

Chairman talks to Servicemembers at Bagram Airfield about the future of U.S. military operations in Afghanistan and force reductions (U.S. Air Force/Gary J. Rihn)



From the Chairman

Representing Servicemembers who make up today's Joint Force is my greatest honor as Chairman. As the principal military advisor to the President of the United States, Secretary of Defense, and the National Security Council, I work to develop a shared understanding of our capabilities and the Nation's needs in order to provide sound advice and to represent the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. To be effective, I must build relationships of trust with those elected to make decisions about the use of military force. But I did not begin to establish relationships with civilian leaders only when I became Chairman.

Long before I came into this position, I believed that the responsibility for managing the relationship between the

military and those we serve falls to every one of us who are privileged to wear our nation's uniform. Whether it is a lieutenant interacting with a local mayor on behalf of her Soldiers or my own interaction with national-level civilian leadership, one of our most important responsibilities is to inform decisionmakers about who we are and what we do.

Teamwork in a Complex World

Our nation's security depends on more than just military prowess. Our informational advantages, economic strength, and diplomatic power all play essential roles in keeping America secure. Our nation requires all of these instruments, and we are strongest when they work in concert. But this is not a simple task.

In my nearly 40 years of service, I have witnessed the increasingly precise application of force. In close coordination with other instruments of power, our nation has used the military to shape environments, empower diplomacy, and help achieve national objectives in complex and uncertain situations. As our weapons become ever more precise, it is tempting to choose force as the preferred instrument of power. Precision, however, does not always translate into control over a situation. Carl von Clausewitz reminds us that "war is the province of chance," and because our profession is about the management of violence, it is our responsibility to explain the capabilities—and limitations—of what force alone can achieve.

Gaining a shared understanding of how the instruments of national power must integrate to achieve objectives requires frequent and substantive dialogue. This dialogue must be based on a solid foundation of mutual trust, and that trust is not built overnight. It can be lost in a minute, so it must be constantly reinforced.

The Ultimate Source of Power

Building relationships of trust with our counterparts in government service is essential, but we must also sustain the trust between those of us in uniform and the country we have sworn to defend. All of our power, whether diplomatic, military, or economic, is ultimately derived from the American people.

Our men and women in uniform must always trust that as long as they remain in harm's way, the Nation will ensure they have what they need to complete the mission. In fact, my moral obligation to those serving is to ensure that when we send them to defend the Nation, they will be trained and ready to accomplish the mission. The American people have demonstrated their appreciation for us in very powerful ways. And they trust us as an institution more than any other institution in America. But at the same time, I think there is a deficit of understanding between those of us who serve in uniform and our fellow citizens.

This is not the somewhat overstated concern about losing contact with the American people. The deficit of understanding concerns the very role of the military. The Armed Forces have been on a war footing for more than 12 years, and we have an entire generation of military leaders who have known nothing else. As we return to our garrisons, we must reengage with our fellow citizens. While interest in the military peaks during times of war, building trust and a true understanding of the capabilities and limitations of military power takes time and constant engagement. We must encourage a shared understanding of what our profession means not only during times of war, but also in everyday life and in the everyday business of promoting our



Chairman talks with Jim Miklaszewski (chief Pentagon correspondent with NBC News) and other members of media aboard USAF C-40 aircraft en route to Afghanistan (DOD/D. Myles Cullen)

national interests. In a world of rapidly evolving threats and challenges, it is important that we strengthen that dialogue with the American people.

Moving Forward Together

The military theorist Ardant du Picq once stated that four brave men who do not know each other would not dare to attack a lion, but that four less brave men who know each other well would attack resolutely. Today's Joint Force enjoys the best of both worlds. It is comprised of women and men who have repeatedly demonstrated physical and moral courage, and among the Services there is an unparalleled trust and understanding developed over the last 13 years of war. We have realized the vision that General Colin Powell laid out for the Joint Force just over 20 years ago: "We train as a team, fight as a team, and win as a team."

The development of our joint capabilities is a great achievement, but it will not be enough. In an uncertain world, it is vital that we expand the concept of teamwork to include our brothers and sisters in uniform and our civilian counterparts. Understanding among those of us in the military and our fellow servants in the diplomatic corps, our civilian

policymakers, and, most importantly, the American people is essential to our ability to effectively provide for the common defense.

And that is why in the time remaining to me, I plan to increase my commitment to have a conversation with our national leaders and the American people about the capabilities of their military, not only in times of war, but also in times of peace. I encourage you to do the same. It falls on each of us to sustain the trust and confidence of those we serve and with whom we serve. JFQ

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