



U.S. Army Chief of Staff

An Interview with Raymond T. Odierno

General Raymond T. Odierno is the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army. *JFQ* Editor in Chief Dr. William T. Eliason interviewed General Odierno at the Pentagon. NDU Press Internet Publications Editor Ms. Joanna E. Seich transcribed the taped interview.

Joint Force Quarterly: After more than a decade of combat around the world, what can you tell us about the challenges facing today's Army?

General Raymond T. Odierno: We're starting from an incredible position of strength because of the experience that the Army has. This is the first time after a long period of war that Army leaders are

staying in the Service; they're not leaving en masse to do other things. So we have an incredible force, and I want to build on that. We have a wealth of experiences from junior to senior officers that we've never had before, and we have to learn how to exploit the experiences gained in joint, multinational, interagency, and intergovernmental environments, and I think that's key to the future.

I do see three major challenges for the Army: First, as we sit here today, we still have over 60,000 people deployed around the world, so we have to make sure that these Soldiers are prepared to do the missions that we're asking them to do. Second, we have to figure out how to keep these Soldiers prepared while, with the fiscal realities of today, we're in the process of downsizing the Army. I need to make sure that I balance that and I need to make sure that I'm taking the Army down in such a way in which we are still meeting our operational commitments and requirements, taking care of our Soldiers, but also taking a stand in order to meet the budget pressures. Third, we have to ask ourselves what we want the future Army to look like. The world around us is changing rapidly, and I tell everyone it might not be the most dangerous time, but it's the most *uncertain* time that I've seen. And we have to have an Army that is capable of adapting to the new realities. We have to have an Army that is looking forward and implementing what we've learned in the past but also looking forward to see what we have to develop for the future.

JFQ: What are your priorities for meeting those challenges?

General Odierno: As I look around the world today, I ask how can the Army contribute across the full range of operations in order to prevent conflict, shape the environment for the combatant commanders to ensure access to build partner capacity, and then, if necessary, win. Maintaining a highly trained and professional all-volunteer force is the number one priority; moreover, we have to develop leaders who can operate in complex environments. I want to sustain

the advantages we have now, and I think that we have an asymmetric advantage both in our noncommissioned officers and officers and in their ability to operate in a joint, interagency, and multinational environment. We have to continue to develop these Soldiers as we move forward. We have to optimize performance; we have to optimize our management of our talent. To me, that's number one by far.

We also have to be globally responsive and regionally engaged. By globally responsive, I mean that in the future, we're going to have many more "no-notice" small contingencies, and we have to be responsive in such a way that we can tailor and scale our response to not only the place we're going, but also the mission. When I talk about the need for decisive landpower as part of the joint force, that doesn't necessarily mean decisive landpower to fight wars—that means decisive landpower to build partner capacity, to respond to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and to build interoperability and multinational capability. We look to solve problems. Decisionmaking will probably be much more decentralized in the future, and we have to ensure that our young men and women are prepared for that. "Globally responsive" means responding quickly and understanding the region in order to be responsible for it.

In fact, there are two recent examples where we've done this. The first is the deployment of four companies to Eastern Europe to assure our allies after Russia's recent actions in the Ukraine. The second is the quick deployment of an assessment force to Iraq—a majority of that being the Special Operation Army Conventional Capability. They are two small examples of how I see the future. We have to possess that capability and we have to continue to build it as we move forward. That's what we're doing regarding setting our priorities for the future.

JFQ: How do you propose to incorporate lessons learned from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan into the future force?

General Odierno: First, a strategic response is going to be much more

decentralized and it's going to be done at a lower level. Also, it's going to be done in a smaller footprint, which is exactly how we operated both in Iraq and Afghanistan where we decentralized responsibilities to lower levels of commands.

Second, we've learned that there will never again be an operation that's purely a military operation. It's going to be one that's conducted in a joint, interagency, intergovernmental, multinational context. So we have to prepare ourselves to operate in that environment.

Third, which is almost counterintuitive, since we're going to have to operate in this joint interagency, intergovernmental, multinational environment, we have to ensure that we are preparing our headquarters to do that.

Last, our adversaries have learned that they must do everything they can to take away our technological advantages. So we have to be capable of operating in a diverse, hybrid environment that will have a combination of conventional capabilities, an environment of terrorist activity [in counterterrorism], as well as an environment of opportunists, insurgents, and criminal activity. No matter where we operate, we are going to have the potential for these environments.

JFQ: How is the Army dealing with the fiscal constraints of recent years, and what kind of planning have you requested should the full impact of sequestration become a reality? In particular, can you discuss the likely effects on the total force?

General Odierno: We're conducting significant planning in these areas, and our assumption right now is that the law of the land is sequestration and that it'll be full sequestration. There will be several impacts on the Army, but really on the joint force. I'll speak to the Army first.

We've done our planning in order to do the things I've already mentioned. But there are three things to balance. You have to balance end strength, readiness, and modernization. Because of the sharp acts of sequestration, however, the next 4 to 5 years will not be in balance. So upfront, because we have to take end

strength down over a 5-year period due to the operational commitments that we have, we are taking some risk in readiness and modernization. That means we're out of balance and we might not obtain appropriate readiness levels. We are delaying modernization, too, which might not allow us to keep our edge in mobility, lethality, and survivability. That's the short, midterm problem.

Once we get rebalanced again, which looks like the 2019, 2020, or 2021 timeframe, we have another problem, which I've testified to. We'll have a smaller force. It'll be ready and we'll begin to reintroduce modernization, but I think we will be too small to meet the current national security strategy. So we have to readjust the goals we have in national security because we will not be able to meet the requirements we currently have in leading and building security and stability in all the regions around the world. That's the longer term challenge.

JFQ: In recent talks, you have mentioned your view that the Army needs to become globally responsive. What ways do you believe the Army needs to change to meet that goal?

General Odierno: We have to think a bit differently, and again I think it ties to how we're going to operate in the future. Over the last 12 or 13 years, we've gotten very used to moving into areas with mature infrastructures. For example, we've built up Iraq and Afghanistan so when we fall in, there are basecamps, there is support that's already set up, there's life support, equipment support, and training support, which is what we normally would do if we were somewhere for a long period of time. But in the future, we're going to be required to go in quickly, and probably into remote areas that have little infrastructure, so we have to get back to understanding that when we deploy somewhere, we have to be able to sustain ourselves for fairly significant periods of time organically.

We have to build packages that are small, that meet the requirement, and that can be moved very quickly—whether by



Chief of Staff gives remarks during promotion ceremony at headquarters, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colorado (U.S. Army/Teddy Wade)

air or sea—and we have to be cognizant of this early on. One of the things all Army leaders have talked about is our ability to build these small packages to respond.

There are several important things along this line of thought that we have to be able to do. Thus, as we talk about being globally responsive, we have to make sure we're able to acquire and maintain a level of information awareness, even as we're deploying. We have to have robust command and control communications, but with small packages that require us to have less support. We have to increase mobility and survivability, but in smaller packages. What the Army brings to the joint force is a variety of capabilities that no other Service brings: We can send light, medium, or heavy airborne capabilities, or we can mix the three together. We can also provide task forces from 200 troops to 50,000. We can support ourselves, so we can build packages that are uniquely organized to meet a required need—whether it is for

humanitarian assistance or operations. We have to build that capability and make sure that we can do it in the right size, get there with the right speed, and be able to accomplish the right mission. I believe the Army is the Service that can do things at many speeds, many sizes, and many different types of activities.

JFQ: A number of social issues have been affecting all the Services, such as repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, integration of women into combat specialties previously barred to them, sexual assault and suicides, and senior officer misconduct, to name a few. What is the Army's approach to working these issues?

General Odierno: For the Army, it is important to bring in the best, most qualified talent that's available, and it is about talent management. To do that, we have to make sure that we create an environment in which all Soldiers not only

believe they can increase their own personal capabilities, but also contribute to the greater good and the team capabilities we have. We have to create an environment where many different people with many different beliefs can operate effectively and are not discriminated against and can reach their full potential. That's the underpinning of everything we do.

We have been able to implement the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," frankly, with only very small issues—and almost no issues at all. It is important that we continue to integrate and make everybody feel comfortable.

Increased opportunities for women in the Army is another priority. The Army has more women than any other Service in terms of numbers, and it's important they get all the opportunities they can meet. We have to be able to ensure that they feel comfortable in the environment we're in, so we take sexual assault seriously. It is our number one priority, and we have made some good progress.

Number two is making sure if something does happen, we have advocates who allow victims to go through the process and feel comfortable that people are concerned about them. The third piece is holding people—the predators who are targeting women, and in some cases men—accountable. Also, holding commanders accountable for creating the right environment where people believe they can [talk] openly. We're working aggressively at that.

All this comes under the Army profession, which gets to the other points you were referring to in terms of senior leader misconduct and other things. We are the most respected profession, and it is important that we sustain that. People have a lot of trust and confidence in us, so it is important that we sustain that confidence.

But there are a couple things we've learned that are necessary for us to continue to build the profession. For instance, we're implementing programs that do 360-degree assessments for all commanders, and now we're starting that program when people first come into the Service. It's a self-development tool, but it's also an awareness tool for command climate and how things are being done. It also lets us know where we should expand that particular program. We have implemented a significant amount of training in all of our professional military schools that concentrate on the responsibilities that Soldiers have as leaders and the ethical/moral requirements that we expect of leaders. The foundation of everything is trust: We talk about trust between Soldiers, trust between Soldiers and leaders, and then trust among Soldiers, leaders, and the institution, and finally trust between the institution and the American public.

We also talk about three basic characteristics that we expect all our Soldiers to have: competence, commitment, and character. We expect our Soldiers to be competent, which is building expertise and constantly learning to improve that expertise. We expect commitment: commitment to your Soldiers, commitment to your unit, commitment to the mission, commitment to the institution.

Most important is character. Character is what defines us. Character is about understanding the moral and ethical values that we represent, as well as the ethical dilemmas that we face throughout our careers. These dilemmas start out small and it's how we deal with them early on that sets our character and how we deal with difficult problems as we grow in responsibility. We are focused on ensuring that we emphasize competence, commitment, and character to the institution. This is ingrained in every one of our training programs. I recently attended a symposium of Army leaders that talked specifically about the profession and ethics. We're taking this discussion very seriously as we move forward.

Finally, as we look at talent management, it is important to look where all Soldiers can serve. We want to open up positions based on standards, not based on preconceived notions of sex—male or female—or other biases we want to eliminate. We want to make the Army a standards-based organization, so we've worked hard on developing standards that we think are right for every MOS [military occupational specialty]. This is why we are doing significant work to make sure we have underpinning information that will allow us to move forward and open as many positions as possible to women in the future.

JFQ: All the Services have programs for helping their wounded warriors and their families. As the Army has the largest population of recent combat veterans in and out of uniform, can you discuss your program called Soldiers for Life, as well as other programs that make up how the Army is working to help veterans?

General Odierno: There are two specific programs that relate to this question. One is the Soldier for Life program, which I put into place 2½ years ago when I became the Chief of Staff of the Army. It's important for Soldiers to understand and believe that from the time they come into the Army and for the rest of their lives, we consider them to be Soldiers who served honorably and who deserve

the care and attention necessary. This covers not only wounded warriors, but also Soldiers who have served honorably and now decided to go into civilian life. We will assist them as they move forward in integrating back into civilian society. Because we believe they are great people to hire, we believe they can be great representatives of and contribute greatly to society both locally and nationally.

The second piece is that we must never forget what our Soldiers and wounded warriors have sacrificed, including the families who have sacrificed lost loved ones. One of my major concerns today is that even though people do understand the importance of providing care—and we get lots of external support, both private and public—we have to ensure that this same care is available in 5, 10, or 15 years, especially to Soldiers who have been wounded and families who have lost loved ones. We have to make sure that we recognize their sacrifices. So we are building programs that will allow us to do this.

The second program that is important is the Ready Resilient program, which builds mental and physical abilities to become more resilient. As we continue to ask our Soldiers to operate in complex situations, we want them to build resilience that enables them to deal with difficult issues. It's about not only proving individual capabilities but also reducing the risk of suicide and other issues that we've faced.

The last program is one we are working on with Veteran's Affairs. As we hand over our Soldiers from the Army to Veteran's Affairs, we want that process to go as smoothly as possible—and we still have a lot of work to do in that area. Although we've made some progress, we have not yet made the progress necessary to have visibility as we move forward.

JFQ: What is the Army's role within the Joint Force 2020 and beyond? Specifically, what role does jointness play in your efforts to achieve that force?

General Odierno: As I think about all the missions we have, whether we're

detering conflict or building capability with our partners, we must have a balanced joint force. We have to have a capability in the Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Army that not only enables us but also ensures that our adversaries understand we have this capability that can deter and compel them not to make misjudgments or miscalculations that could lead to conflict.

As mentioned earlier, the Army provides specific and unique capabilities that no other Service can. For example, the Army provides the majority of support to the joint force and combatant commanders in terms of enablers. Whether it's [intelligence] support, engineer support, logistics support, command and control capability, we are the largest provider to the joint force to include the combatant commanders, and so I think that's an important mission.

I also believe in the notion of strategic landpower. I often joke that we know 72 percent of the world is water, but I always say 100 percent of the people live on land. To create security and stability requires the ability to interact with individuals on land, and we do that in several ways. The United States does it diplomatically, but it also does it through [military-to-military] relationships, and the Army plays a significant role in this. Understanding the human dimension of conflict and the human domain and how that impacts our ability to interact and build relationships in every region of the world is very important. This gets to the point of regional forces and our ability to align forces to combatant commanders that allows them to meet their missions and to be an integral part of the joint force. Doing so establishes what I consider a global landpower network. It is a small footprint, but it still allows us to respond. This network can have Marine capability, special operation forces capability, and Army capability. We are in the process of establishing this network, and the Army will continue to be an integral part of the joint force.

We have to be careful that all the Services do not focus on domain warfare, which takes us away from jointness. The Services are too worried about the



Soldier scans surrounding area for potential enemy movement during mission in Saberi district of Khowst Province, Afghanistan (U.S. Army/Justin A. Moeller)

land domain or the air domain or the space domain or the cyber domain or the sea domain. We cannot get focused on individual domain warfare. We have to stay integrated because every one of those domains intersects at one time or another, and it's crucial to have the ability to operate jointly when those domains intersect. We have to stay focused on that idea, but I am a bit worried that we're headed away from that. We have to remind ourselves that we have to operate together. For the Army, the intersection of the land, sea, air, and cyber domains is critical. An integrative approach to these domains, to include the human domain, proves a strength that no one else has. If we do not take an integrative approach, we are going to lose synergy. One of the real advantages that we have is our ability to do that—and we have to make sure we stay focused on that.

JFQ: What has the experience of being Chief of Staff meant to you, and what will you tell your eventual successor about the job?

General Odierno: Being the Chief of Staff of the Army is the most humbling experience I've ever had. I have the opportunity to help shape and ensure that this institution keeps moving forward.

We have incredible Soldiers, and I have the opportunity to see them and what they do every single day. As we awarded the Medal of Honor to Staff Sergeant [Ryan] Pitts only yesterday, I was reminded of not only the incredible sacrifice, but also the capability and the trust that these young men and women have in the Army. It's my responsibility to ensure that we continue to build an Army that comes forward at these levels. The lesson I learned is that we represent many different people; we represent our Soldiers in the Active and Reserve components, as well as the National Guard. We also represent our civilians, and it's incumbent on the Chief of Staff of the Army to ensure that the Army continues to prepare itself for the future while meeting current operational commitments. The most important job that the Chief has is to maintain continuity, and we have to make sure that we move forward in a consistent manner. Understanding that the next Chief will have to make some adjustments is a given, but we must stay focused on where we want to take this Army in the future. JFQ