

Center for Strategic and International Studies

Online Event

“The Army in the Indo-Pacific: A Conversation with General James McConville and General Paul LaCamera”

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FEATURING:

General James C. McConville,
Chief of Staff of the Army

General Paul J. LaCamera,
*Commanding General,
United States Army Pacific*

CSIS EXPERTS:

Mark F. Cancian,
*Senior Adviser, International Security Program,
CSIS*

*Transcript By
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Mark F. Cancian: Well, good morning. I'm Mark Cancian, a Senior Adviser at CSIS, and I'd like to welcome you all to our event this morning.

It's a great opportunity to have Generals McConville and LaCamera join us for a discussion of the Army in the Indo-Pacific region. The generals need little introduction to this group.

General McConville is the 40th Chief of Staff of the Army. A senior Army aviator, he's qualified to pilot a variety of Army aircraft. He's commanded at every level, from the company to the division. And he has considerable experience in Washington, having served on the Joint Staff and as the Army G-1 for personnel and as the vice chief of staff, before stepping up as the chief when General Milley became chairman.

General LaCamera is commander of the U.S. Army in the Pacific. He's commanded at every level from the company to the corps. A Ranger, he's also led forces in the Special Operations community.

Both generals are veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

And I would note that this is both an exciting and a challenging time for the Army. On the one hand, the Army has been nurturing a wide variety of new technologies, several of which are on the cusp of moving from the lab to the field. The Army's also experimenting with new kinds of force structures to adapt to the demands of great-power competition. On the other hand, this is happening as DoD budgets have likely peaked and there will be severe competition for resources. Many strategists and budgeteers are looking at the Army, particularly its end strength, as an offset to fund air and maritime priorities. They question the Army's role in the Indo-Pacific region.

The format of our event today will be that the generals will give some brief remarks, then I'll have a short conversation with them, and finally we will open the floor to questions that have come in from the audience. So, with that, I will turn the floor over to General McConville.

General James C. McConville: Well, thank you, Mark, and it's great to be here with you today.

And I just want to highlight yesterday was National Vietnam Day, and I think for all those out listening a special thanks to our Vietnam veterans for what they've done. We stand proudly on their shoulders. They left us a great legacy. So if you know a Vietnam vet, please thank them for all of us.

And as you said, very challenging times this last year, exacerbated by Covid, civil unrest, national disasters, all the time we've been conducting global operations around the world. So I'm very, very proud of what our people have been doing. Our soldiers and our people have really been the pathway to the readiness and modernization.

As you said, you know, every 40 years the Army goes under a major transformation, I would argue. It happened in 1940. It happened in 1980, when some of us came in the Army. And we're in 2020 and we're in the process right now of taking a look at the future, the type of capabilities that we need to provide for the joint force. And it's not just new equipment, although that's important. It's new doctrine. It's new organizations. It's new ways we're going to train. It's a 21st-century talent-management system. And we are aligned with the joint force. We're aligned with our allies and partners in the region.

And we know in the future, whether it's in the Indo-Pacific or it's other places around the world, we'll go as a joint team. And all the service chiefs are working very closely to provide that capability, along with working very closely with our allies and partners to get after that.

So we look forward to the discussion. And back to you, Mark.

Mr. Cancian: Thank you very much, General.

Let me turn the floor over to General LaCamera for a few words.

General Paul J. LaCamera: Yeah. Thanks, Mark. And thanks, Chief, for the opportunity to participate today. And I'll echo those thanks to our Vietnam veterans out there.

And good morning and thanks for the opportunity to participate and talk over the great things that our soldiers and civilians are doing out here in the Indo-Pacific. And as the chief said, you know, we're not going to go alone. It's going to be a joint, it's going to be a combined, it's going to be an interagency fight. And on a day-to-day basis, we're out here in the competition phase.

In the Indo-Pacific, it's critical to retain our vital – for vital economics, global economics. It's home to 4 billion people, 36 countries, of 24 of the world's 36 megacities – that's 10 million plus people. Four of the five priority security challenges in the National Security Strategy are out here. It also includes natural and manmade disasters, negative impacts to climate change, rapid population growth, disease, and as – and, as we're all living, pandemics.

We are the Army's largest Army service component command, with about 52,000 personnel assigned, another 25,000 available, so a total of 77,000 on a given day. But that does not include the organizations that we get for our exercises. And this year, for the Army, Defender Pacific 21 is a large exercise for the United States Army, and we'll bring forces from Forces Command to come and participate out here west of the International Date Line and also on the West Coast of the United States. So the area of the U.S. Army Pacific starts on the West Coast of the United States all the way to the west coast of India, and from the North Pole to the – to the South Pole.

Our daily focus is on competition. We've got to be ready to respond in crisis and we've got to be prepared to win in conflict. And what doesn't change is the last 100 meters is still the most dangerous piece of ground on the face of the Earth in conflict, and so the focus of making sure that our forces are trained and ready to fight in that last hundred meters is absolutely critical and something that I focus on and think about every single day.

We are also – we also do provide for the Army some environmental training. We have the Army – the Northern Warfare Training Center in Alaska, which focuses on Arctic and mountaineering. And we also have the Jungle School here on Oahu. Good news on the – at the Jungle School here is we don't have any animals that will kill you. The bad news is when you go west of the International Date Line you will run into things that can kill you. And recently, last summer, we had some Thai soldiers here training. They were disappointed that there were no snakes on the island. I told them, please don't bring them here. The locals will not be happy with that. But we had a great training event with them in preparation for their Joint Readiness Training Center exercise.

And so with that, you know, we talk about Covid, but we've been able to continue to train in bubbles. We've been able to create bubbles. When the Covid lockdown, for lack of a better term, started a year ago, we were deployed west of the International Date Line, and we were able to stay in Thailand for a period of time to continue to train in that environment and bring our soldiers back with zero Covid-positive, demonstrating that we could do that. And we've built on that over the past year, allowing us to train.

But the challenges with – as we, the standing theater joint land force component command responsible for INDOPACOM's response to Covid in FEMA Region 9, our partners and allies have the same responsibilities in their countries. And so we've had to temper – or, our OPTEMPO's been tempered by the fact that they've got to focus on their citizens, much like we focus on our citizens. But we have been able to adapt to that and we have been able to continue to train.

And then lots of opportunities. I stated we have Defender Pacific 21 coming up, and the plan is to continue to create the bubbles – the training bubbles to operate. We'll work with the countries within the limitations of what they can handle given the requirements that they do have.

And with that, I'll pass back to you, Mark, and look forward to the discussion and questions.

Mr. Cancian:

Well, thank you very much, General.

Let me start with a top-level question, which is: What is the Army's role in a great-power conflict in the Indo-Pacific region? There's been a lot of discussion about that and maybe some controversy. And let me turn to General LaCamera, since he's out there, and give him the first word on this.

Gen. LaCamera: Well, you know, it's to be part of a joint, combined fight. To work with our partners and allies is the – is the top priority.

And then we, you know, provide over 51 percent of the, you know, logistics to the other services. You know, we are the largest ground force, so if there's a fight on land, you know, we'll be the ones participating in that. But as a joint, you know, with our Marine brothers and sisters as we move forward. You know, with long-range precision fires, you know, taking and holding – you know, us grabbing a piece of ground that then facilities, you know, operational maneuver with our operational fires, that sets the conditions for the Air Force and the – and the Navy, is part of that.

And then, you know, with all the different warfighting functions – whether it's intelligence, fires, protection – we're integrated into the air and missile defense – and command and control as we go forward.

So we have – we have a role that we play. We exercise it as often as possible. The commander INDOPACOM, Admiral Davidson, talks about the joint fight. So, you know, we've integrated our forces. We have the Multi-Domain Task Force that we're using out here. We used them last year in an exercise, in an Army exercise, and then we turned around and chopped them Pac Fleet and Admiral Aquilino used them in his – in his exercise.

So, again, as we work through operations, activities, and investments, and we experiment out here in the next fight, getting back to large-scale combat operations, I think we play a critical role to the success of operations out here.

Mr. Cancian: Well, thank you very much.

General McConville, let me give you the floor.

Gen. McConville: Thank you. Appreciate that.

And you know, when I – when I take a look at, you know, what's the Army's role in conflict, I want to roll it back to what's the Army's role in competition because we really don't want to get to great-power conflict. And you know, what we're providing in the Indo-Pacific is really what the combatant commander has asked and the – and the joint force has supported, is that – Security Force Assistance Brigades that can advise and assist our allies and partners and work very closely. And Paul and his team are doing a very good job of employing them.

We talked about the Multi-Domain Task Force, and that operates below the level of armed conflict. That brings long-range precision effects, intelligence capabilities, information operations capabilities, cyber, electronic warfare, and space. And it also has the capability to provide precision long-range fires as we develop those capabilities, and we're in the process of doing that, and the combatant commander has asked for that. We're certainly involved in the air and missile defense capability, the logistics support that they've asked for. We're using watercraft. We're not a navy, but we do have a watercraft capability that is in demand. And also, working very closely with our partners on how we protect the force.

And that's where the Joint All-Domain Command and Control system comes into play. We've added a C to that because we recognize the importance of our allies and partners. But the services, working together, tying sensors through some type of integrated battle command system with artificial intelligence, allows us to get the sensor to the – to the right shooter and then provide the lethal effects that I think ends up in deterrence. And so the role of the Army is certainly to be there for competition, to be there to help deescalate crises. And if we have to go to conflict, then what we provide is the ability to gain and hold ground for the duration of a campaign, to mass fires, to mass logistics, and protect and work very, very closely with the rest of the force.

Mr. Cancian: Well, thank you.

Let me ask, then, the follow-on question, which is, you know: What changes does the Army need to make in its structure and equipment to be more effective in great-power competition? Let me go to General McConville first.

Gen. McConville: Yeah, let me start with that.

You know, we've done a lot of experimentation to get after what we call our transformational developments that we're going. And so we've come out with our modernization priorities: long-range precision fires, the ability to penetrate an anti-access/area-denial capability, the ability to provide an anti-ship capability from land. And as we've done our experimentation and simulation, we've found this to be a valuable contribution to the joint force.

We recognize that we need to develop a next-generation combat vehicle, so we're doing that.

We've taken a look at our aircraft and we believe that we need more speed and more range, so we're developing those.

As far as the network, we've recognized, like the other services, the importance of being able to do machine-to-machine data passing and information passing so we can get to what we call convergence, which allows us to get to lethal effects in a matter of seconds vice a matter of

minutes. And we're doing a lot in the air and missile defense capability, recognizing unmanned aerial systems – swarms are going to be something we have to deal with.

And again, what we want to be able to do is provide the right shooter with the right sensor for the threat that we see from the air. So we're working very, very closely on that. And we're doing a lot in our – as far as our soldiers' lethality goes with new weapons systems and improved night systems.

But to us, it's not just about new technology. It's really focused on the soldier, and it's about a new way we're going to fight, which is our multi-domain operations doctrine. It's a new organization we talked about. We talked about the SFAB. We talked about the Multi-Domain Task Forces. We're talking about some information-capable organizations, how we train using augmented reality and virtual reality, synthetic training environment. And then most important is really the 21st-century talent-management system, getting the right person in the fight job at the right time.

And so that's all coming together, of how the Army is going to contribute to the future fight. You know that old adage about, you know, generals are always trying to win the last fight or fight the last fight better? Quite frankly, we're trying to work with the joint force and our allies and partners to make sure that we, you know, can deter the future conflict. And winning, to us, is really not to have to fight. But we have to have a credible capability to deter those who wish us harm.

Mr. Cancian: Thank you.

General LaCamera, is there anything you'd like to add?

Gen. LaCamera: Yeah. I would – what I would add on to the chief's comments is, you know, we're taking, you know, the lessons learned from the last, you know, 20 years of fighting in a different environment, boiling it down to the fundamentals, and then applying it to this environment. The chief talked about Security Force Assistance Brigade. And having used them in Iraq and Syria last year, you know, that was – they were used – they were used one way. But in this – in this environment, with our partners and allies, it's less of an advisory role and it's more of the interoperability role they're working with our partners and allies, who have the experience in the different – in different environments.

So we're taking, you know, what we're doing from the Army's perspective and we're adapting it to the – to the environment out here, which has, you know, the Arctic, which has, you know, mountains. It's got the jungle, which is something that we're getting back into, you know, from previous conflicts, et cetera, and that expertise, and learning from our partners and allies, and understanding how they're – how they operate in that. We're

taking the Multi-Domain Task Force and we're working with our partners and allies. It's several countries here. They're not going to create the now in the Multi-Domain Task Force, but they are – they understand the multidomain operations. The Japanese use the term “cross-domain operations.” But that's their version of them.

So working with them, working with the Australians and others on how they're adapting to the current environment and how we can, you know, be interoperable with the different partners and allies, which I think will be different with some – than some of the other ASCCs. I don't think it'll be a one-size-fit-all because the environment is different. And then making sure that we can work with the Navy, and the Marine Corps, and the Air Force out here and the interagency piece. So taking the Army concepts, adapting it to the environment here, to make sure that we can be successful and we're competing on a day-to-day basis.

You think the kill web – or the kill chain is really the kill web. This isn't about going after arrows. This is about going after the archer. And, you know, how do we position ourselves to be able to do that and be successful?

Mr. Cancian: Thank you.

Let me ask a question about the concept of operations in the Western Pacific and how that relates to the Marine Corps, because General Burger has articulated a version where the Marines will develop long-range fires, anti-ship, anti-ground, that they will create bubbles inside enemies' or adversaries' what they call weapon engagement zone. And that vision sounds somewhat similar to some of the things I've been hearing the Army articulate. And I was just wondering how the Army would distinguish what it proposes to do in the Western Pacific from what the Marine Corps is proposing to do. And let me start with General McConville.

Gen. McConville: Well, first of all, I think we have a great Marine Corps. We fought side-by-side, all of us, in Iraq and Afghanistan. And I think, you know, as I discuss with General Burger, what he's doing with the Marine Corps is an expeditionary force, maritime focused, that can operate very quickly and get to the places that they need to provide those type of effects. He is developing some long-range precision fires with those capabilities.

But as we take a look at what we're developing for the Army, these are – certainly can be used in the Pacific when we look at long-range precision fires. The systems we're developing are more along the lines of a campaign rather than quickly expeditionary type systems. And so I don't see us in competition with the Marine Corps. We got a great Marine Corps. They have roles and missions that are extremely important, as does the United States Army. And I think when I take a look at the size of the forces that we have, every single armed force member is absolutely key, along with our

allies and partners, in providing the deterrence that we need to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Mr. Cancian: Thank you.

General LaCamera.

Gen. LaCamera: Yeah. I would echo the chief's comments. I think what we also provide is the mass piece of that. I meet regularly with the MARFORPAC commander. We exercise regularly with them – Cobra Gold, Balikatan, and some of the other things that we're experimenting it, with Defender and Reforger this – or Forager this year. So I think we're – you know, whether they're there first, we come in behind them. That allows them to continue to move on.

It really is based on, you know, how do we work well within the concept, the design that the commander of INDOPACOM, how he's going to fight. And I think that's what the operations, activities, investments, the experimentation that we do out here. We can use the past as being – it can be instructive. But it's not a blueprint. And as they bring on capabilities, as we bring on capabilities, you know, we're experimenting together to make sure that we can not just compete but, in a crisis, respond, and win if we've got a fight.

Mr. Cancian: All right. Thank you. Let me ask about differences between a great-power competition, a great-power conflict, and regional conflicts. And out there in the Pacific you see that difference between China and North Korea, two threats to U.S. security but also very different threats. And some people have argued that all the services need to have different capabilities for those two kinds of adversaries. And I was wondering about the Army's perspective on what I call the regional versus the great-power adversary, and whether the requirements are different, and how much they overlap. And let me start with General McConville.

Gen. McConville: Well, what I think as I look around the world – and we can certainly look at North Korea, we can certainly look at the Indo-Pacific, and quite frankly we can look at the – around the rest of the world. And what I've seen, at least in my experience over 40 years, is we never quite get the threat right. We think we may do something, or we think we're going to do something, and we end up going somewhere else. So when I take a look at, at least from the Army's standpoint, is what we want to do is provide options – options for General LaCamera, options for the COCOM commander, Admiral Davidson. And then allow them to take what we're providing and integrate that into a joint plan.

But the thing we do know, at least as we've done our experimentation and simulation, speed matters, range matters, convergence matters. And probably one of the most important things, and to get us what we call decision dominance so we can provide lethal effects very, very quickly, and

as we look into the future, we see that giving us the overmatch that we're going to need, that hopefully will deter those who wish us harm. But if it doesn't, what we have seen if they have that capability we can defeat them, and defeat them soundly, if required to do so.

Mr. Cancian: Thank you.

General LaCamera.

Gen. LaCamera: Yeah. I guess I look at the – I brought that up earlier with, you know, the last hundred meters being the most dangerous piece of ground. So as we prepare the formation to be able to fight and survive and win in that, I think it's the same. I mean for potentially both. The terrain is obviously different or could be different. You do have megacities. So we've got to take that into account. Last fall I co-chaired a conference bringing in our partners and allies with the Philippine chief of Army, who's now their chief of defense, to talk about megacities and how we would fight in there, and how we would adapt to that piece.

So I think there's a lot – there's some similarities. I think at the operational and strategic level it changes a little bit. I think the levers that the Chinese have versus what the levers that the North Koreans have, when you think of the elements of national power, (E ?) being probably the most – you know, where they have the ability to impact a lot more people. So I think all of that gets tossed into it at the operational and strategic level. We'll have to work with the INDOPACOM commander on it. But at the tactical and operational level, I think the fights are – they're not exactly the same, but we do have to continue to focus on the basics and take the equipment that the Army, and the weapons that have been given us, and the other joint services that have, and apply it to that environment.

Mr. Cancian: Great. Thank you.

Let me ask one last question for General McConville. Then we'll – I'll turn to the questions that are coming in from the audience. And this is about the size of the Army, and whether there is a minimum size for the Army. General, you talked about how you would like to see at least regular Army at the sort of 500,000 level, if that were possible. But of course, resources are very constrained. The Commission on the Army set a size – a minimum size of 980,000 for the total Army. But back when we were looking at, well, sequestration and coming off of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, people were looking at a regular army of maybe 450,000 or 420,000. So I was wondering, is there a minimum size of the Army in peacetime, you know, that would allow it to meet all of the obligations it has both in wartime and in day-to-day operations?

Gen. McConville: Well, I think that the size of the Army should be determined by the strategy that, you know, the policymakers want to execute? And, you know, from

experience – and I’ve talked about it. I’ve had leaders that have sat in my seat recently that have said, you know, we need – and we certainly can show the analysis – an army that’s above 500, 540 – 540,000. There’s other people have taken a look and said that’s about the right size for the Army. The Army right now sits about 485,000. I can – you know, would like to grow it more.

I don’t think, as we don’t have a budget yet, but, you know, I’m taking a look at decisions that will have to be made. 485,000, a little over a million for the total force, is where the force sat on 9/11. And, you know, we had to grow the force to – on active duty – to 720,000 during the peak – 570,000 regular Army, 150,000 National Guard – to execute operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. So you get an idea of what we think, you know, the size could be or how quickly you’d have to grow the Army, depending on the plan.

So, you know, from where I sit, I think that about 485(,000) right now is probably what we can afford. We’ll have to see where the budget goes. And then again, what chiefs do is they’re going to take a look at the strategy, they’re going to take a look at the priorities. I’ve already said that, you know, we’re not going to send anyone into combat that’s not ready. So we – you know, we do have to spend money on readiness. And the force right now is very ready. A few years back we were not, during sequestration. So we feel good about where we are as readiness.

But I also believe strongly that we must transform the force now. We must modernize it. We must get the force ready for the next 40 years because our competitors are. And if we’re going to compete and deter, then we need to maintain the overmatch that we must have as part of the joint force.

Mr. Cancian: OK, thank you. And I will turn to questions that are coming in from the audience. And there are two that have come in about the Korean Peninsula. So one of them is about the Army’s plans to respond to the North Korean ongoing threat and the increasing threat that it poses for missiles and nuclear weapons. And then a related question came in regarding the exercises on the Korean Peninsula. You know, they had been curtailed under the Trump administration. And the question is whether those will be reinstated, and whether the Army needs to reinstitute them.

So General LaCamera.

Gen. LaCamera: Yeah. Those – I think those two questions really should go to General Abrams. I mean, my responsibility as the Army Service Component Command is to get him the – what he needs to be successful. So I think that’s a conversation between him and the INDOPACOM commander and the chairman on the assets that he needs. And it’s our responsibility to make sure that as we bring forces from CONUS that they are trained and ready to do that, and that the requirements that I have for responding are filled.

Mr. Cancian: OK, great.

Let me ask you a question that's come up in sort of several venues regarding lines of communication in the Pacific. You know, for the first time in maybe 70 years those lines of communication will potentially be threatened. We have a question here from George Barrett (sp), who's an Army civilian, about how the Army will meet the requirements to deploy Army forces when the ability and capability to lift forces by sea and air is limited and threatened. So let me – let me start with General McConville and then turn to General LaCamera.

Gen. McConville: Well, I think, you know, as we take a look at the future, I think all of the services are assuming that we're going to be contested in all domains, which is very, very different than right now. We're going to be contested certainly on the land, which we have in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also in the sea, also in the air, also in cyber, and also in space. And so what that comes down to is how we position the force. And calibrated force posture becomes very, very important, of where our forces are. And that's where this discussion goes. You know, where are you prepositioned forward? What equipment do you put forward? And how do you rotate forces through dynamic force employment so you have the right amount of forces in the right place at the right time? And that's the general philosophy for the United States Army. And Paul can talk, you know, maybe a little more specific about the actual region.

Mr. Cancian: General LaCamera.

Gen. LaCamera: Yeah. The – I think, you know, some of the strategic and operational, you know, we won't be able to take that for granted like we have in the past. I think our adversaries, you know, will have the ability to prevent it. And I think then that becomes a very deliberate operation to create – you know, we will – to create the window to be able to reinforce with forces, whether it's over, you know, the land, the sea, or the air.

So I think it'll be a lot more deliberate. There'll be portions that – you know, they can't control everything, so there'll be portions that will have, you know, freedom of movement. But I think then the operational maneuver or strategic maneuver, we'll have to set conditions to do that. And, you know, there's the potential impact of commercial and other, transportation, that'll have to be taken into account that will have to be protected as things move.

So I think it'll be a very different piece. And then when you look at, you know, the tyranny of distance, you know, the sail times and the flight times and what not – and you can't look at this area on a flat map. You've really got to look at it looking at a globe. And some places look a little closer on a globe. But again, when you're dealing out here, you are dealing with some great distances that will have to be protected.

So I think protection for that warfighting function will play a huge role as we go forward to be able to move capabilities between bubbles. So create, open a window, move the force, and then – and then close it. I'm not sure we will be able to keep it open, you know, 24/7 like we have in the past.

Mr. Cancian: Great. Thank you.

Another question has come in from Tony Capaccio in Bloomberg News, building on comments that General McConville just made regarding our allies. And the question is, how much of a political-military challenge will the Army in the Indo-Pacific have to convince allies to allow the U.S. to base Army units – for example, the Multi-Domain Task Forces and post-INF-range weapons – on their territory in the first island chain, such as Japan. So let me start with General McConville. Then we'll turn to –

Gen. McConville: I think, you know, this is – as you said, that's a political decision. You know, the administration will, I believe, lead with a policy, and that will be shaped by diplomacy between our countries and our allies and partners based on their national security interests. And then we will support with security. And again, that'll be one of those type things that each country is going to have to take a look at that and see what type capabilities they're willing to accept, and then, on our side, what we're willing to employ in support of that partnership.

So from where we sit, at least at the Army, is what we're doing is providing options which become dilemmas to our competitors. And the politics or the policy of where they're actually based and how they're based will be worked out through the policymakers and the diplomats.

Mr. Cancian: Thank you.

General LaCamera.

Gen. LaCamera: I agree with the chief. I mean, there – you know, we have some treaty allies out here and we'll work with them. But again, at the point of a conflict or incident, I think the diplomats and the policymakers will negotiate what it is and we'll be prepared to respond and adapt accordingly.

Mr. Cancian: OK, thank you.

We have a question from the Air Force, actually. This is from Orville Wright, president of the Air Force Association. That's a great name for the president of the Air Force Association. And the question is, does the Army's emphasis on deep strike and precision fires duplicate Air Force fighter and bomber capabilities? And does significant budget investment in new Army long-range deep strike fires actually create increased budget and employment risk for airmen who will be tasked to attack deep targets? And

this question has come up, I think, a number of times from Air Force commentators.

So I'll start with General McConville.

Gen. McConville: Yeah. I think, you know, when we take a look at long-range precision fires, you know, we don't see that in competition with the great job that the world's greatest air force does as far as striking targets deep. To me this is about providing options to a combatant commander, options from the land that gives them the capability to, in some ways, strategic – even deter with strategic counterfire or suppress air defense or, you know, strike, you know, ground targets through a different method, and, quite frankly, not necessarily putting pilots at risk.

But my experience has been when you provide multiple options, which provides – which causes the adversary to deal with multiple dilemmas, you have a much better chance of protecting the force and achieving your objectives than having one organization go alone.

Mr. Cancian: OK, great.

Is there anything you'd like to add there, General LaCamera?

Gen. LaCamera: I think this is about providing multiple dilemmas to our adversaries and – even though there's inherent risk in the business, and that's why we train with each other. That's why it's important to train in our joint training centers and to work together so that we can bring that risk down.

Mr. Cancian: Great. Thanks.

We have a question on equipping that, you know, maybe builds on something we've talked a little about before about aligning Army capabilities with new threats. This comes from Steve Dalzell at RAND Corporation. And his question is, beyond generally meeting the next generation of combat vehicles and aircraft, are there specific considerations to make these systems appropriate for the likely battlefields in the Pacific? He notes that the M-1 was great for open plains and deserts. But does the Army need vehicles more suited for urban operations, jungles, islands, that sort of thing?

So let me turn to General McConville here.

Gen. McConville: You talked about vehicles and aircraft. And, you know, I became a believer of armored vehicles in Iraq, having spent a lot of time in air assault and lighter type units in training. But actually going into an urban environment like Sadr City or going into Fallujah or going into Najaf, you quickly learn the value of having some type of armament capability, which, you know, we certainly want to take a look at the weight of certain vehicles.

But what we feel right now is the future in ground combat is the next-generation combat vehicle, which can get our troops to the decisive point. And we believe we're going to have to do that even with the technology. There's always going to be a role, most always, that we're going to have to put soldiers or Marines on the ground. And we want to give them the best capability to do that.

And then, as far as on the aircraft side of the house, especially as we look at the ranges that we see in the Pacific, we believe that the future vertical lift aircraft that we are looking at are going to provide us range and speed that's going to give us the capability, not only in that area, but any place else that we operate where there's long ranges that we need to accomplish the mission.

So we take a look at the next-generation combat vehicle replacing the Bradley and the future vertical lift providing us unique capabilities that we need in the future.

Mr. Cancian: OK, let me give General LaCamera a moment here, although I realize this is mostly a Washington issue, but if there's anything that you would like to add.

Gen. LaCamera: I would just say that I think it's our responsibility to help inform those decisions and talk about the environment and experiment and provide that feedback back to the chief.

Mr. Cancian: Great. Thanks.

We have a question on technology and networking, particularly in the Pacific because of its large size. This comes from Jackson Barnett, FedScoop. And the question is, what technology are you developing to maintain connectivity and convergence over the great distances in the Pacific theater? And are you working with Space Command for satellite connectivity?

So let me start again with General McConville.

Gen. McConville: Yeah, we recognize the importance of connectivity. And as you mentioned, there's multiple ways of doing that. Space is certainly absolutely critical to everything we do. I think the Army, you know, we're certainly one of the biggest users of space, because most of our systems have something, whether it's global-positioning satellite, it's long-range radios, it's early warning for some of our systems, it comes from space. So we are a big user of space.

And one of the things that Paul talked about, though, is the idea of webs. We recognize, you know, as we build these systems, they have to be resilient.

And we assume that they're going to be attacked and they're going to try to be defeated. So it's got to be a very resilient web. And we see multiple ways of doing that. We use a term called PACE, Primary, Alternate, Contingency, and Emergency. As we build our systems, we are putting those in place.

Mr. Cancian: Great. Thank you.

General LaCamera, again, this is a – tends to be a Washington issue, but let me give you a chance to weigh in.

Gen. LaCamera: No, I – you know, we've got to look at, you know, the communications architecture that exists out here. Again, you know, 4 billion people live out here. There is some infrastructure. What can we, you know, use to our advantage? And, you know, we look at the different spectrums that are out there. And, you know, how can we operate? Is it different, you know, when you're transmitting over water? And to your point, we are working with the other – the functional combatant commands on how we can go forward.

Again, different environment; we've got to provide that feedback. But I think the infrastructure that's out here, we've got to understand what can we use to our advantage over.

Mr. Cancian: Great. Thank you.

We have a question about Multi-Domain Task Forces. And both of you have talked about those already. The question is about whether the Army will be establishing a second MDTF in the Pacific, and then what you're thinking about in terms of basing. Would it be more appropriate to get one in a host nation? And what are the challenges for standing up the MDTF? And I think maybe more generally, how do you see that concept playing out?

And we'll start with General McConville.

Gen. McConville: Yeah, as we build the Multi-Domain Task Forces, one of the things that we're kind of informing is, it is a task force. And each area – we're taking a look at least building two for the Indo-Pacific. We're looking at building one for Europe. As far as positioning, again, we're going to wait for the policymakers to decide where's the best place to put them. But they will be deployable, and even by parts. So some parts of the organization, as General LaCamera has said, have already been deployed. They're working. We're in a campaign of learning, trying to get this right.

You know, from where we sit, what we want to provide the commander in the field is the capability for long-range precision effects, especially operating in the competition phase, and also to deter the conflict phase is the ability, as we develop – and we're in the process of rapidly developing long-range precision fires capability that can tie in that – but we also see the capability at, again, task force, of – that they can have air-missile defense.

They can have attack aviation if required. So – and they'll probably have some type of security force, depending on where they're going.

So what we're doing right now – and General LaCamera can talk more about that – is building an organization, and we're not waiting to get it right before we start employing it. We're getting good feedback from the commander in the field and what they want us to do as we develop this organization moving forward.

Mr. Cancian: Great. And I should note that that question came in from Jen Judson at Defense News.

General LaCamera, is there anything you would like to add?

Gen. LaCamera: Yeah. As the chief stated, you know, we're not waiting for it to be fully operational. We're experimenting with it out here and providing feedback and making the modifications.

I think, to me, when I talk to – when I look at what they're doing and when I talk to my fellow component commanders and inform back to the Army, to me, I see two things here – the Multi-Domain Task Force, which is the noun, and the multi-domain operations I stated that as we work with some of our partners and allies. You know, that's kind of the verb, and I think we, as an organization, have to start thinking of the multi-domain – you know, of all the domains and, again, how do we get after the archer and not just focusing on the arrows, and thinking in all the domains and making sure that we understand the capabilities and limitations of our joint partners and then also our coalition partners, going forward.

And all that kind of gets put together, and as we get the Multi-Domain Task Force, employ that and its unique capabilities, but also make sure that the commanders, the other commanders, are thinking multi-domain operations.

Mr. Cancian: Great. Thank you.

Let me ask about the Arctic, and we don't really often think about the Arctic in connection with the Indo-Pacific, but the Army has significant capabilities in its command out there and the training capabilities up in Alaska. So I was going to turn to General LaCamera and just ask about the Army in the Pacific and the Arctic, and I would note that CSIS has a project going on here reflecting increasing interest and concerns about what's going on up in the Arctic. So, General?

Gen. LaCamera: Yes, we have the same concerns and interests, and I've got great support from the chief in the Army on an Arctic strategy. We've got two brigades that are up there right now, and as we experiment in our ability to not just

survive in that environment but be able to fight and win. So and then, again, working with our partners and allies who have similar environments.

But as the polar ice caps melt, I mean, we just saw this recently with the Suez Canal being bottled up there with one ship, I mean, you know, when those – when those sea lanes open up that'll save, I think, 19 sail days from Asia to Western Europe.

So I think it's a – you know, from an economic standpoint from the resources that exist up there, you know, our ability to protect our interests, you know, rest in our ability to fight and, again, protect our interests. So the two brigades up there are not just the two brigades, but the Army as a whole are focusing on the equipment needed, the training, tactics, techniques, and procedures to be able to fight and not just survive in that environment.

Mr. Cancian: Let me ask a quick follow-up on that about changes that you've seen over the last number of years that indicate increasing interest and capabilities in the Arctic. You know, those capabilities, I think, deteriorated/declined during the post-Cold War era as the threats of the era declined. But then concerns have, you know, increased and I think our capabilities up there increased, and I was just wondering if you could talk about some of the changes that have occurred.

Gen. LaCamera: Yes. You know, when we started or restarted this journey, I mean, we brought in, you know, we called them, you know, affectionately, the gray beards, to sit down and talk about, you know, what it was like in the – you know, in the past and, obviously, with changes in equipment and things like that.

But we've also noticed, you know, others, you know, and their interests up there and, again, our ability to be able to compete and – but that's kind of, you know, been driving what we're looking at.

But, again, taking advantage of, you know, the previous lessons learned, adapting it to the technological changes that have occurred and then giving it to the soldiers on the ground and, quite frankly, working with our joint partners who also are looking at their capabilities in that – in that region.

Mr. Cancian: Great. Thanks.

Let me shift a little to talk about the pandemic, which has dominated our lives for the last year. CSIS has produced a report about the military and the pandemic, and made the point that there was an initial stutter step on – by all the services – pausing basic training, for example, until new procedures were put into effect.

But then all of the services were able to commence transfers, personnel transfers, training, and deployments so that we were able to maintain our overseas commitments. And I was wondering about, from the perspective of the Army leadership and looking at the Indo-Pacific, you know, how that happened and whether you see that there may still be some residual readiness concerns as a result of the pandemic that will need to be made up when we're all vaccinated and life gets back to something like normal.

And let me start with General McConville.

Gen. McConville: Well, as you said, Mark, you know, I mean, the pandemic affected everyone and – but as I've said before is, you know, the Army can't telecommute to combat or to, really, the Indo-Pacific theater. So we had to kind of figure that out. And, you know, we stopped recruiting for a while, and the way the Army works is we have to bring in 130,000 – about 130,000 soldiers for the total force every single year. So they have to get recruited. They have to get trained.

We have worldwide commitments around the world and so that means families are going overseas and all this is done in a Covid environment, which is very, very challenging. Our units that are going over to critical missions go through a combat training center. Again, we paused with that.

But I think very proud of how the force put the proper measures and controls in place, all the things, you know, from wearing the masks we have right here to the separation, washing hands, and then taking – you know, testing and now with the vaccinations getting after that.

So I think the force has done a very good job of maintaining their readiness, because as I look at around the Army the readiness of our brigades is very good right now. You know, when we take a look at, historically, where we have come from, the readiness is very good and that's been on the backs of very dedicated soldiers working through the fog and friction.

Now, some of the exercises – and I'll let Paul talk about that – some of the things we had to, you know, curtail or maybe lessen the amount. But it's almost like, you know, operating in a contaminated environment. You know, one thing about, you know, the Army and all the services is you got to fight the fight you have. So if you're contested on the sea, you got to – you got to – you know, you got to accommodate that and work your way through it. If you're contested in the air, you got to accommodate that. If you're contested by this thing called Covid, you need to adapt and then work your way through it, and I think the force has done a good job of that.

Paul?

Gen. LaCamera: Yeah. Thanks, Chief.

As I stated in my opening remarks, I mean, we were, you know, west of the international date line when the – you know, quote, “the lockdowns” started to occur and we kept a brigade forward for a period of time, and I think, quite frankly, when it became more of a burden to the – to the host nation was really the tipping point to bring them – to bring them back. And we have continued to do the joint readiness trainings.

I think what’s added to the training is the restriction of movement or the isolation piece before we could put them – you know, bring them all together. So your previous question about the Arctic training, you know, in a ten-man tent in, you know, subzero weather, you know, there’s not a lot of, you know, ventilation. And so making sure that those soldiers were tested and were clean before and then – and then did it. So it really extended the training but really forced us to do – to focus on the basics.

Are we where we need to be if we had, you know, full contact every single day? No. But I’m extremely impressed with how the soldiers reacted, and to include the fact, as I stated, you know, our support to FEMA Region 9 but also back, you know, in CONUS where soldiers or medics especially, medical personnel and engineers, reacted to building makeshift hospitals and pulling out, you know, PPE that we had – personal protective equipment that we had in storage. A great success.

General Abrams and his force inside of U.S. Forces Korea on the Peninsula where they’ve been able to maintain the fight tonight while dealing with the host nation, you know, restrictions, for lack of a better term, or constraints, and we’ve been able to continue to – you know, to do the permanent change of station.

But that adds time to what we’re doing and, again, really, you know, forces us to focus on the basics. We’ve been able to – we’ve done a lot of things virtually. I have not been able to travel as much, but I’ve been able to meet with my partners and allies virtually and keep that dialogue up.

But at the lower level, you can’t do that. So our soldiers have to go in a restriction of movement. We deploy them overseas, and we have to trust our partners and allies that they’re doing the same, that they’re testing. And they are. They’ve taken it seriously and we’ve been successful.

So it’s been impressive to watch. Some things have been – have been curtailed because of higher priority missions for the host nation and for ourselves. But for the most part, we’ve adapted and been able to maintain our readiness.

Mr. Cancian:

Great. Well, let me ask just one last question here, which is about the Indo part of the Indo-Pacific. We have a question that’s come in from the Economic Times, and the question is, what role do you expect India to play, and I think maybe more relevant here is, you know, what role is the United

States playing with India in terms of exercises, in terms of military coordination? The Indians, of course, are, you know, famously independent and jealous of their sovereignty. But there's been increased connection. So let me give General LaCamera the last word here regarding India.

Gen. LaCamera: We just finished UDABAS (ph), and a great exercise, and the soldiers, you know, bonded. As stated, you know, we protected them going in and they were able to conduct training and I've met several times with my counterpart and on developing a way ahead to continue to work and develop that relationship, and it's moving – it's very positive.

Mr. Cancian: Great. Well, I think we've come to the end of our hour. I want to thank both of our guests for joining us and giving us their thoughts. You've given us a lot to think about. Unfortunately, we're unable to get through all of our questions. So that'll provide more material for a future engagement.

Thank you very much on behalf of CSIS.

(END)