

ARMED FORCES RADIO AND TELEVISION SERVICE

Q: General Myers, thank you for joining us today. I know you had a busy schedule, so thank you for taking the time out to join us.

A: Thank you, Quinn. It's good to be here.

Q: Let's talk about the introduction to Joint Vision 2020, which deals with the transformation of our armed forces. In that introduction it says we need to prepare now for an uncertain future. The events of September 11th have changed the course of our security here in America.

How do we prepare our forces for what no longer is the threat of terrorism, but is actually the reality of it now?

A: That is a great question. Can I come back to it in just a minute?

Q: Sure.

A: First I'd just like to

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its way to.

First, stepping in as Chairman at this particular time is a lot more momentous than I would have thought, and of course September 11th defined that for us. I think we need to realize that this country has never been threatened like this since probably World War II. So we're engaged on an effort that's unlike anything most of us in uniform have ever experienced before.

I think we're absolutely ready and trained to do this, but one of my jobs is going to be to ensure that all the forces have the resources they need to conduct this mission.

I think this war on terrorism is the most important thing on our plate right now. Everything else, at least for the next couple of years, will probably pale in comparison to efficiently and effectively carrying out the orders that the President of the United States has given us.

So I guess the bottom line to all of this, I really want all our troops to stay focused on this particular mission, take care of themselves, and just to remember that if we're successful -- and this is not just a military effort alone -- if we're successful then our nation will be victorious and in the end freedom will be victorious and that's what it's all about.

Q: You came into this position right into the middle of things. How will your job and your role as Chairman be different than in this.

A: I don't think it's going to be substantially different. The roles of the Chairman are pretty much outlined in the law, so I don't see a big difference. I think different than past conflicts, going all the way back perhaps to World War II, this is going to be conducted on a global scale.

The terrorists that we're after, the international terrorists--they have a worldwide network. They're in over 60 countries. They're in the United States of America, for that matter. So I think it will be different in terms of the scale of what we're trying to accomplish. But again my role--going back to my earlier comment is--my job as Chairman and the job of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the staff that supports them here, the Joint Staff, is to make sure that we convey to the Secretary of Defense and the President and the rest of the National Security Council what our unified commanders and our forces need to do their job. So in that way it's going to be pretty much the same.

I would also say this as a difference. This particular war on terrorism is different in that it's just not a military war. This is going to involve all agencies and departments of the United States government. For me that means relationships that probably were important in the past are going to take on new importance in this particular conflict. I'm talking about the civil law enforcement agencies. I'm talking about commerce. I'm talking about the Treasury Department, I'm talking about the State Department. There are some really important partners in this war. The military is

just a piece of it.

Q: If we could go back to September 11th the day that everyone will remember like December 7, 1941, what do you remember about that day?

A: I remember it was like watching a bad movie. I was on Capitol Hill. I was about ready to meet with Senator Cleland. I was meeting with him in preparation for my hearing, my confirmation hearing to be the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And I remember before we walked in there was a TV that was playing and somebody has said, "An airplane has hit one of the World Trade Center towers." They thought it was an airplane, and they thought it was a small airplane or something like that. So we walked in and we did the office call with Senator Cleland.

Sometime during that office call the second tower was hit. Nobody informed us of that. But when we came out, that was obvious. Then right at that time somebody said the Pentagon has been hit.

I immediately, somebody handed me a cell phone, and it was General Eberhart out at NORAD in Colorado Springs talking about what was happening and the actions he was going to take. We immediately, after talking to him, jumped in the car, ran back to the Pentagon.

The Chairman had left that morning to go to Europe, so he was somewhere over the Atlantic. As I got to the Pentagon I noticed a lot of people were coming out of the Pentagon. Of course they'd been told to evacuate.

My concern was where can you best discharge your duties? Where's your duty station? As a sailor, Quinn, you know a lot about your battle station. Well my battle station was in the National Military Command Center. I asked if it was still running, they said it sure is, so I went back in the building to the Command Center and was joined shortly thereafter by the Secretary of Defense. The Deputy Secretary actually went to another location at that point. We did what had to be done in terms of the command and control of the day.

We were getting home at the end of that day, the clothes smelled very smoky, the tales of heroism were being told by many. It was a terrible, terrible day, but as you would expect the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, coastguardsmen, civilians in here in the Department of Defense reacted with great heroism that day.

Q: Could you believe that it was actually a terrorist attack?

A: I didn't know what to believe at the time. That was the problem. We had these events, and then subsequently the airplane went down in Pennsylvania. We were trying to tie this together, what does this mean. General Eberhart was working with the Federal Aviation Agency trying to figure out the logical steps at this point. We had some fighters airborne at that time in case we had some hijacked airplanes that were possibly a threat to other institutions or structures, but it was initially pretty confusing. You hate to admit it, but we hadn't thought about this.

Q: You talked about this war on terrorism is going to be a joint effort not only with the military but also with other federal agencies. How is the military prepared to handle this war on terrorism and what will we need to fight it?

A: I think we're reasonably well prepared to handle this. We have many of the tools that we're going to need. And I would suggest that we're going to have to use everything in our kit bag for this particular war. We will use and we have used already humanitarian assistance. On one end of the spectrum we have the humanitarian assistance. There may be a time, and I'm not saying this is going to happen, but we have to be prepared to use military force in a much more conventional way than maybe all out conflict. But it's so different, because this is not about a particular nation. This is about an organization, a terrorist organization or organizations because there are many international terrorist organizations, and it's about those folks that sponsor them. Sometimes they are state related, nation related. Sometimes they're not. So I think it will use all our capabilities.

We need some help in bolstering some of our capabilities, particularly in the field of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. Part of the money that was appropriated by Congress early on

that will go to the Department of Defense will go to these kind of systems that will help us fill what gaps we have. Because while we're pretty well prepared for it, I think there are some things we need.

Q: We not only have to fight this war on terrorism, but we have to look at and protect U.S. interests and the interests of our allies. How are we effectively going to be able to defend these interests around the world?

A: First of all we've got a great military. We are the best military in the world. We are relatively large.

Having said that, we can't do this alone. One of the most gratifying parts of this whole effort is the support we're getting from our allies and friends around the world. We've had offers of all kinds of support. Some and most in relation to what countries can offer. Sometimes countries over-reach a little bit and offer more than you think they can really afford to put to the fight, and I'll use the word fight loosely here--but to the effort.

So I think it's going to be a combination of things. I think it's going to be our vigilance around the world to make sure threats that we worry about sort of day in and day out, that we have a pretty good feeling for how it's going--for instance in places like Korea. Then we're going to have to count on our allies and our friends to help us an awful lot. And I think we've got that support. I just can't tell you how good it makes you feel when you have countries of all persuasions. We have Muslim countries. We have very close allies. We have friends that have maybe not been too close to us in the past that want to help, because I think everybody realizes that this really is a fight for freedom.

The last thing we want to have happen is have terrorists take our freedoms--away anywhere in the world--and for us here in the United States. If they're successful in taking our freedoms away, then they've won. Most of the world recognizes that, I think. They're supporting us in ways, again, that are just very, very gratifying.

Q: One of the messages that the President and the Secretary of Defense and yourself have said is that this is not a war on Islam. This is a war on terrorism.

A: Absolutely. We happen to be, the initial part of this is in Afghanistan, a Muslim nation. But it's not about Islam. It's not about Arabs. What it's about is terrorism and those who support terrorism. It is a global war, and I think the President's made that very, very clear. We certainly keep it in mind all the time. It's an important distinction. This is about terrorists and those who support them.

And I might add, we might want to add on the end of those weapons of mass destruction. In my view, September 11th broke through any thresholds about the use-- about the terrorists' use of weapons of mass destruction. They killed so many people that we now know that they're more than willing to use weapons of mass destruction. The current anthrax situation, whether that's terrorist sponsored or not, we don't know, but there is another potential weapon of mass destruction. I think we've broken through those thresholds.

So as we take on this global effort, its terrorists, it's those who support the terrorists and it's also weapons of mass destruction. I think they all go hand in hand.

Q: You mentioned anthrax, sir, and we know the Department of Defense has suspended its anthrax vaccination program some time ago, and over the past few weeks people have been delivering anthrax through not any sophisticated manner but through the mail.

A: Right.

Q: Is the department looking at reimplementing its anthrax vaccination program?

A: Right. Even before September 11th, the issue was the one facility in the United States that produced the anthrax vaccine had to be recertified under the FDA, and that issue was being studied very closely by the Department of Defense.

I think since September 11th there's been an effort to speed up that certification. I don't have the final outcome, what the department has decided, but my guess is that we'll try to speed the process up in a way that is as safe as we can be, to get back into production of the vaccine. We'll probably look for second sources, or a couple of other countries to produce a vaccine because our stockpile has been drawn down fairly low at this point.

So I would look... And this will take some time. This is not going to happen overnight, but I'd say within six months to a year our situation could be vastly improved if we stay on the timeline that they hope to stay on.

Q: Sir if we could, let's turn to operational tempo. How are we going to balance OpTempo to fulfill our commitments when we're fighting a war on terrorism, we're trying to protect our interests, the interests of our allies, how are we doing to do this without stretching our forces too thin and at the same time not over-taxing them?

A: Well, I think there are two issues here. One is your operational tempo, your PersTempo in peacetime. And I think the service chiefs have managed that very well over the last several years. They've brought it down into reasonable norms and have worked very, very hard.

We're in a different situation now. We are at war. I think we need to think of it differently. We will stretch the force and I would just hope the force is going to understand that -- again, going back to the earlier comments -- this is a global war on terrorism. It is defending what every soldier, sailor, airman, Marine, coastguardsman said when they raised their right hand and they took their oath, to defend and support the Constitution of this United States. I mean we're defending freedom in the most specific and the broadest sense of that word.

There are going to be personal hardships. There's no question in my mind. Now having said that, our job, the Service Chiefs and my job I think will be to try to mitigate that impact on families and the servicemen and women around the world--and we'll do our best to do that. But I don't think there should be any illusions here that we're going to be able to maintain the same PersTempo and OpTempo guidelines that we used in the past. I think when we have to surge; we're going to have to surge.

So our job is going to be try to balance our war on terrorism with our exercise programs and everything else that we have going on, and try to balance it in a way that puts the minimum hardship on our people. But I hope the troops out there understand, this is really the most important task I've been assigned since I've been in the military. This is very, very important we get this right, and I hope everybody's dedicated to getting that done. There will be some hardships, you bet, but we're asking for everybody's support.

Q: Adding to our overall active duty forces we have the Reservists and the National Guard. How important are those components to the military mission?

A: Just as important as ever, maybe even more important. We've initiated a Reserve call-up, so I guess we're saying they're more important.

My personal belief is, I've been a big believer since almost day one of my service in the Total Force. And today, of course, we've got a lot of Guardspeople, National Guard people, Reservists, helping defend the continental United States. We've also got them deployed overseas.

So their role is key and critical. Again, I know that, and the hardships as well, I'm very well aware of that. However, the Guardsmen and the Reservists that I've talked to I think are willing to support this effort and understand that yes, it will come with hardships, but the end is going to justify their efforts.

Q: If we could shift gears quickly, sir, and talk about quality of life a little bit. It's always important to service members and their families.

What are your plans for improving different areas of quality of life?

A: I think we've made some big strides with housing, with pay, and so forth. I think the area that I

would like to focus on is access to medical care, and not so much for the service members but for the families. Depending on what TriCare region you come from and are served by, your care may be excellent or you may spend all day on the phone trying to get an appointment. I think that's something that needs to be worked, and I think all the service Surgeon Generals understand that. I certainly understand that. I've got a family that tries to make appointments as well. If I'm going to focus anywhere, at least in the near term it's going to be on access to care, particularly for dependents.

Q: What message would you like to send to the families during this time of terror?

A: Well, the message to the families would be, understand how important this task is. Support the service member as part of your family. For the service member, if you're overseas particularly, your family's going to worry about you so communicate them with you as you can. If you have access to e-mail, then e-mail them. Write letters the old fashioned way. But stay in contact. Because naturally moms and dads and spouses are going to worry about members forward deployed, so as you can, reassure them.

This is... We're one big team. We wear different colored uniforms, but I think... I've been in the joint arena and joint assignments so long... Yes, I have an Air Force uniform on, but this is one team trying to fight the most important fight we've had since I've been in the United States military. And the families, you're part of it too, just like you always are. One way or another, you're part of this. This is, as we say, a team sport. So I would ask for their support of the service member piece of their family and we'll get through this just fine.

Q: Sir, you mentioned being in the joint arena for some time, and over the past few years we've been looking more to jointness of forces working together. How much more important is that going to be in the future?

A: It's extremely important. It kind of goes back to your first question, which we skipped over, and I apologize for that, Quinn. But with the Joint Vision 2020, the way we will win this battle and all other battles is a joint warfighting team. We've got a great one together now. We can make lots of improvements. Joint Vision 2020 sort of leads us there. I think it's very consistent with the Quadrennial Defense Review we just completed. And if September 11th had not happened I think we'd still be on this same path. I think September 11th maybe keyed us into doing some things a little bit quicker and we'll add emphasis to get some things done that I think are really important--that the Service Chiefs think are very important.

I would only say that if we're going to win this war it's going to be because all the services pull together, and I include the Coast Guard there as well, because they have a tremendous responsibility not just guarding our ports and rivers here in the United States, but also overseas locations. So they're an integral part of this team, and they're always part... When the Joint Chiefs of Staff meet, the Coast Guard Commandant is often there as well.

Q: With those joint forces working together, not only are we looking at our war on terrorism overseas that we're fighting in Afghanistan now, but we also have to look at our homeland defense. What role are we playing with that?

A: As I think most of the people know, we're playing a huge role. We have the North American Aerospace Defense Command is flying what we call combat air patrol over the United States of America on the alert for aircraft that are headed for critical infrastructure. And we never thought this would be how we deployed our force, but here we are. A lot of that is being done, by the way, by the National Guard.

We also have National Guard in many of our airports providing additional security.

If there were to be some other major event, for sure the Department of Defense would be asked to support the civil authorities who are generally in charge of those kind of events, so we are organizing ourselves to be ready to respond very, very quickly across the country.

That's a huge issue that we're working right now, the whole issue of the department's role in

homeland security, and we're working that out. But as we speak we have thousands of men and women that are dedicated right now to the security of the United States.

Q: I know at the beginning of our interview, sir, you took the opportunity to talk to the service members and send a message out to them. Here's another opportunity for you to do that in your final remarks.

A: Let me just say this. We are one team. I'm on your team. I hope the troops are on my team, all our teams. I'm going to do my best to support every individual service member and make sure the quality of life is what it ought to be to be commensurate with the courage they show every day and the risks they take every day. I'm going to make sure they have the tools in their hands to do their job, that they don't go wanting, and that we are appropriately manned. I'll work tirelessly to make that happen, along with my fellow Joint Chiefs.

The other thing I would ask them for is their support in this effort, again. One more time. This is probably, this is no doubt the most important thing that any of us in uniform right now have ever been asked to do. So I ask for their support in this. We'll try to make sure they have the tools, everything they need, and we need their best thinking, and when it comes time to executing missions we need their best execution.

So I would ask them to stay focused on this, to take care of one another, to take care of their families. And there's no doubt in my mind when this is all over that the United States of America with its friends and allies are going to be victorious over this threat of terrorism.

Q: Once again, we thank you for joining us today.

A: Thank you, Quinn.

(END)