



CHAIRMAN'S
STRATEGIC DIRECTION
to the
JOINT FORCE



8th

18th



Members of the Joint Force,

6 February 2012

The ten years since 9/11 stand among the most challenging in our military's history. Through it all, the Joint Force has persevered and prevailed. Our families have stood strong with us, deployment after deployment. Together, we have kept the homeland safe while promoting our interests abroad.

We are a proud force and rightfully so. It is not exaggeration to say that we are the strongest military power in the world. To remain strong, I intend to focus my early efforts as your 18th Chairman in four areas.

First, we must achieve our national objectives in our current conflicts. For as long as we have America's sons and daughters in harm's way, we will not be distracted. Al-Qa'ida remains in our sights, and our forces in Afghanistan remain in a tough fight.

At the same time, we are creating the military of our future. We must develop a Joint Force for 2020 that remains ready to answer the Nation's call—anytime, anywhere. We need to offset fewer resources with more innovation.

We also must confront what being in the Profession of Arms means in the aftermath of war. Each of us must be a leader of consequence beyond our battalion, our squadron, our ship, and our unit.

Above all, we have to keep faith with our Military Family—Active, Guard, Reserve, and Veteran. They have endured much and need support now more than ever. They are our heart and must remain our priority despite pressure to do otherwise.

In this pamphlet you will find my early thoughts on how to do these things. I welcome your feedback, and I trust you to support and improve them. In so doing, we will strengthen our relationship of trust with the American people.

I'm Proud to Serve with You,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Martin E. Dempsey".
MARTIN E. DEMPSEY
General U.S. Army
18TH

Strengthening Our Relationship of Trust with the Nation

Introduction

The All-Volunteer Joint Force is our Nation's decisive advantage. Those who serve in the Armed Forces of the United States of America are the source of our unrivaled strength. The talented men and women of the Joint Force are resilient warriors who volunteer to fight and fight again.

In the years to come, our Joint Force will face several challenging transitions. We will transition from war, but in the context of an increasingly competitive security environment. We will transition from abundant to constrained resources. And, many Service members—and their families—will transition into civilian life. Any one of these would be difficult. All three together will test our leadership at every level.

We will pass this test. I am determined that we will stay ready now, be ready for the future, renew our commitment to the profession of arms, and always honor our



families. I will put the weight of my personal effort behind realizing these critical efforts.

Achieve our National Objectives in our Current Conflicts

In this era of persistent conflict, we confront aggression from an array of malevolent state and non-state actors. Even as we transition from conflicts of the last decade, we must not lose sight of this reality—our forces are still forward-deployed and fighting to achieve our national objectives.

"The true national object in war, as in peace, is a more perfect peace."
—Captain Sir Basil Liddell Hart, 1944

In the past two years, we have transitioned from over two hundred thousand to fewer than ninety thousand deployed in combat. We stabilized Iraq when it was thought impossible and ended two decades of operations in and over that country. We reversed Taliban momentum while building new security forces in Afghanistan. We protected the Libyan people from mass atrocities. And, we have pushed al-Qa'ida to the edge of strategic defeat.

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Nevertheless, our conflicts are not yet over. Increasingly isolated al-Qa'ida affiliates still seek to terrorize us and our allies. Afghan forces are more self-sufficient but still need our help protecting the Afghan people while they grow stronger.



Other demanding missions remain. We will continue to deter aggression by Iran and North Korea. We must repel prolific and costly cyber attacks. We will patrol the global commons, maintain nuclear deterrence, train partners, deliver humanitarian goods, and more.

Even after a decade of war, we must remain vigilant of new threats and capabilities. War is discovery—we must continue to out-think and out-adapt our adversaries. Only by remaining alert to the weak signals of change can we preserve the initiative and provide options for our civilian leaders.

The men and women we send into harm's way merit the leadership and

resources to succeed. We will adapt our structures and push capabilities “to the edge,” and we will continue to send our best and brightest forward and sustain them until they all come home. The last casualty in our fights is no less a sacrifice than the first.

In response to these challenges and others, we will lead, and we will enable others to lead. Moreover, we will do this—always—by coordinating military power with the diplomacy and development efforts of our government and those of our allies and partners.

Key Efforts

- Sustain persistent action against al-Qa'ida and other violent extremists. Enhance cooperation with civilian authorities at home to



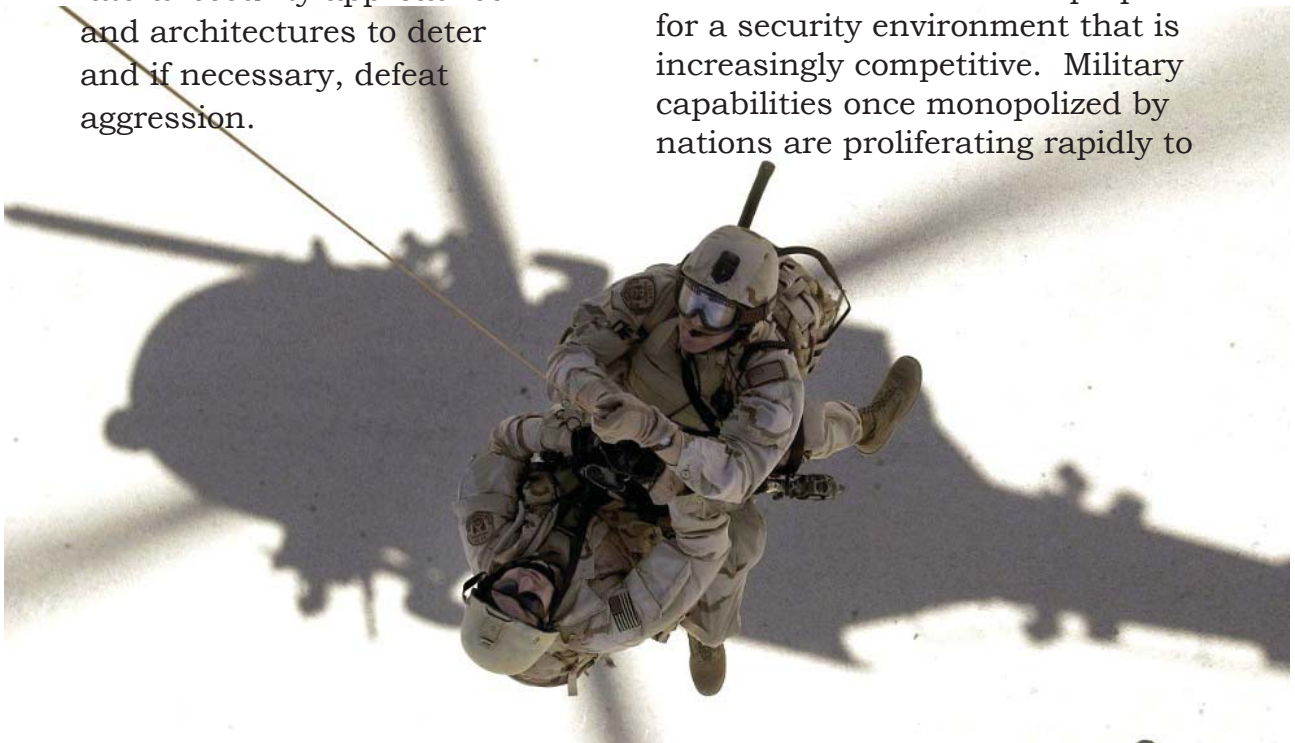
strengthen our domestic defenses and resilience.

- Transition security responsibility to the Afghan National Security Forces. Be relentless in disrupting and degrading insurgents and terrorists that threaten the Afghan people.
- Prevent and mitigate the impact of a cyber attack. Extend cyber domain awareness, establish an active defense, and provide responsible offensive capabilities.
- Expand the envelope of interagency and international cooperation. Promote multi-lateral security approaches and architectures to deter and if necessary, defeat aggression.

Develop Joint Force 2020

We are developing today the Joint Force our Nation will need in 2020. Keeping our military the best led, trained, and equipped in the world is a non-negotiable imperative. Doing so during a period of fiscal constraint will be hard. We will need to be selective in the joint capabilities we reconstitute after a decade of war. We will need to get smaller to stay strong. Importantly, we will need to be even more joint—advancing interdependence and integrating new capabilities. I am convinced we can restore versatility at an affordable cost. I am determined to build a responsive Joint Force that preserves options for our Nation.

Joint Force 2020 must be prepared for a security environment that is increasingly competitive. Military capabilities once monopolized by nations are proliferating rapidly to



violent non-state actors. This has created a more unpredictable and dangerous security environment—an environment that has been described as persistent conflict. This conflict has extended into the cyber arena. We have adapted to changes in the traditional forms of conflict, but we are not yet adequately prepared for this contest.

"The history of free men is never really written by chance but by choice – their choice."

—President Dwight D. Eisenhower,
9 Oct 1956

edge information technologies to ensure a secure and collaborative command and control network. We need innovation in how we operate—our ability to re-imagine the way we fight will determine if we succeed or fail.



The Joint Force will also be used differently. Specialized capabilities, once on the margins, will move to the forefront. Networked special operations, cyber, and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) will become increasingly central. We must leverage cutting-



Additionally, I anticipate a new valuation of risk. Today's troubled political economy is elevating the relevance of cost and reality of financial risk. Discontinuous change, such as the Arab Spring, and systemic competition over non-renewable resources are upending conventional geo-political wisdom. Expected economic trends and unexpected global events invite us to re-think the military's role in mitigating the risk to our Nation.

We must not misfire in defining Joint Force 2020. Our choices must be informed by a strategic logic that reconciles ends to ways and means. Competing priorities must be carefully weighed in light of fiscal constraints. We must

anticipate shrinking our force in some missions and targeting growth in emerging capabilities. Smart cuts are not always equitable cuts. By necessity, we must weigh sacrifices in every area, from force structure to pay and benefits. Yet, our cuts cannot be allowed to hollow the force. We must preserve readiness by valuing quality over quantity. Most importantly, we will put the interest of our Nation before that of any specific group or Service.

Our aim should be a versatile, responsive, and decisive Joint Force that is also affordable. This Joint Force must excel at many missions while continuously adapting to changing circumstances. It means building and presenting forces that can be molded to context—not just by adding and subtracting, but by leaders combining capabilities in innovative ways. It means interdependence—Services that rely



on each other to achieve objectives and create capabilities that do not exist except when combined. It means a regionally-postured, but globally networked and flexible force that can be scaled and scoped to demand. It can close on its objective at a time and place of its choosing and produce irreversible and stable outcomes. Finally, it is a Joint Force that provides a degree of security in balance with what the Nation demands and is willing and able to pay.



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Key Efforts

- Pioneer new ways to combine and employ emergent capabilities such as cyber, special forces, and ISR. Examine organizational and other force development changes to better leverage game-changing capabilities.
- Drive Jointness deeper, sooner in capability development, operational planning, and leader development. Identify and reduce, but do not eliminate, overlapping capabilities across Services.
- Preserve the readiness of our force. Choose a smaller, well-trained, and equipped force over a large force that cannot afford world-class readiness.

- Move quickly toward Joint information and simulation networks that support secure and agile command and control.
- Be affordable in every way possible. Be demanding stewards of the nation's financial resources.

Renew Our Commitment to the Profession of Arms

Now is the time for us to reflect, not just on the lessons of war, but on who we are and what we do. We are a Profession of Arms, guardians of the Constitution who reflect our Nation's ideals. We are military professionals—every officer, enlisted and civilian—not because we say so, but because of how we serve. Ours is an All-Volunteer Force. Americans take an oath—freely and

"No man ever reached to excellence in any one art or profession without having passed through the slow and painful process of study and preparation."

—Horace

without any mental reservation—to live a vocation for which they may die. They are not simply doing a job. They are answering a call to



join an uncommon profession—the Armed Forces of the United States of America. It is a profession of experts in the use of military power to defend America. We serve apolitically under civilian authority and adhere to the highest ethical standards. Membership is inclusive, encompassing every Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Marine, and Coast Guardsman—Active and Reserve, military and DoD civilian, officer and enlisted.

Each of us, and all of us, are the stewards of this Profession of Arms. As we transition from our current conflicts, we have an opportunity—and an obligation—to reflect and adapt. War has changed us, but we do not yet know how. We have a responsibility to figure this out—to ask first-order questions about who we were, are, and can be. We must confront and institutionalize the lessons of war. We must continue to learn, to understand, and to promote the knowledge, skills, attributes, and behaviors that define our profession.

After 37 years of service, I am convinced that learning and leadership are at the core of our profession. Military service must continue to be our Nation’s preeminent leadership experience. We will continue to reform and leverage the Professional Military Education enterprise to advance our profession. It is more important than ever to get the most from the potential and performance of every Service member.

Our profession is our people. To strengthen our profession, we must recruit talent. We must hone and reward vision. And, we must retain leaders with essential expertise and proven potential. These imperatives must be underpinned by innovative personnel policies that promote more of what we need. In the end, we must get the people “right.”

Each Service contributes its own story, rich heritage, and unique



capabilities to the Joint Force. Our Joint Profession of Arms depends on this diversity as a source of strength and versatility. On the other side, Service differences pale when compared to our shared values and common commitment to mission success. These define our common identity and collective responsibility.

Our professional ethos must also embrace teamwork; not just to keep pace, but to out-pace our adversaries. We need to promote a sense of shared responsibility within our government, with our Nation, and with our partners and allies. To this end, the Joint Force will contribute to an unprecedented level of public and private, state and non-state unified action.



Key Efforts

- Develop and adopt lessons learned from the past decade of war. Promote a culture of continuous learning and adaptation at every echelon of the Joint Force.
- Define the essential knowledge, skills, attributes, and behaviors that define the Joint Profession of Arms. Institutionalize these in education, training, organizations, and policies.
- Reinforce leadership development at all levels of Joint Professional Military Education. Develop principled leaders who can combine new capabilities in new ways in complex environments.
- Recruit and retain people with the leadership, character, and expertise needed to sustain our Profession of Arms.

Keep Faith with Our Military Family

The stress of a decade of combat and the uncertainty of fiscal constraint reinforce the need to keep faith with our Military Family.



Keeping faith means understanding and recognizing the Military Family's extraordinary contributions and sacrifices, firmly supporting them in the ways they need most, and preserving the trust between us. Always.

Our men and women in uniform, the family members who stand with them, veterans of every generation, wounded warriors, and loved ones of our fallen are all a part of our Military Family.

This Family has fought harder and sacrificed more over the last decade than many will ever know. They have shown remarkable strength

and resilience. But ten years of war have strained our Family, and impending budget cuts have cast uncertainty among our ranks. The burden stretches far beyond the active duty force. Repeated deployments of Guard and Reserve personnel have upended families, employers, and communities. No aspect of the Military Family has been unaffected, no corner of the country untouched.

The wars have left deep wounds both seen and unseen. Forever changed by their experience, hundreds of thousands of returning veterans and their family members are confronting significant long-term challenges, and many are facing mental health issues. Rates of substance abuse, domestic violence, suicide, divorce, and homelessness also remain tragically high—a sober reminder that our Nation's security comes with tremendous cost.



As a Family and as a Nation, we must face these challenges together. Taking care of our Military Family preserves the strength and readiness of our All-Volunteer Force. Moreover, it is the very fabric of who we are. When tested, we come together to care for them—they deserve the future they sacrificed to secure.



Unsustainable costs and smaller budgets mean we must examine our warrior and family support programs and determine which are producing the best outcomes. We need pragmatic reform and more flexibility, and we need it in a way that does not diminish our ability to recruit and retain our Nation's best. We also need to go about this in a way that is both affordable and reassuring to our Military Family.

Meaningful change is already underway. The Services have adjusted force size and rotation, redoubled transition support, and invested in world-class health care for our wounded. America's citizens have also stepped forward. From the local to the national level, thousands of organizations, higher learning institutions, and businesses have partnered to support our Military Family. They have helped find education opportunities, meaningful employment, and health care options. We must continue to connect this vast groundswell of support to specific needs.

"The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the Veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their Nation."

—George Washington

Going forward, we must honor our commitment while reforming compensation and benefits. We must balance our commitment to provide quality, accessible health care with better management of its escalating costs. We must constantly learn, adjust, and improve how we will meet the long-term needs of those who defend the Nation.

Key Efforts

- Support Departmental efforts to reform military compensation and benefits to produce a more affordable system that honors commitments and improves readiness.
- Support the Services as they assess military family needs and program effectiveness. Encourage the Services to learn from each other. Help assess the most effective programs across the force and carefully reduce duplicative efforts.
- Champion the fielding of effective treatments for mental health issues, traumatic brain injury, and combat stress. Reduce the stigma and remove barriers to seeking mental health services for both Service members and their family members.
- Strengthen the force and enhance resiliency through a culture of total fitness.
- Build public awareness of the value and needs of the Military Family. Identify gaps in the reintegration and transition processes. Promote sustainable community-based partnerships and initiatives that improve education, employment, and wellness support.



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Conclusion

We are and will remain responsible to provide our leaders with options to defend this Nation. The tension between winning the present and winning the future will require hard choices and principled leadership. Transitioning out of a constant combat posture to being ready to fight across all domains will require deep thinking—about the capabilities we need and about who we are. Caring for our families must be a professional legacy just as it is a personal one. The American people have bestowed upon us a sacred trust. Ours is a noble and mighty calling for service and of sacrifice. These past ten years have proven that we are worthy of their trust. The next ten will demand more of the same. I know we will answer the call.



General Martin E. Dempsey
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

“More information about the Chairman and these and other Joint Staff issues is available on these websites.”



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