General George and I, have talked a lot about how the Army is really undergoing its most fundamental transformation in 40 years. You know, we're moving away from the systems that we designed in the '80s to a bunch of new systems.

You know, I was never a big fan of sort of doing a one-to-end list of the six modernization portfolios that we have, and part of the reason is because of what General George said about scale. You know, the Army doesn't have the luxury of just focusing on air defense or just focusing on fires; we have to do all of those warfighting functions. And hence, all of our six modernization portfolios I think are very important.

You know, we're making good progress. I think one thing that's worth everyone remembering is that when you are trying to develop as many new systems as quickly as we are trying to do in the Army, there are inevitably going to be hiccups. There are going to be bumps in the road. And you know, we're seeing some of those bumps. But we also have gotten, you know, AMPV fielded. We've got M-SHORAD out there. We have down-selected to Bell Textron for FLRAA, for example. You know, most of our programs are going very, very well, and I think we're on the right path.

One of the challenges for us is our relatively flat budget and making the difficult decisions between how much of the enduring systems that we have – like Bradley, like Abrams, like Black Hawk – you know, how much of those do we continue purchasing and producing versus putting money into R&D and procurement for new systems.

Gen. George:

Yeah. I would agree 100 percent on the consistency, and I think that that's important. You know, one of the big – people often ask me what you, you know, people have learned about what's happening in Ukraine, and I always point to if everybody's paying attention just how well U.S. equipment works and how effective it is in combat.

So, to pivot off that a little bit, I think – I think you said somebody had talked about the biggest change in 40 years. I think if anything what we've kind of learned over the last couple is we've actually got to start to get to a point where we actually rotate and are moving a little bit quicker. So the other things that we're talking about – and we got to

constantly evaluate ourselves – is how do we build things that are open architecture; that are, you know, more modular. I mean, we're doing some of that. HIMARS is great; how do we update the missiles inside of that, which can be more cost-effective, and we can rapidly get that into our force?

And I could probably go down every warfighting function, but those are the things that we talk about that I think we have to continually adapt and why we really talk about continuous transformation, because I think that that's where we need to be focused.

Dr. Karako: Yeah. Ukraine got 18 HIMARS launchers, used them to very good utility. And Poland said. Thank you very much. We'd like 486 of them – (laughter) – for that – for their usefulness.

So, staying on that, the Army's top modernization priority, long-range precision fires, you already alluded I think just there to PrSM, for instance. There's also LRHW, the Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon, and that sort of thing. Could you unpack that a little bit more? Yes, we're seeing it in high relief in Ukraine, but why is it that long-range precision fires has been the top priority? What do you see kind of the vision for the future of fielding artillery in that front?

Sec. Wormuth: Do you want to start, General George?

Gen. George: Sure, I can start.

So, kind of as I mentioned earlier, very hard – long-range, you know, precision fires are very hard to target. We've seen that in Ukraine. You can move, shoot, hide in the clutter, and so proven to be very effective. And I think what we're looking at and what we produced with what we have is enduring with the HIMARS and ATACMS, PrSM going to longer range and having the ability and changing those missiles. So, there's several increments that are coming, a medium-range capability and then Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon.

I mean, really what you want to provide for commanders that are out there in the fight are a range of options. And you know, to get after attacking the A2/AD bubble that would be out there as part of the joint force, I think it's a critical capability for the joint force. And you want to have all those arrows in your quiver.

Sec. Wormuth: And I would just add, Tom, I think that, you know, in an environment where our adversaries have the standoff capabilities that they have – and certainly, you know, in the case of some of the – you know, in the case of the pacing challenge of China, the ranges they have on their

munitions are formidable – you know, it puts a premium on us developing systems that have much longer ranges. And you know, I think we have a good portfolio that is – allows us – you know, obviously, things like ERCA and PrSM are going to have a lot of utility in a European conflict, potentially; whereas, you know, some of the later increments of PrSM – mid-range capability which has a seeker on it that allows us to hit maritime targets and mobile targets on the ground – have a lot of value. And then, of course, you know, Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon, that’s not something we’re going to be shooting at just any old target but for, you know, truly, truly distant targets and very time-sensitive targets. I think, you know, we can add – we can be, again, another arrow in the joint-force quiver because, obviously, the Navy and Air Force are going to have missiles, you know, with that kind of capability as well.

Dr. Karako: Well, LRHW has certainly been in the news. I have to react, as well – you know, I think it was General Rainey of Army Futures Command who made the remark earlier this year that it used to be that fires were in support of the maneuver force, and now the maneuver force is moving into being in support of fires.

But staying with LRHW for a moment there, you know, as we think about this new hypersonic capability coming on with different services getting it, why is it never less useful and important for the Army – for a ground-based service – to have that as opposed to putting it in the sea and the air? Why is that operationally useful to have those things on the ground?

Sec. Wormuth: I think, you know, some of it is what General George says, which is that it can be very, very hard to find land-based fires, you know, that are going to be able to hide in the clutter.

I also think, frankly, that, you know, there are – I like to say there are going to be more than enough targets to shoot at, and so I don’t think the services need to spend a lot of time bickering about who should have a monopoly on long-range fires.

Dr. Karako: Yeah.

Gen. George: Yeah. I would – I agree 100 percent.

Dr. Karako: Ok. (Laughs.)

Well, shifting to air and missile defense, another one of the top, top priorities there, we’ve got a question here that’s just come in from a reporter, Jen Judson. She’s asking about Patriot force growth, first of all.

You know, where are we going in terms of the – I guess the end strength of the air-defense artillery? I think, unfortunately, for all the demand signal that we're seeing, it's still the smallest division in the Army except for the finance division.

Sec. Wormuth: Yeah. I mean, I would start, Jen, by saying, you know, we are beginning to build an additional Patriot battalion. That was, you know, part of the program decision memorandum last year from OSD.

And you know, I remember I worked for a boss many, many years ago who said, you know, if something's been low-density, high-demand force structure for 10 years or more, maybe we need to just build more of it. And I think the Army has figured out that integrated air and missile defenses is a capability that we need more of. So, we are investing in building additional Patriot structure, but also additional IFPC structure, for example. So that is going to be a growth area for us.

I think, you know, one of the challenges we have, obviously, is recruiting, and we've got to be able to recruit to that force structure. So that's something, you know, as we focus on recruiting, we're also looking at making sure we're bringing in enough young Americans to be able to man that new structure, which is going to take some time to build.

Dr. Karako: Yeah.

Gen. George: Yeah. I would just add we're super proud of what our ADA troops are doing. I just was over in Europe, and everybody's talking about how much they're deploying. And so, I went and asked them, you know, what they needed. And they wanted a BeaverFit gym, which made my heart sing, you know? (Laughter.) They were more interested in that. But they're doing really well. I think, again, it's an amazing system. It's proven to work very well. And it's, I think, made a difference too we have just great troopers that are inside that formation that know how to work that equipment.

And, as the secretary mentioned earlier, that is a priority for us, to continue to – we got a lot of ongoing efforts inside the air defense – integrated air and missile defense portfolio that we need to look at, in addition to all the lessons we're learning out of Ukraine, for, you know, loitering munitions. I mean, the battlefield is changing, you know, a bunch. And how are we changing with it is going to be important.

Dr. Karako: You know, you mentioned, IFPC in addition to Patriot. But PEO Missiles and Space is also bringing on IBCS. There's lots of interest in NASAMS. Of course, there's the Stinger, the Stinger follow on, and all the M-

SHORAD interest as well. How do you think about the – kind of the balance between that, and really growing a set of capabilities for the full air and missile spectrum? How do you balance cruise missile defense versus, you know, aircraft? How do you think about that?

Sec. Wormuth: Well, again, I think the Army has to be able to do almost all of that. And so, you know, we had obviously not been producing Stinger for quite a while. But, you know, with everything that's happened in Ukraine we are working on refurbishing, obviously, some old Stinger missiles to basically get ourselves a little bit more capability while we work on the new version of Stinger and ramp up production there.

But I think we've – just like the long-range fires portfolio, where we've got, you know, something like ERCA that's at 70 kilometers, and we've got something like long-range hypersonic weapon that's over 1,000 miles, we need to have capability like Stinger, Javelin, NASAMS, all the way up to Patriot with – you know, and obviously, we need a much more, I would argue, robust cruise missile air defense capability. And that's where IFPC comes in. I mean, again, I think if you look at some of the munitions that other countries are developing, you know, we have got to be able to counter those sophisticated cruise missiles. So, again, the challenge for us a lot of times is affordability for all of that.

Gen. George: Yeah, I was just – I was going to add one other thing too. That I think this is something that the joint force – so we've done Project Convergence, as an example, has been important to us to kind of help tie the systems, you know, together. There's other integrated air and missile defense across the joint force. So, you know, kind of taking – help to take the lead on making sure that we tie all that together, that's a big part of – you know, you were talking about IBCS as being able to see across all of those systems. So, I think that that's the other thing that we can help across the joint force, because it's going to be a joint fight in that – in that area. And I think we need to do what we can to lean into that.

Dr. Karako: So, Jen also sent a question, which I do want to ask, which is: The Army's had a great relationship with MDA. MDA has been developing and procuring THAAD over the years. It's one of the things that we have looked at, the transfer of not merely the operations – which has already been done a long time ago – but also the procurement side of the house. Is that still a live wire? And how do you think about the big challenge of taking that on, the TOA, the bill, that comes with it?

Sec. Wormuth: Yeah, I mean, obviously, the Army, you know, has a lot of experience with THAAD operationally. And I was actually just out in Guam and was able to see our great soldiers. You know, we've had that capability there

since 2013. There is, I think, a discussion going on right now between us and MDA about THAAD. You know, again, I think, you know, we have the capability to take that on, but obviously MDA has a lot of experience in that area as well. And there's – I would say, it's an active discussion. The TOA issue is a significant issue. I mean, again, with a flat budget, like what we've had for the last few years, I don't think we'd want to take that on unless we were assured that the resources were going to be coming with it, and were going to be coming with it in an enduring way.

Dr. Karako: Yeah. Certainly, if there's a hardware modernization, not really just procuring the same thing, I can understand that. So next year, you're going to be doing another iteration of Project Convergence. I wonder if you might kind of talk about the vision for that, and how it's going to differ from the past, and what are the multidomain operations that you're going to try to advance in the next Project Convergence.

Sec. Wormuth: Yeah, I'll open it and turn it over to General George. I'll try to be brief. I mean, I am a big supporter and proponent of Project Convergence. I think we have learned a tremendous amount. It is, I think, the biggest and most successful joint opportunity for experimentation. You know, I think it's fantastic that we have a joint board of directors that helps us decide how to structure Project Convergence each year.

You know, I would say a couple of the notable changes going forward are, one, we have been trying each year to have increasingly complex scenarios or use cases. We have also tried to increase the participation, particularly with some of our allies and partners, as observers. And what we found is generating that complexity and learning all the lessons from the previous years, Project Convergence really needed to take more than 12 months. So, we are not doing this now on strictly an annual cycle. We're going to do – the next capstone event for Project Convergence will be in the spring of 2024. And that allows us to, I think, both learn fully from the last year's experience and really build the set of experimentation cases for the next year, so that we get the most out of it.

Gen. George: I think the one big piece that I would add, Tom, is that we're also trying to look at this as continuous transformation. So rather than just looking for big events, I think we have to use exercises. We have a big TTX that's ongoing right now that's, you know, focused on our network. We've had exercises down at 18th Airborne Corps. We just did a lot with the network and mission partner environment in zero trust out and Talisman Sabre. So, what we – again, this gets to kind of continuous transformation. I don't think what we're – you know, that will be a capstone event. What we want to do is tie all the pieces that we're

learning together and make sure we're doing this in a continual fashion, and kind of spinning things off.

Dr. Karako: And that's going to feed into the MDTFs, the Multi-Domain Task Forces, I would suspect, in a big way. How do you articulate the strategic utility of the MDTFs to the joint force? Yes, Indo-Pacific, also one in Europe. Where does that fit within the – you're thinking about the future?

Sec. Wormuth: Yeah. I think we've done a lot of learning – a lot of good learning with the Multi-Domain Task Forces. You know, we have one out in Europe and we have two associated with the Indo-Pacific. I actually was able to see the third MDTF, which participated in Talisman Sabre down in Australia. And, actually, it was really interesting to see how just in the, you know, not quite two-and-a-half years that I've been SecArmy, how much we've learned about MDTF. And I think, you know, there's a tendency to focus on the fires function of the Multi-Domain Task Force. So, you know, thinking about, you know, the battalion that will have PrSM, for example, or the Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon.

But really – and I think sometimes that comes at the expense of the non-kinetic capabilities that the Multi-Domain Task Force has, which is being able to bring, you know, information operations, space capability, cyber capabilities. And what I think is starting to come together, from what I saw, is the possibility of using the non-kinetic effects to be able to sort of open up windows in time in a very anti-access and area denial environment, where we can then use kinetic fires. And that was sort of a connection that I hadn't seen us make up until recently.

Gen. George: I think that often we get equipment focused. But I do think that some of the formations – MDTF was one. I was out at first corps and helped stand that up. The secretary talked about cyber, space, electronic warfare, all of those coming together. That's the reality on the battlefield, again, that you're going to have to fight in all of those domains and understand it. And I think some of the formations that we're standing up – and, again, this is why we need to transform. Talked a little bit about you know, where we've gone over the last 20 years. And we were built to basically rotate brigades over to Afghanistan. That we have to make some of those transformations as well in our people. And I think that the MDTF, for example, that's been out in the Pacific has been deployed out there for more than six months. So again, it's a continual learning and partnering with our partners and allies.

Dr. Karako: So, last question for the kind of modernization piece of this, there's a question come in from Sam Skove of Defense One.

And Sam says: Most of Ukraine's artillery losses currently come from Russian loitering munitions. What more does the Army need to do to protect its units from drone threats? I might amend that; the Army is now the lead service for countering UAS broadly speaking. Could you give us an update on that, broadly?

Gen. George: I'll jump on that one.

Sec. Wormuth: Sure.

Gen. George: So, I spent a lot of time with – the Army is the Joint Capability Office for Counter-UAS. So, partner a lot with Dr. LaPlante, at A&S. So, I think this gets into the continuous transformation piece that we are doing. And we are – you know, right now, to stay ahead of this, I think we need to be having developers, users, and testers all together. So, we're doing that forward. We've been doing that in the Middle East. And we have been able, because of that, to actually maintain pace with what's happening out there, adjust the missile, adjust the software. I think we – you know, we got to do that in a very cost-effective way.

We have stood up training down at Fort Sill to do that. So, we are also doing that for the joint force to make sure. And I think, and I saw – I read an article this morning. I think if there's been anything that we've – you know, that a lot of people have been focused on it's drones and, you know, loitering munitions. And, again, I think what we're focused on is – it's the cost curve. If you can 3-D print – and I just was down at one of our formations. We're doing it as well. When you can 3-D print a UAS that can go out for just several hundreds of dollars to do that, you're going to have to change how you fight and how you have those in formations. And it's going to change our formation as well.

Sec. Wormuth: Yeah. The only thing I would add is, I think, you know, there's the offensive side, if you will, of drones – of, you know, using them for sensing, using them, potentially, to, you know, drop kinetic payloads. But I think we also have to be thinking about the defensive side of that. And I think one of the lessons learned of Ukraine is that we're – you know, fires is going to be very important. But we're going to need to probably have organic air defense with our fires – you know, our maneuver units, so that they can protect against drones. And, you know, and the other thing, I think, that we – that we need to put more emphasis on – and we've started this – is to make sure that our brigades, you know, at places like Fort Irwin, or at Fort Johnson, when we've got brigades going into the box, is having them working with drones and working with defending against drones, for example. And we've started to do that, but that's something, I think, we'll continue to work on.

Dr. Karako: Yeah. Well, let's stay with the Pacific, because you both referenced that just now. And, you know, it's so frequently kind of referred to as well. That's an air and maritime domain. And the Army is really focused on Europe and things that pop up in the Middle East. But at the same time, the Army has a big presence in the Indo-Pacific. And, you know, in some respects, every theater, every combatant command, is joint. So, big picture, what do you see as the Army's role in that region? And what is the Army doing, at the highest level, to kind of position and posture for fundamentally deterring Chinese aggression there?

Sec. Wormuth: Yeah. I like to talk about the role of the Army in the Indo-Pacific. You know, I like to break it down into how are we contributing to deterrence, which is frankly the most important thing. You know, we need to – I do not think that war, for example, with China is inevitable. But the way to make sure that we don't have to fight that war is to deter it. And I think that the Army plays a very important role there. You know, first of all, we are the more enduring manifestation of American combat power in that theater.

As General George said, you know, we've had Army forces out in INDOPACOM six months out of the year. You know whether it's the MDTFs or other Army formations. We also have our security force assistance brigades who are out there, you know, working with allies and partners – Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines. And that presence is there on a consistent basis. So, I think demonstrating that those relationships are strong, that we are interoperable with our allies and partners in the region, and being able to periodically demonstrate capabilities like a live fire of the HIMARS, for example, you know, strengthens deterrence.

Gen. George: I think the other thing that really strengthens it is that you got to be great at your warfighting mission. And so – and that's what we talked about with every commander. You got to – you know, I think the biggest deterrent is knowing it's one thing to be good at something on paper. It's a different thing to be able to actually execute it, and execute it at scale. And I think that that's what we're rehearsing. That's what we do at our CTCs. That's what we're doing with exercises, just like Talisman Sabre, where you're actually – to exercise logistics and the Pacific to be able to, you know, send fuel, you know, from offshore overland, you know, for three miles into an airfield and do things you actually have to demonstrate that capability and do it.

And I think that that's what we're doing out in the Pacific. Not to go back to all the other, you know, comments we've made, you're going to

eventually have to be on land to make – you know, to be decisive. And I think our partners and allies, most of our partners and allies over there, have big armies and smaller navies and air forces, which are a little bit more expensive. So, I think we have a big role over there and partnering with them, training with them, gaining interoperability with them. And I'm proud of what USARPAC's doing in that light.

Dr. Karako: Secretary, you mentioned a HIMARS test. I'm guessing you were referring, perhaps, to the recent test in the Philippines of both HIMARS and Patriot. Lots of islands to fire things from, including that midrange capability you mentioned, of course.

Sec. Wormuth: And, Tom, if I could, I would just say, you know, I think when I became secretary of the Army, there was a lot of skepticism, frankly, about the role of the Army in the Indo-Pacific. And I think some of that skepticism was rightly anchored in valid questions about, you know, access and basing arrangements. You know, how are you – you guys have to be there when the balloon goes up, because it's going to be pretty hard to get in, you know, after fighting starts.

But I think we've seen some significant advances in that area. You know, whether it's again, you know, the Philippines allowing four new additional sites for EDCA, you know, again, associated with Talisman Sabre, we've seen the Australians allow us to leave some equipment sets behind. And we're really starting to work with some of the countries in the region to build out what we call theater distribution centers. And so, I think the posture issue is really improving. And I think, frankly, some of that is driven by countries in that region looking at some of the very coercive behavior that they've seen by China. And it is, you know, driving them, essentially, to, I think, think differently about access and other kinds of, you know, posture agreements with us.

Dr. Karako: Yeah. Great. Well, because the Army doesn't have enough to do – and, speaking of islands, in June, the Deputy Secretary Kath Hicks designated the Army as the lead service as well for the defense of Guam. And if I'm not mistaken, there's a report perhaps being generated on kind of where the Army's vision for that is. Could you maybe give us an insight on kind of where that process is at, and when that might go back up?

Sec. Wormuth: Sure. As General George said, you know, air defense is a joint responsibility and a joint task. And I think that is particularly true when it comes to looking at the defense of Guam. You know, that is going to be a joint responsibility. The Army, I think, brings a lot to the table, but obviously you've got the Navy with its Aegis Ashore capability, and its Aegis ships. MDA obviously has a lot to bring to the table. So, we have been asked in the Army to take the lead from an acquisition perspective

in terms of figuring out how do we knit all of our capabilities, MDA's capabilities, and the Navy's capabilities together.

And we are working on that plan. But I think it's also important to remember it's not just the systems. It's not just the architecture. It's everything that goes along with that. It is the infrastructure that's going to be needed to support a more robust defense of Guam. And I would just say, having seen our Army soldiers out there on the THAAD battery, you know, they're working in pretty austere conditions. And there's going to have to be a lot of construction to support a more robust defense of Guam. And Guam obviously has a finite capability, which is already, frankly, pretty well consumed with a lot of the typhoon reconstruction that they're having to do.

So, part of what we need to work out is how do we organize ourselves, you know, to be in charge of that complex system? But also, how do we make sure that we build the underlying infrastructure to include the kinds of things we need for quality of life for our soldiers and families? Because, frankly, I don't – I don't think our soldiers on Guam have had the kind of quality of life that they really need to have, given how long they've been there. It's been 10 years now.

Dr. Karako: And you mentioned infrastructure, in addition to kind of the housing, all those sort of things I think you're alluding to. I mean, I was there recently as well. And what I heard was repair depots. We can't be calling back to Hawaii for spare parts on a bad day, those kinds of things as well, so.

Can we shift to Ukraine? We've got a question here from Byron Callan from Capital-Alpha. This is a training question, but it also plays on the counter-UAS thing we had a bit ago: Can you say how Army training has changed as a result of what's being done in Ukraine – the use of drones at scale, electronic combat, operations in built-up areas? That's from Byron.

Sec. Wormuth: Yeah, go for it.

Gen. George: I'll start. We could talk about this probably for a long time.

So, I'll – first, I'll just talk about – you can, you know, see in a sense – I think everybody's seen, everybody's watching what's playing out in Ukraine, whether it's from open source, or space, or whatever. I think that what we're practicing right now, to give you a concrete example, we've had a brigade combat team that just went in to one of our training centers and realize that you can't have a bunch of vehicles with a bunch of antennas, and tents, and all of those things. You're not going to

survive in combat. So, our command posts are becoming much more leaner, low signature, much more mobile. So, this was a brigade commander. This was Second Calvary Regiment that had just five vehicles.

I think we're going to use a lot – we really have to partner, I think, with commercial industry on some of this. You were talking about your tablet. And this is one of the things that we're working at – working towards for Project Convergence. But there's no reason why we can't have – simplify our systems, you know, to something that we're all familiar with, like tablets and phones and watches. So that's an example. I think that we have to change the how we operate in the electromagnetic spectrum. We are actually training with drones. We are looking at loitering munitions.

And I think our challenges is, this is why we're – we have what's in process right now is reviewing how we train in our CTCs, our combat training centers. We have to look at how we're training at our combat training centers, and then also what we can do at home station. So, I was the division commander out at Fort Carson, Colorado. We owned to 65,000 feet, which helped us to train, you know, and own that airspace. And it's not the same everywhere else. So that's what we're kind of reviewing, how we – you know, given the changes on the modern battlefield, how do we bring that to bear both at home station and then at our training centers?

Dr. Karako: Yeah. Recognizing it's probably too early to say yet what the lessons of Ukraine are, but nevertheless, what – when you think about that, what are your takeaways in terms of the implications for the Army, the implications for land warfare, in part on the basis of how you're seeing the Russians but also the Ukrainians operating?

Sec. Wormuth: I think there are a lot of lessons to be learned from what we're seeing in Ukraine. And the Army has been paying extremely close attention, obviously, to the conflict in Ukraine. You know, we learned a lot, obviously, from the Yom Kippur War, you know, many decades ago now. But some of the biggest lessons, I think, that – I mean, General George basically alluded to a number of them. I mean, obviously, the role of unmanned aerial systems, you know, both in terms of its sensing capabilities, but also the need to defend against that. The fact that – you know, the implications for that for our fires unit is we've got to be able to, you know, shoot and scoot, as they say, because we're not going to be able to operate from fixed positions the way that we used to.

I think there are a lot of lessons about command and control and communication. You know, on the one hand, I think what we've seen is

soldiers can make very good use of their phones and their tablets and things like that. The Ukrainians, I think, have been very, very innovative about that. But, obviously, that can be – you know, those signals can be tracked and then be targeted. So, we have some learning, I think, to do in terms of figuring out what are our sort of ROE for using those kinds of personal devices. You know, obviously fires, the need to have incredibly deep magazines. That's something that, you know, I think we've definitely learned, and we are working on obviously building up our production capability. You know, we've been having a lot of talk with General Dynamics about that, for example.

And I think, you know, one of the other lessons that isn't talked about quite as much, but I think that's very, very important, is in an environment as contested as what the battlefield's going to be, where communications can go down, can be jammed, mission command and understanding commander's intent, and having mature leaders who are disciplined and who are able to operate off of that commander's intent, even if they don't have persistent comms, that's very important. And frankly, I think that that is a real strength of the United States Army that I would stack up basically to any other land force in the world.

Gen. George:

I mention a couple quick ones that the secretary didn't cover. And to get on her last point, I think that most innovation, it comes from the bottom up. And so how do we harness that? I mean, how do you – that gets to the mission command – how do you innovate, improvise, and those kinds of things at the tactical level? The other piece that I think we've learned a lot, and that is changing how we're looking at things, is on the logistics side. If you look at what we're doing with tele-maintenance, what you can do now to 3-D print for parts. So, I think there's a lot on the logistics side, obviously, that that will play in whatever theater. And obviously, moving large supplies around is very difficult in INDOPACOM.

So, I think we're looking at how do we do – how do we fix things forward at the edge? How do we reduce our logistical footprint? What are the things we're doing? There's a – we have a big effort, I think, looking at hybridization, which I'm a fan. You get silent watch to basically silent movement on your vehicles. And you're reducing your log footprint. So, I think they're – you know, in logistics there's a lot we're learning there as well.

Dr. Karako:

Well, and you recently stood up a new CFT for contested logistics. You know, how do you see the vision for that CFT, for instance? Why did you need to add that?

Sec. Wormuth: Well, I think because, you know, even before Ukraine, there was a – there was, I would, say a theoretical recognition that logistics were going to be contested. But the Ukraine conflict, I think, has really made that very real to all of us. And I think there was a recognition that while we were thinking more about logistics, probably, than we ever had, that there really was a need to bring more focus to it and to think about the materiel implications of contested logistics, but also think about doctrine, think about how we're going to be planning in the future for logistics. It just – you know, particularly given the very long distances in the INDOPACOM theater, it just needed, I think, a greater focus. And I have every confidence that General Rainey is going to do a great job with that, in partnership with General Hamilton at AMC.

Gen. George: Yeah. I would also add on, Secretary Wormuth mentioned earlier, as far as magazine depth. And I think that the other thing that, you know, we've been challenged by – you can be challenged by parts. And so, I think it's not – ammunition is one aspect of it. The other aspect of it is parts and things to keep everything moving. So, what I like about the CFT – I think the plan for CFTs are when you have a problem, you pull people together, and they tackle that problem. And there has been some others that we start to look at, you know, lowering the profile of it. So, I think we just have to be adaptive and look at ways to transform to the changing character of war.

Dr. Karako: So, another aspect, I think, from the Ukraine thing and post-Afghanistan, you know, the administration messaged about over the horizon capability but, you know, got to have that capability. So how do you think about the – and how do you see the need for persistent sensing as it's unfolding in Ukraine? You got to see that convoy. You got to see those things moving around. I'm reminded that I think it was in the early 2000s that the JROC validated a requirement for persistent overhead sensing. And that was how we kind of got JLENS. But then that went away. So how do you think about that need – elevated sensing to fight the horizon?

Sec. Wormuth: Well, clearly, persistent sensing remains a very important requirement, I think. And we've got to have capabilities that give us that requirement as much as possible. And we are investing in things, for example, like HADES to try and, you know, give us more overhead sensing capability. I think, you know, the Army is a very big consumer of our space capabilities. You know, and our space capabilities at the joint level, I think, are growing substantially. So that's going to remain, I think, a very important capability for us.

I was a fan, particularly thinking about cruise missile defense. (Laughs.) I was a fan back in the day of the JLENS system. You know, I know

General Karbler has talked about that recently. You know, we all remember what happened when the cable dragged through Maryland – the Maryland suburbs. But there are some attributes that that system brought that I think were really beneficial.

Gen. George: I think, to go back to your JLENS example, obviously the changes we've had in space are, you know, profound over the last several years. But I think still at the tactical level, we are going to have to – you know, we're going to put balloons up that can provide an advantage at the tactical level. We're going to have UAVs that are up to can provide a tactical advantage. So, I think all of those things, in addition to what we're doing to scrape things off of OSINT. You know, everybody who's out with – you know, most of the time we know what's going on in the city because we pick something up from what somebody has done on their cell phone. And that's still going to happen around the world. I don't think – there's probably very few people out there without a Samsung or an Apple phone that are taking pictures and doing those things. So, we got to have the ability to do that as well, from the tactical to the strategic level.

Dr. Karako: Well, I'm glad you highlighted the high-altitude stuff. Because it's not just about space. Some of this stuff you don't want to be looking at for space or relying upon that. So, yeah, dirigibles, and balloons, and that sort of stuff.

General George, you highlighted – we both highlighted kind of working with industry. And so, I'm thinking here of – Undersecretary LaPlante, I think just a couple days ago, said going to 100,000 155 a month. And Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser, was saying to the press recently he spends 15 minutes a day on getting, borrowing, begging allies to help with 155 for Ukraine. So, my question is, this is a conversation that we're having about the defense industrial base, about production and this kind of stuff. Do you think that we would be having that discussion about China and these kinds of things – would we even be having that discussion if not for the Ukraine – engagement in Ukraine?

Sec. Wormuth: You know, I think, again, much as the Ukraine conflict has sharpened the focus on logistics – logistics and sustainment, I think Ukraine has brought home in a very real way the need to look at our industrial base and the need to look at our requirements for minimum munitions, the need to look at building back our stockpiles. You know, I would say I can remember sitting in DMAGs when Ash Carter was the deputy secretary. And he would say, you know, this fifth-generation fighter jet is great, but if we don't have missiles to hang on it, you know, it's not very useful.

So, I think there was a realization before Ukraine that we needed to be investing more in munitions, for example.

But, again, I think it's become much more real. And, you know, I think that we have done a tremendous job working with industry. And I give a lot of credit to Bill LaPlante. I give a huge amount of credit to Doug Bush on our team and his whole team, for taking the money that Congress has given us and getting that on contract very, very quickly to work with our industrial partners to both, you know, have essentially 24-hour shifts, to open up new production lines, you know, to build new plants, in some cases. You know, there's more work to be done, no doubt. But, you know, we went from 14,000 155-millimeter shells a month to now we're at 28,000 shells a month. And, like Bill said, we'll be at 100,000 shells a month in 2025.

So, you know, we have done a tremendous amount of work. I think we also need our NATO allies to invest in their own industrial bases, and our allies around the world. I mean, again, I think, you know, the Australians are looking very seriously at what they can do to invest more in building munitions. So, there's work to be done. But I think we've done a lot.

Dr. Karako: You mentioned the speed – the speed that this has encouraged us to do. I mean, what kind of innovation on contracts, on getting stuff built, and contracted, and fielded quickly? How do you see the Ukraine thing affecting that?

Sec. Wormuth: Well, I think we have gotten our own contracting system to work much more quickly. You know, again, we've put money on contract at pretty much lightning speed for the Army. We've also been able to take advantage of multiyear procurement authority from Congress. I think, you know, we've seen the value of that. And I think we've had a lot of good conversations with our industry partners about, you know, how can we make sure that there are multiple components, multiple suppliers for downstream components, for example? You know, we need to have more than one supplier of rocket motor – you know, rocket motors, for example. We need to be thinking about long lead parts. So, I think, you know, those are also things that we've learned from this experience.

Dr. Karako: Yeah. Now, George, you alluded to, you know, everybody having their phone and open-source intelligence, OSINT, as being of use to the Ukrainians, for instance. But how do you think about the operational challenges for the Army when that's going to be reflected back the other direction as well? You know, in a notionally transparent battlefield,

when our ground forces are going to be so much more visible to them? I mean, how do you see that changing on our concepts?

Gen. George: I think that the secretary was kind of alluding to that. You know, it's a double-edged sword. But I do think the technology exists for us to have that capability, and then basically to hide in the noise that's – you know, that's in there, that's happening out in the battlefield. Not every battlefield is going to look like the National Training Center, which is a big desert. And I think that's the other thing we're learning that things move to where the people are at. So, we're looking at all that.

This is one area where I think we can learn a lot from industry. When I look on commercial and tech and what they're able to do, that we really have to partner with them. And I know AFC has had several sessions down, got another one soon, where they're inviting industry down to figure – help us figure out this problem. We have the greatest, you know, ingenuity anywhere on the planet. And we just have to take advantage of that, I think.

Dr. Karako: Yeah. We've got another question here from another reporter, Mark Pomerleau, from DefenseScoop. Notes that Secretary Wormuth has talked about the role of non-kinetic capabilities. Can you provide additional details, he asks, regarding how non-kinetic capabilities can be an enabler and create windows for other things as well? So, I guess, what's your vision for non-kinetics and how it's going to change how the Army fights?

Sec. Wormuth: Yeah. I don't want to say too much about that, but what I am talking about is – you know, speaking of sensing, for example. So, obviously, if an adversary is out there trying to sense where we are, to presumably target us, for example, you know, if we are able to use cyber capabilities, or EW capabilities, or space capabilities, for example, or some combination, to be able to block that view of what we're doing, that can then, you know, open up a window in time for us to launch a kinetic effect. So that's, I think, what we're trying to get to. And I think, you know, the – given how contested the environment is going to be, we're not going to be able to – you know, we can't assume that we're going to have an open window all the time. We have to find ways to open those windows so that we can bring our fires capabilities.

Gen. George: Yeah. I was just say, beyond cyber and EW, I mean, we're also looking at microwave directed energy. So, I think there's some that's in the middle. And these are things that we're experimenting with and trying to move forward. But, again, you know, if you can get to a way where you have magazine depths with that at a much cheaper, you know, cost per round, so to speak, I think that will help as well.

Dr. Karako: Right. Dr. Hamre alluded at the beginning, I think, to kind of the premature diagnosis of the death of armor. So here again, that was one of those things in the early days of the conflict, when it did look like fires or standoff was going to be the thing, how do you see that? I mean, you know, like, we have an armor CFT, for instance. Now we got Abrams, you know, that are going to be going over to Ukraine. How do you see in the big scheme of things the role of armor? I would say, not just in Ukraine, but also – or, in Europe, but also in the Pacific?

Sec. Wormuth: Yeah, I mean, I think armor remains very, very relevant. And I think the sort of, you know, claims that we had seen the end of the value of tanks were a little bit premature. You know, I will – General George, obviously, can expand on this dramatically, given that I have not served in uniform. But part of why the Russian tanks were targeted the way they were, is because they were not using dismounted infantry, you know, in complement with that. And that's not how we would operate. So, you know, yes, I think with overhead threats, there are challenges with armor. We are working to develop capabilities to defend against that. But we are, you know, working on, obviously, a next-generation tank that will be lighter than the M1A2 SEP v3 we have now. I think we need to do that for mobility but, you know, the firepower that a tank brings, along with the protection for our soldiers, is unmatched. And I think that is a capability that's going to remain relevant.

Gen. George: Secretary Wormuth sounded like a tanker. (Laughter.) I mean, I agree 100 percent. I think most of the – it's really about combined arms. And you're going to need all of this. And so, we just – USARPAC just had M1s that they had pulled out preposition stock and move them down in part of Talisman Sabre. I think if you've ever been anywhere, and you've got a tank really close to you, you're very thankful that you have – you know that it's right there. And I've been in a lot of those situations. So, I think looking way out into the future is why we need to continue to look at modernizing, you know, those systems.

The other aspect of that, to get back to your earlier question, that we are looking at is how do you build in also active protection – active protection systems to get after loitering munitions and drones that helps to reduce the weight, so that you're more mobile, but it, you know, also makes you more protected. And if you have an open architecture that you can do that, then I think you can continue to evolve with the changing character of war.

Dr. Karako: Great. Great. Well, let's shift again to kind of the recruiting and retention kind of issues. I think last year, the Army missed its recruiting goal by

something like 15,000 soldiers. And modernization and weapons is great, but if you don't have the soldiers to run all this it's not going to be that much useful. So how do you think about the recruiting challenge? And what do you want the Army to be doing in terms of is it changing messaging, is it doing something differently? How do you think about that?

Sec. Wormuth: Yeah. Well, the recruiting headwinds are strong, I would say. You know, at the same time, we have not been standing around flat footed, you know, facing into those headwinds. I'm very proud of everything that not just U.S. Army Recruiting Command, but more broadly TRADOC, FORCECOM, our marketing office, our Army Recruiting Task Force has done to come up with innovative programs. Things like the Future Soldier Prep Course, you know, which has had very high graduation rates for folks coming out of that program and going to basic training. We've been innovated with having as a soldier referral program, so soldiers can recruit us and be rewarded for that in terms of promotion points, for example. And with all – and, of course, we launched our new be you can be campaign, which I think has resonated very well not just with young people but with, you know, adults and other influencers.

And as a result of all of that, I think we're going to finish this fiscal year pretty strong. I mean, I've said for some time now that 65,000 was a stretch goal, and that we were unlikely to make that. But I think, you know, we've been seeing the pace of contracts in the last two months being very, very strong. So, I think that we've done better than I would have expected a year ago. That said, we do need to make some more profound changes to allow us to take the progress that we've made this year and build on it so that we can get back to a point where we are recruiting 60,000 or more young Americans into the force every year. So, we'll be, I think, probably making some announcements in the relatively near future about what those changes are going to be. But there's still work to do.

Dr. Karako: Ok.

Gen. George: Yeah, the only thing I would add under that is that our retention rates are very high. People in – everywhere that I've been, you know, they're out, our soldiers, doing their missions that are enjoying themselves, they like what they're doing. Of course, we won't take that for granted. So, I just think we need to do a better job of getting the word out, and why, you know, joining the military – of course, we want them to join the Army. We think that'd be much better for them. But, you know, joining the military in general will be a life accelerator for them, a great opportunity for them. And I think we just got to work harder to get that message out.

Dr. Karako: And you mentioned the retention. What are the factors there? Is it, you know, the command climate? What are the things that you see as the drivers for that for improving or sustaining those retention rates?

Gen. George: I think it's – yeah, I think it's a bunch of things. You know, I came in – and, of course, I was only going to come in for a couple of years. You know, you stay for opportunities. You stay – for the most part, through the years, I've stayed because I enjoy the people and I love the mission. And I think that, you know, everywhere I go – that's what I was just down talking to a drill sergeant. She was thinking about getting out. You know, now she's like, OK, I'm staying. And I love what – and she's in a very difficult job, so but she likes her mission, she likes the people that she's with. And so, again, what we can't do is take that for granted, I think. And we got to make sure that continued focuses on building cohesive teams that people want to belong with, and that we have the right commanders and command sergeant majors leading our formations. And so, we spend a lot of energy on that.

Dr. Karako: So, one final question on retention. It's only going to go to you, Secretary Wormuth. And that's, some would say, involuntary retention. We've got – because of the nomination hold in the Senate – we've got folks who can't retire, who can't move on with their lives, move states, you know, get a new job, all this sort of thing. So, you recently wrote an op-ed on this with the other service secretaries. I'm trying – I can't keep track of what the reason – the stated reason for the hold for all military nominations these days. It seems to change. But how are you thinking about that right now?

Sec. Wormuth: Well, I'm very, very concerned about Senator Tuberville's hold. You know, it is really unprecedented to hold all general officer and flag officer nominations based on one policy issue. I think Senator Duckworth did that for a very brief two-week period. But, you know, Senator Tuberville has held our general officers' nominations for more than eight months now. And, you know, I am concerned about it for short-term effects, but also some very important long-term effects. I mean, not only do we have someone like General George, who every day I stumble – you know, I call him chief, I call them acting chief, I call him vice. You know, but General George is essentially doing to jobs. And the role of the chief and the role of the vice are both more than full time jobs. (Laughs.) And we have multiple examples of our general officers who are doing that.

We have families who don't know where they're going to be located. We have kids who don't know what schools they're going to be in. You

know, we have families that are trying to take care of aging parents. Many of us are in the sandwich generation. And those kinds of life situations are getting increasingly challenged. But the other thing I'm very worried about is the longer-term downstream effects, which I think are growing stronger and stronger, which is our majors, our lieutenant colonels, our colonels are looking at this and, I think, saying: Do I want to put my family through this?

You know, if this is what it – if this is what happens when you become a general officer, is this what I want to put my family through? Maybe I'd rather, you know, retire now and go and work in industry or, you know, work in some other area. I worry a lot about a talent drain, because we are an all-volunteer force. These people are, you know, making a choice every day to continue to serve. And I really worry that we could lose some of our best talent if we don't get this situation resolved soon.

Dr. Karako: Thank you. On the – you alluded to some new initiatives in terms of recruiting and that kind of stuff. But how do you think about the risk for the country? We talked about the need – or excuse me, the growing force structure for the ADA, and other things like that. But there's got to be trades within the Army for these different specialization. How do you think about assessing the risk to the country, to meeting the needs of the NDS, with a smaller Army overall?

Sec. Wormuth: Well, first of all, I think, you know, it's important to say that the Army right now is able to do all of the things that the president and the secretary of defense have asked us to do. And we are busy. You know, I think it's worth noting that that the Army, in terms of op tempo, is about as busy now as we were, you know, during the two decades of the global war on terrorism. And, you know, that's surprising, but when you step back and think of everything we're doing in Europe, to the reassure mission, to train the Ukrainians, with all that we're doing an Indo-Pacific with Pacific pathways, we're very, very busy.

And I do think there is a point at which the Army could become too small to be able to do everything that it needs to do. You know, you could not fight a major war in Europe or in Asia with an Army – you could fight it very effectively with an Army that's smaller than 450,000. So that is why it's really an existential issue for us to be able to solve our recruiting challenges. And those challenges, I would just note, are not limited to the United States Army. You know, they hit us, I think, most deeply because we are the largest service, but the other services are struggling with recruiting as well.

Dr. Karako: Gotcha.

Gen. George: Yeah, I think we need to grow capability. And that's what we're focused on doing to fix the recruiting challenge so that we do all the things that you mentioned – integrated air and missile defense, counter-UAS, long range fires, all those things that we need to grow, so.

Dr. Karako: Yeah. You mentioned, General George, the phrase “continuous transformation.” What does that mean to you? How do you operationalize that? What is that?

Gen. George: Yeah, so I think counter-UAS is a good example of that. And that it's changing so fast that you can't wait, you know, to put something and say, hey, let me wait a couple years and get out this system that's going to work. So, for us it's, you know, how do we build systems that we can adapt and continually adapt. And same thing with what we're doing on the network. Counter-UAS, what we're doing with our own unmanned systems, our own loitering munitions. All of those things, I think, are going to – are changing.

And that's – you know, we have to work with Congress to make sure that we can continue to do that in a rapid way. But I think that we're going to have to. We can't wait. You know, we're going to have big, enduring systems that are great. And we got to continue to modernize the other systems that we have coming online. But there's a lot of the subjects that we talk about, that we learned, that are filling in a lot of the other gaps. I think we are going to have to continuously transform. And it's also how we train, how we're educating our people. I mean, people are the decisive element of this. And I think we've seen that in Ukraine with the will and the skill down at the very tactical level.

Dr. Karako: We opened this by talking about, you know, the Army of 2040. I can't help but think though, and we talked about the 2017 modernization priority announcement when it was kind of tied to an Army of 2028. And then it kind of became 2030. And is it slipping? Is the objective force slipping? Or do you see – do you see still that retained focus? This is another question that's come in – that retained focus on this, what the president has called the decisive decade?

Sec. Wormuth: I don't think that our – I don't think that our efforts are slipping frankly. I think it goes a little bit to, you know, what General George was saying about continuous transformation. You know, as I said much earlier in this conversation, I think our modernization efforts have pretty much stayed on track. You know, we are seeing those systems begin to be fielded. We are getting prototypes in the hands of soldiers. We are, you know, basically keeping, you know, most of the programs that we've had. So, I think, you know, we just continue to start chipping away. We

have not seen, for example, any significant capabilities – we have not had to push those timelines well out into the future.

Dr. Karako: Gotcha.

Gen. George: Yeah. I mean, I think what we're trying to do instead is pull things where we can – pull them left. And, obviously, you have to operate within your budget. But we're doing the best we can, and just mindful of what the situation is out there. Pull what you can left that is going to make the biggest impact.

Sec. Wormuth: And I would also note – and I think this is significant – that while we are really focused, you know, from a capability's perspective and a force structure perspective, we're very focused on the Army of 2030. General Rainey at Army Futures Command has really – you know, has really begun working in a serious way on our next concept for 2040. You know, and that's not withstanding the fact that we just basically – you know, the ink isn't all that dry on FM, you know, 3-0 multidomain operations. But we are already thinking in a very serious way about what is the next operational concept for 2040.

Dr. Karako: Gotcha. I think you both mentioned Talisman Sabre. It came up a number of times in the conversation. Could you talk a little bit about what the Army is doing in terms of working with allies and partners, especially in the Pacific but other places, too?

Sec. Wormuth: Yeah. I'll stick with Talisman Sabre, just in part because I was able to go and observe pieces of that exercise, which took place, you know, a couple of weeks of July into August. But I think it's very significant and its representative of the kind of work the Army is doing through our pathways set of exercises. Talisman Sabre had 13 countries participating. You know, it took place in Australia. We were – you know, Australia is almost as big as the United States of America, so the kinds of distances that we were operating in were really, really remarkable.

We had our MDTF there. We had a HIMARS live fire, for example. We did a joint logistics over the shore demonstration. General George spoke earlier about the joint petroleum over the shore operation that we had, where we demonstrated that we could basically set up three miles of pipeline to be able to get fuel to our forces. And we had, you know, again, 12 other nations participating as a part of that. And I think that's the kind of multilateral, complex, real training that you see in the pathways exercise. And we're really trying to have those exercises take place such that we have Army forces in the region six to seven months of the year, which I think is pretty remarkable.

Gen. George: Yeah. I'd say, beyond the exercises too, what we have with the security force assistance brigades is kind of persistent and focused on our partners and allies and where they want to have, you know, some assistance and some help. So, it's more focused on them. In another exercise we could go – I mean, we've done dozens of exercises over there with USARPAC. Orient Shield is going ongoing right now.

And having been involved with those exercises, what you – first, the human interoperability is, I think, critical, working together. But what we're also doing to make sure our systems connect, and it's critically important. And they we've done it in the Philippines with Balikatan, and Indonesia with Garuda Shield and Super Garuda Shield. So, I think just getting – and one of the things General Flynn is – in addition to that – is just also then as having some persistent presence out there to help with things so that we can learn and grow together. And our troops are getting a lot out of it. And if you have to exercise in that, you know, given those distances, logistics is always hard. But doing it at that scale and over that distance, the more you do it the better you get.

Dr. Karako: Well, thank you both. We've covered a lot of ground. I guess I would just give you an opportunity to say anything else that you'd like to emphasize here, and maybe some themes and topics that we should be trying to articulate in future Strategic Landpower Dialogue events.

Sec. Wormuth: We have covered a lot of ground. So, I don't think I have a lot to add. You know, I would just – I said this back in the green room earlier – you know, if you're not sitting in the Department of the Army every single day, you can easily lose track or not be aware of all the United States Army does. It is really remarkable. And I think that it – that it explains in part, you know, why our soldiers are as busy as they are, even though we're not in, you know, Afghanistan and Iraq anymore.

But in – you know, not only do we have our folks over there, again, shoulder to shoulder with our NATO allies, training the Ukrainians to be able to help them prosecute the counter-offensive, doing everything we're doing in the Pacific, being on the Korean peninsula day-in, day-out, which we haven't even talked about. We also, you know, have our Army soldiers on the southwest border. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been instrumental in the recovery efforts in Maui, for example. And so, you know, we are the force that does windows. And I think America should be incredibly proud of the work that the soldiers do each and every day, and incredibly grateful for the families who are supporting those soldiers and making it possible.

Gen. George: And besides doing it – doing windows, I think we can do things at scale. I think that's important for the Army for almost anything that we've

talked about today. And my last – I would end is, if you know anybody out there who really wants to accelerate their life, they should come see us and join the Army. (Laughter.)

Dr. Karako: Windows of opportunity.

Gen. George: Yeah. Thank you.

Dr. Karako: Well, thank you both, Secretary Wormuth, General George. This has been fantastic. Thanks to everybody who showed up. Every seat is full today. They had to bring in a lot of extra chairs. I think that speaks to the interest in this. So, thank you both for coming out. (Applause.)

(END.)