



NEWS FROM

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OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN BUYER MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING PROPOSALS TO TRANSFORM TRADOC

General Abrams, I want to welcome you to this hearing and thank you for hosting the subcommittee. I also want to say from the outset that you and I are in complete agreement as to the critical importance of the Training and Doctrine Command to the Army. That importance is embodied in two statements that you made as part of your command plan.

The first is that, "TRADOC is Army Readiness." The second is that, "Training remains the connective thread that allows the Army to develop and sustain proficiency for all other missions...."

Despite our agreement on TRADOC's importance, I have had a long-standing concern that for a variety of reasons TRADOC has been unable to perform its full range of missions to standard.

I first became aware how severely the overall shortage of Army resources had undermined TRADOC in the aftermath of the 1995 deaths of four Ranger students in Florida.

Less than two years later, I again had cause to look closely at the state of training in TRADOC as part of the House Armed Services Committee investigation into the causes of the sexual misconduct by Army drill sergeants and others at TRADOC bases. What I found stunned me with regard to how the requirement that TRADOC absorb its "fair-share" of Army-wide shortages, and other factors, not only had undermined the ability of drill sergeants to do their jobs, but also created an environment for some to abuse their authority. In addition, the initial entry training system had seemed to have lost its focus on rigor and the need to impart a warrior spirit into new trainees.

I worked closely with your predecessor and with Gen. Shinseki's predecessor to address the manning shortfalls and urged both to restore rigor and the warrior spirit into the system.

(MORE)

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General Shinseki's initiative to fully man the Army's operational units caused me to refocus my concerns on TRADOC because of the potential for that initiative to make worse what I believe to be a less than satisfactory TRADOC manning status. I appreciate Gen. Shinseki's commitment not to allow the initiative to, as he says, "break TRADOC." However, I'm not sure I know what that means. It sounds like the part of the Hippocratic oath that establishes as the first principal that doctors shall do no harm. Promising to do no harm, however, does not address what needs to be done to heal the patient.

How to heal the patient is what brings us here today. Gen. Shinseki challenged you to present him with a plan to reengineer and transform TRADOC. You have developed that plan and presented your recommendations to Gen. Shinseki. We look forward to hearing those recommendations from you today, Gen. Abrams, because the recent publication of readiness reports from all the TRADOC installations presents the picture of a troubled organization. TRADOC faces critical shortfalls not only in military and civilian personnel, but also in funding, training equipment, facilities, base support and modernization. In addition, it is being asked to take on new missions with no commitment for additional resources that those new missions require.

I believe that TRADOC today in some ways is like a body that is struggling for survival. In order to keep core functions going the body begins shutting down the less critical extremities. What I take away from the readiness reports is that for a number of years now TRADOC, in order to continue training – its core function – has been forced to delay, defer, and even shut down performance of other missions. Moreover, to me there is evidence in some of the comments from your subordinate commanders that TRADOC's ability to perform its core mission of training to the required standards is beginning to fail.

Given the importance of TRADOC to the Army, as well as the seriousness of the broad challenges faced by your command, Gen. Abrams, your plan for transformation, and the subsequent Army commitment to support it, are crucial to the long-term readiness of the Army.

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