

MAY: I'm Cliff May, Founder and President of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. We appreciate you joining us for another FDD event. As you may know, FDD is a research institute, exclusively focused on national security and foreign policy. We are non-partisan and accept no funds from foreign governments – never have, never will. We host many events through the year, all of which are available at FDD.org. Today, we are honored to be joined by the U.S. Army Chief of Staff General James C. McConville, who recently returned from the Indo-Pacific – and there is much to discuss.

Spurred by an increasingly daunting challenge from China and the People's Liberation Army, the United States military is undertaking its most significant transformation and modernization effort in decades. Each of the services is revamping operational concepts, organizations, networks, capabilities, exercises, and training regimens. The goal is to get U.S. combatant commanders what they need to compete, deter aggression, and prevail in combat if necessary. The stakes are nothing short of the success of America's service members on future battlefields as well as the security of the American people, our allies, and our interests. Yet, this modernization effort is taking place in the context of an essentially flat defense budget that may not improve anytime soon. During this period of change and uncertainty, there is an important debate regarding the optimal roles for each of the services and how finite resources should be allocated among them. Decision makers in both the executive branch and in Congress will have to set priorities and make tough choices.

Today, we're pleased to have General McConville with us to help inform this important debate. He will be interviewed by my colleague Bradley Bowman, Senior Director of FDD's Center on Military and Political Power, where he focuses on U.S. defense policy and strategy. He has tremendous experience as a former long-time Senate staffer, Army officer and assistant professor at West Point. Thank you again for joining us today. Brad, I'll turn the floor over to you to introduce General McConville, and begin the discussion.

BOWMAN: Thank you, Cliff. I want to thank everyone watching. I hope you and your families are safe and well. I especially want to thank General McConville for joining me for this discussion.

General James C. McConville is the 40th Chief of Staff of the United States Army. He has commanded at every level, including as the Commanding General of the historic 101st Airborne Division Air Assault. He spent a good portion of his long career abroad in dangerous places, defending Americans and our interests. That includes for example, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In addition to those operational commands and deployments, he also served as the Army Vice Chief of Staff, Army G-1 and Chief of Legislative Liaison. I suspect each of those positions helped prepare him for what he's doing today. I would also note that General McConville is a senior Army aviator qualified in the AH-64 Delta Longbow Apache helicopter and a number of other rotary wing aircraft. And he's a native of Quincy, Massachusetts. He has three children serving in the military, which is quite an impressive legacy of service.

General, welcome. It's good to see you again, if only virtually. Thank you for making time to join me for this discussion.

MCCONVILLE: Thanks Brad. It's great to be here with you today.

BOWMAN: I appreciate it. Before we jump into our discussion, which I'm excited to do, if I may, just allow me to make a few comments to kind of set the scene for the audience.

China is widely, increasingly, and inappropriately, from my perspective, recognized as a, or, the preeminent national security challenge for the United States. Much of this competition with the People's Republic of China – or the PRC – will continue to occur outside the military sphere requiring a comprehensive strategy from the United States that goes well beyond the Department of Defense and employs in a coordinated fashion all the tools of international power.

For that reason, I was glad to see the Department of State's policy planning staff issue a robust paper last week on the elements of the China challenge. But even the policy planning staff's paper recognized the Chinese Communist Party is, "Developing a world-class military to rival and eventually surpass the U.S. military."

Accordingly, as its second recommendation, this paper from the Department of State, they emphasize, "The United States must maintain the world's most powerful, agile and technologically sophisticated military." That is exactly what the Department of Defense is trying to do.

The policy planning paper also emphasized that the competition with China is, and will be, global in nature. While this is true, we can expect much of the military competition with the PRC to, of course, play out in the Indo-Pacific.

That is what brings us to today's topic. The role of the U.S. Army in the Pacific, when it comes to Great Power Competition, particularly with China. Due to the vast distances dominated by the maritime domain, the roles of the Navy and Air Force in the Indo-Pacific are widely understood. The important current and future role of the Army in the Indo-Pacific may be less well understood.

I hope today's conversation will add some insight on this topic. The ultimate goal, in my view, is determining what mixture of U.S. military capabilities and capacities are required, regardless of what service provides them in order to deter and, if necessary, defeat aggression from the PRC or others.

So, we have a little less than an hour, and with that scene setter that I hope is helpful, let's get started. General, you're just back from a trip to the Indo-Pacific. If you don't mind, where did you go? Why did you choose to go to those countries? And what are some of your key takeaways?

MCCONVILLE: Yeah, the two major countries that we visited was Indonesia and Korea. This is my fourth trip to the Indo-Pacific since I became Chief. I've been to Thailand, I've been to Japan, I've been to Singapore. I had an opportunity to go out there in Thailand and meet with most of the chiefs from Vietnam and from many of the countries up there.

The reason we went to Indonesia and we went to Korea is because of the importance of allies and partners in the region. Indonesia is a country that we're beginning to develop a relationship that we think is very, very important. They recently attended one of our joint readiness training center rotations with us. We have the capability to work very close and train together with them.

And as many know, we've had a long-term, iron-clad alliance with the Republic of Korea and their armies. That was an opportunity to meet with their senior leaders and continue to work the partnership and alliance.

BOWMAN: That's great. When many Americans think of U.S. soldiers serving abroad in recent years, for obvious reasons, many think of them serving in places like Iraq or Afghanistan, but some may not be fully aware of how many U.S. soldiers are already serving in the Indo-Pacific. Can you give just a general overview of the Army's current posture and activities and the Indo-Pacific?

MCCONVILLE: Sure. We have about 90,000 to 100,000 soldiers that are committed, either in countries forward or in places like Alaska or Joint Base Lewis–McChord, that are in Hawaii, that are in Guam, that are supporting operations in our presence in the Indo-Pacific.

So, there is a fairly significant portion of the Army that is committed to this region. And we think it's a very, very important commitment. We provide capabilities that the combatant commander needs, and we are there as necessary to provide the support that they need.

BOWMAN: Many Americans wonder why U.S. forces need to be stationed abroad, right? You know, why can't we have most, or all the U.S. Army at Fort Hood or Fort Bliss or Fort Bragg? Why does the United States need to have its soldiers forward-stationed in general? But also, what, from your perspective, based, in part, on all your travels, what is the value of having U.S. forces, particularly Army forces, stationed forwarded in the Indo-Pacific?

MCCONVILLE: Well, first of all, I think by having forces forwarded, it shows our commitment. It reinsures our partners that we're there with them. It also gives us a chance to improve their capabilities, their capacities. We work very closely together with our allies and partners.

We talk about Great Power Competition. From where I sit, we cannot have great power conflict. And the way you do that, in my eyes, it's about peace through strength. And so, we must have a strong military, but more importantly, our allies and partners need to have a strong military. Together, I believe that we can keep the situation in a stable and secure manner, which is what all our partners want. They recognize the need that they are going to trade and have economic interactions with China. They have to. It's really important for them. We certainly understand that. But they want to maintain the stability. They want a free and open Indo-Pacific. They appreciate the world order where everyone has a choice, and that's what they'd like to see continue.

BOWMAN: That's great. As you know, from decades of service, far better than me, by going abroad, we make Americans more safe at home. We deter conflict that we don't want to happen, because we have a forward presence that makes potential adversaries think twice. And while we're there doing that, we're helping to train them and make them more effective, ultimately reducing the burden on us. So that makes sense to me.

You mentioned China. What are you hearing from allies and partners, with respect to China? I'm not wanting you to divulge any private conversations, but generally speaking, what are you hearing from allies and partners on China?

MCCONVILLE: I kind of mentioned before, most of our allies and partners have very strong trade relationships with China. They're very dependent on them for their economic growth. What they would like is, they don't want to have to choose. They don't want to have to choose. On the other hand, they want to have the freedoms they enjoy. They want a free and open Indo-Pacific, and they want to make sure that people aren't encroaching on their areas. Things like fishing and some of the other things that are going on in the area. They do have some concerns about that.

BOWMAN: Yeah. As you recently highlighted in your speech at the AUSA Conference, the Army is undertaking the most significant transformation, I think you've said so, and it seems right to me, in about 40 years, four decades. This includes dramatic changes to doctrine, organization, training, and equipment.

You've conveyed a sense of urgency when you've talked about it. I sense a real sense of urgency in your comments. You've emphasized that, "The time is now," for this transformation. Why do you believe Army transformation is so necessary and what makes it so urgent?

MCCONVILLE: Well, as we look around the world, our competitors are really modernizing their armies, and they are competing with us with their armies.

I think, as we come out of what I would call irregular warfare, counterterrorism and a counterinsurgency-focused Army, has been using, really, the doctrine and the equipment that we developed 40 years ago. The time is now to transform the Army, so we're in a much better position to compete. Therefore, we can deter any type of conflict that may come about.

BOWMAN: I saw from my perch in the Senate, because the Army was so busy doing important things and resources were finite, all the services had to continually postpone modernization. And as we were postponing modernization, many of our great power rivals were actively pursuing modernization programs in an attempt to leapfrog us. And so, I actually quite agree with your sense of urgency. I'm so glad to see the progress the Army and others are making, in which we'll talk more about in a second.

You said just a moment ago, and you've said in speeches elsewhere, that great power competition does not necessarily have to mean great power conflict. Obviously, no one wants a war between U.S. and Russia--something we tried to avoid during the Cold War. No one wants a war between U.S. and China. That would be horrible and catastrophic.

If we compete effectively, we can protect our interests, we can deter aggression and prevent those very kinds of wars we're talking about. General, what is the unique role of the Army? It seems to me; the Army has a comparative advantage here in competing before a full-scale conflict emerges. How would those activities help the U.S. if a conflict did become avoidable? Talk to me about that kind of pre-full-scale conflict stage and what the Army does in that space?

MCCONVILLE: Yeah. I think we're really taking a hard look at what we do in the competition phase. It starts with working with our allies and partners and give them an opportunity to go to our schools. What I find in the relationship, when I go out into the Pacific and I've met with most of the chiefs of staffs. The chiefs of staff that have gone to our Command General Staff College, the chiefs have gone to our War College, the officers up there that have attended international military education and training, have a whole different vision of what the United States is all about.

They respect our values, they respect our democracy. We work very, very well with them. They want to give that experience to their junior officers and NCOs. The Chief of Staff of the Army of Indonesia went to Norwich. Has a master's degree from Harvard and has got a PhD from George Washington.

BOWMAN: That helps.

MCCONVILLE: So, he is very understanding of what America is all about. So, we want them to go to our schools. You know, we don't sell weapons systems, but it's good when they use our weapons systems because there's interoperability. And many are finding, when they bought systems from other competitors, they don't have access to parts. They don't have the things they needed. Quite frankly, some of the quality is not very good.

We've stood up new units. The Security Force Assistance Brigades. What they do is they work very closely with the conventional forces in our allies and partner countries, and they increased their capabilities. They're very good at building conventional forces, teaching them how to do logistics, teaching them how to professionalize their armies. Those forces are very much in demand. We run a lot of exercises. We run exercises in the Pacific. We also bring them to our combat training centers, so they get to see how to professionally train a force. Even in Indonesia, the Indonesian Chief of Staff is very interested in building a combat training center, because he sees the gains that we make by training in our combat training centers.

Then as we start to look at the multi-domain operations that, in competition, the ability to deter with new organizations, a multi-domain task force that can provide long-range precision effects and long-range precision fires gives us the capability to maybe deter some of our competitors before we get to a crisis or before we get to a conflict.

The other thing, as far as the calibrated force posture that we like to talk about, there's some things we want to keep forward, because that deters. We know if we have equipment forward, we can get there quickly. If we have forces there, they're already there. We don't have to worry about getting them there and all those play into the deterrence and competition concept that we have.

BOWMAN: No, that's excellent. At the end there, you made the comment, "And getting there quickly." By having things, particularly equipment, right there already, then we can flow people in if they're not already there more quickly....I did an event a while back with the TRANSCOM Commander. He emphasized how every node that we have, if we have to transport units and equipment and people across large distances, those are opportunities for our adversaries to do all domain attacks on us, including the cyber domain. That seems to be another reason why, in some cases, we would want to have troops forward. You also mentioned quickly SFABs, Security Force Assistance Brigades. People like you and I, focused on these things for a living, will know. For the audience these are – and help me get this right if I get it wrong General, but these are specific brigades designed to do exactly what you're talking about. The Army is focusing, as it should, on Great Power Competition, and potentially combat, but you also have these special brigades carved out, mostly in the active duty, some in the reserve, I believe one in the reserve component, that is doing just that, building partner capacity. The existence of those SFABs, those Security Force Assistance Brigades seems to be a unique asset that the Army brings to exactly what you're talking about, that pre-combat competition phase.

MCCONVILLE: No, I think they are. It's amazing we just set up our fifth Security Force Assistance Brigade in the active Army, at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. That SFAB has focused on Indo-Pacific. It's already out there. All countries out there want them to work with their forces. What they have is people go, "Are these special forces?" No. They're not special forces. What they are is they're very experienced leaders, former company commanders, former battalion commanders, former brigade commanders, who have already successfully accomplished the job that they're advising and assisting in. You get a very professional force, that's going into a country and has the ability to improve their overall capabilities and capacities very, very quickly.

BOWMAN: That's excellent. If you take the SFABs and you combine that with the state partnership programs, for example, where you have state guards who are linked up with specific countries, and you add to that the robust menu of exercises you're doing, it starts to paint a picture of this pre-combat phase where the Army is playing. It seems to me – I'm obviously a little biased – a pretty decisive role.

General, the Army and the Department of Defense more broadly, again, as you know better than me, are developing a joint war fighting doctrine. We're in this great dynamic period, perhaps overdue, where we're, as I said earlier,

transforming everything. Moving from the competition to, heaven forbid, a combat phase. If deterrence fails, and this is really one of the heart of the things I was most eager to talk with you about. What do you see in the future as the unique war fighting role and comparative advantage of the U.S. Army in a potential conflict in the Pacific, heaven forbid, with for example, the People's Liberation Army?

MCCONVILLE: Yeah, well initially some of the systems that we're developing, we're going to fight as a joint team. A lot of people in Washington, D.C., there's always a lot of competition for resources. But when we go into conflict and we go into competition, we're fighting as a team. What we want to do is provide the capabilities that the combatant commander needs to win. Because really, at the end of the day, winning matters and it is about winning.

When we start to look at the capabilities that we're developing, long-range precision fires, the ability to penetrate and anti-access area denial capability like we've never seen before. If you look at what the other services are being challenged with, many of our competitors have put in place what we're terming an anti-access area denial capability. We use an acronym A2/AD. It's a robust, integrated air defense. It has a robust anti-ship capability. This can cause challenges for our maritime and air forces. What we have the capability to do is help them out. We have the ability to penetrate those with long-range precision fires.

We'll very shortly have the capability to sink ships. We can help them establish our own anti-access area denial capability. We can do strategic counter fires at long ranges, which is very helpful. We can provide fires. We also have – one of the biggest concepts we're working together with the Air Force/Navy, we call it a Project Convergence. But what it really does is bring in the sensors from the joint forces together, and then using artificial intelligence is getting it to the right arrow in the quiver and using the right weapon system to respond.

We just did a major test out in Yuma. We're getting fire effects in seconds from when it used to take many minutes. We find in the future speed is going to matter. The Army has these types of capabilities, and multi-domain task force, security force assistance brigade. We certainly bring a lot of air and missile defense, and we bring a lot of logistics in hand.

All this is going to be challenging because what we're going to have to really train ourselves on, over the last 19, 20 years, we've been in combat. But we really haven't been contested in the sea and we really have to contest in the air. We've been able to move our equipment relatively freely around the world into a port. We almost have to go back to World War II to get an idea what it's like to be contested in the sea.

We're going to be contested in the air. There's integrated air and missile defense systems that we're all going to have to deal with, where in Afghanistan and Iraq, the air and missile defense was really very limited. It really was not what we would expect. We're going to have to deal with that.

The other thing that as far as for the Army is, we're going to have to protect our forces from air and missiles, we haven't really had to do that for a long time. I checked the history. I think it was April 15th, 1953, the last time we lost a soldier to enemy air. So, it just shows how well our air forces are doing. But in the future, we're going to have to protect them. We're developing those systems right now. We're bringing mobile short-range air defense back into our organizations. We're very concerned about the proliferation of unmanned aerial systems and lethal unmanned-aerial systems. We even see violent extremist organizations having them. We're certainly going to see them in the next fight. All of these things have come in together and we're going to have to work in all domains together to be – to win the next fight.

BOWMAN: No, thank you for that. I want to, in a moment, delve into maybe two or three specifics. You've talked about capabilities, which is excellent. In a moment I'd love to talk about two or three specific systems that you're particularly optimistic or encouraged about that would be helpful to the joint fight in the Indo-Pacific.

But before I do that, you mentioned a little bit of history there, which I find incredibly valuable. As you look at history and as you're leading this effort to transform the Army, are there any other major historical lessons or anecdotes that you look at to help inform what kind of Army you think we're going to need in the Indo-Pacific?

MCCONVILLE: Yeah. Well, I look back to World War II. Some people have told me, "Hey, there's no mission for the Army in the Pacific." And I go, "Wait a minute. I think we had 20 divisions during World War II. At least what I saw that was a fairly significant amount – it took a lot to do that.

I mean a lot of people could say a lot of things. But at the end of the day, you're going to put soldiers on the ground. You're going to have to do that. That's when you show the commitment. Any place of importance, you have competitors or your adversaries are going to try to take – you're going to have to protect them with some type of ground force. You're going to have to protect your air. You're going to protect all those type things. You're going to put people on the ground if you want to be decisive.

BOWMAN: One of the historical examples I often look back on it as, and again, you probably are more familiar with the details than I am, but Task Force Smith in Korea, when we failed to provide our service members and units the training equipment that they needed. We put fellow Americans in harm's way, not prepared to do what we asked them to do. That, to me, is the sad thing that can happen when we don't get this right.

MCCONVILLE: Yeah. Well we all hope for peace, but we have to be ready for war in the military. I was just in Korea right now. It's amazing, when you take a look at South Korea, how well developed that place is and the quality of life that they enjoy. But right across the DMZ, there is a potential threat there. We learned that many years ago with Task Force Smith. We had the same discussion talking about the importance of maintaining our militaries, our armies at a high state of readiness. Because that's what prevents wars from happening. And if you don't, you'll end up in a war. That's always hard to explain to people. They can't think of the unthinkable, but that doesn't mean it won't happen. We got a lot of history showing that when the Army wasn't ready, that's when we had the biggest problem. Then we almost – we go back to World War II, Kasserine Pass, we can go to Task Force Smith. We can work our way through the history. When we were not ready, we tended to lose the first battle.

BOWMAN: What an important cautionary tale. General, I have some questions from reporters that, with your permission, I'd like to weave in as we go along here. It strikes me as now would be a good time for a question from Tom Bowman, from the *NPR*, *National Public Radio*. He'd like to know, in light of everything you said, I think, up to this point, I'm interjecting it obviously, whether you anticipate the need to deploy more soldiers. You talked about how many are already there. In light of the kind of capabilities you've talked generally about, do you anticipate in the next few years deploying more U.S. soldiers into the Indo-Pacific?

MCCONVILLE: I don't think more. I think what we're going to see is the quality of the deployments, very focused on working close with our allies and partners out there. What we can see is, we want to increase their capacity and capabilities. We want them to invest in their defense. We can help them do that. Again, it's the sum of all the parts that gets us the strength we need to maintain the peace up there. We feel that with the exercises we're running, the deployments to the Security Force Assistance Brigades, Special Forces and our National Guard soldiers are working out

there. It all comes together to create a much more capable military and our partners and then together we have a much stronger deterrence up there.

BOWMAN: So, I'd like to drill down, as I said a minute ago, into some of the more specific weapon system or programmatic level details, if you're willing. So, in the context of the Army, as I know, six modernization priorities, are there a few, one, two or three, specific research, development, test, and evaluation programs that from your perspective show particular promise and could be, or will be, particularly important in joint fight in the Indo-Pacific? Are there one or two that you look toward? And let me just quickly add this, Paul McCleary at *Breaking Defense*, another reporter question, is wondering if you might be willing to elaborate on any Army efforts to develop, and you mentioned this a moment ago, shore-based fires that could actually target, Army shore-based fires that could actually target enemy vessels?

MCCONVILLE: Yeah. Well, first of all the number one priority is long range precision fires, and that is moving along. We're very, very happy with those. Those who know the acquisition system usually are talking decades, not years.

BOWMAN: Right. Unfortunately, right.

MCCONVILLE: With hypersonics we had a very, very successful test. We just did it. We're going to do another one next summer. We're anticipating having a first battery set to go in FY23, which is extremely fast. We are developing a mid-range capability based on the SM categories of Navy and also their Tomahawks, this could be land-based so that's where we're going to get that mid ranged capability. We have a precision strike missile capability that we're developing also. So, all three of our, what we would consider long range fires, ranging from 500 kilometers to 2,500 nautical miles, are all developing very quickly. And we're looking at having them in the force in really the next three years, so that's coming across very nicely and they will fit in well in a deterrence mode in the Pacific because they're part of the joint force.

We take a look at future vertical lift. We're flying, which is really pretty amazing, two different companies are flying aircraft for our future long-range assault aircraft, our future attack reconnaissance aircraft and the speeds they move in will allow us to operate in the Pacific between islands like we've never done before and that's going to give us some great capability.

We're bringing together our Integrated Air-Missile Defense Battle Command System; all this is getting to bring in sensors and shooters together. That's going to make us much more efficient and effective in any type of air or missile attack that we may receive from an adversary, we'll be in a much better position to protect ourselves. So those are it, but we also have a lot of other systems that come along very nicely.

BOWMAN: Right. And I'm glad you mentioned, as you went through some of those, when those would potentially be fielded, because I think sometimes there's an impression in the think tank community or some of the folks looking at the Pentagon that a lot of this is like out there, right?

MCCONVILLE: Yeah, decades.

BOWMAN: We're so used to, like you said, these things taking 10 plus years sadly. And the threat is just too serious and moving at such a quick pace, as you know better, we can't do that anymore. And so, to me as just a patriotic American it's heartening to see a lot of these programs coming to fruition because of people like Brigadier General John Rafferty who is doing such a great job at long range precision fires, and so that's very exciting.

So here I have a question from Sydney Freedberg at *Breaking Defense* and this really gets to one of the more sensitive areas, but I think important, and I'll just read it directly from Sydney and here's his question, "Is the Army going to fundamentally play a supporting role in the Pacific Great Power Competition Conflict with the Navy and Air Force in the lead? In particular, as the Army develops long range, precision fires and air and missile defense systems," some of what you just talked about, "Will that let the U.S. create its own anti-access area denial bubbles around friendly islands? Is the service seeking an equal role to the Navy and Air Force in long range strike and air and missile defense or a supporting role? And are these efforts complimentary or competitive and redundant?" That's the question from Sydney Freedberg at *Breaking Defense*.

MCCONVILLE: I think we talked about, between the services, what we want to do is bring options to the combatant commander. So, we're going to have long-range precision fires, if we can help penetrate for the Air Force and that allows them to get in and do what they need to do, it's very similar to what then Lieutenant Colonel Cody did at the opening of Desert Storm. He did what we would call a penetration mission with his Apaches, I would not recommend that today, but at the time they were able to get up there and take out two defense sites and that allowed the air war to take off.

So, the way I look at it there's going to be times when we're supporting them, they're supporting us. Historically we're always looked at, at least from the Army standpoint, again, perspective is perspective, is that we would be supported maybe by air or we would be supported maybe by Naval forces for the decisive mission, but I can easily see where our role is to support and especially initially.

So, what we're doing is developing the capabilities we think we need for this future fight. We're not trying to fight the last fight better, we're trying to win the next fight, preferably deter the next fight. And so, the long-range precision fires, a lot of things we can do with them and if they enable maritime or Air Force maneuver, that's fine, but we're still going to have to secure things. You're still going to have to put troops on the ground. No one likes to think about this, but history tells us that if you want to win you have to put soldiers and Marines on the ground and hold that ground. And so, what we're doing is we're giving them all the capabilities that they need that's transformational so they're more lethal, they're more capable, and we're in a position really to deter because the cost to those who wish us harm will be so great.

BOWMAN: That's great. I'm among those who think that we need a larger Navy and that's obviously going to require a lot of money. We've got to modernize our Triad, all these very, very important things. But one of the priorities of the National Defense Strategy is increased lethality. And if we can add that kind of strike capability you're talking about, that lethality, perhaps along the first island chain, make it mobile, then that would relieve, potentially, some of the pressure on some of the Navy's vessels to do other things and it might provide the same or similar capability, potentially at a lower cost, that seems to me one consideration possibly. I don't know if you disagree or agree with anything I said there.

MCCONVILLE: I do. Actually, the way I look at it it's not a binary solution, either this or that. I think what you want to do is have multiple options. So, if you're looking at it from where we sit, if you have land-based fires, you've got subs, you've got carriers, you've got air, you've got all these different things that the enemy sees as dilemmas. So, if he goes after the ships we get them this way.

BOWMAN: Right.

MCCONVILLE: If they go after this, you go after – Multiple problem sets that they have to deal with and that gives the combatant commander multiple options. He doesn't become a one option leader. So, if we can't get the carriers through he has no other options. He's got multiple. If he can't get air through or he can't get the Army through, or there's something that limits our capabilities, or if we can't get to this one island because they won't give us access. All these things come together. So, the best forces are the ones that have multiple options that you can use depending on the situation.

BOWMAN: We want to complicate the job of their military planners as much as possible and present them as many vectors that they would have to deal with so as to dissuade them from undertaking the aggression in the first place. So, going back to what you said about some of these specific programs, and I have to ask this, some people roll their eyes when they hear this question because we hear it so much in Washington, D.C. and the beltway, but just having spent the time in the Senate, it's something that I feel strongly about, and I want to give you a chance to respond to it. In order to ensure that we deliver these capabilities to our war fighters that you're talking about, how important, this is what they call softball, but I want to ask, how important is timely, sufficient, and predictable funding from Congress, and I think I know what you're going to say, but maybe more importantly for people who don't track these issues daily, what are the consequences? What are the specific consequences for our readiness, our security, and our soldiers if you don't receive that timely, sufficient, predictable funding?

MCCONVILLE: Yeah. Just imagine trying to run a home and not have a budget, just think about it. You don't know how much money you're going to have, you don't know how much to spend, and when you get it, you get it late. And you know better, you worked in the Senate and spent a little time on the legislation, but what happens is, you can't start new things. So, we're often criticized for how slow we are in getting systems into place. So now we're accelerating and we're moving very, very quickly. In order to field the systems such as hypersonics in three years there's no room to wait. You've got to get everything moving.

And if we don't have the appropriations, and we're on a continuing resolution, well, then we can't go ahead and purchase the things that we need to do, we can't start new projects, we can't increase production of our projects. It slows everything down because people don't want to spend money they're not sure they're going to have, and it's very, very inefficient in the long run and even sometimes in the short runs it hurts our soldiers and it hurts our families, because even things like housing and stuff like that you can't fix it. And so, it's extremely inefficient, it's very ineffective, and as you said, we'll go over there and we'll show, we do it every year, or just about every year why we need timely, adequate and sufficient funding and predictable.

We put up predictable because again, if you were working – maybe for some folks that have a budget, if you don't know how much money you going to have it's hard to make purchases that you need to do. You just don't. You just slow it down and you're afraid to spend money, then you race at the end to try to catch up. And that's also very inefficient.

BOWMAN: So in this moment where we're talking about transitioning from research, development, test, and evaluation programs to programs of record that we're fielding to the force to help to deter great power combat, at that moment, this is a critical window of two to five years, it seems to me, where if we get this right, if we maintain funding levels where they need to be and we get it on time, the United States and our allies could enjoy benefits for decades to come but, if we mess this up and delay things or, heaven forbid, cut some of these vital programs, it seems to me the consequences could be lasting and not good.

MCCONVILLE: I think you've got it exactly right. I'm really concerned, and you heard me talking about, we need to transform the Army right now. I feel as the Chief of Staff, if I don't get this done over the rest of my term, two and a half years, we have let our soldiers down for the future. 40 years ago, someone had the vision, the chiefs had the vision to go ahead and bring the big five onboard.

BOWMAN: Yeah.

MCCONVILLE: We've used those, we've incrementally improved them, but we have an obligation to put in place the right doctrine, the right organizations, the right training centers, the right weapon systems, really to take us over the next 40 years when we are going to have Great Power Competition. So, we have to do it.

BOWMAN: You mentioned the big five, just for the listeners who may not be tracking that, these are the kind of five big systems, Black Hawks and M-1 Abrams and these key systems that were conceived of in the '70s and '80s and fielded in the '80s, roughly speaking, and that people are still using today in dangerous places. So, we can expect that the very programs that you and your team are working on now, our children and maybe our grandchildren are going to be utilizing so we have got to get this right.

General, another question from a reporter, Bryan Bender, a little redundant, but it has a slightly different twist on it. Bryan Bender from *Politico* wants to get your response to what he calls it, "developing line of argument," and again, I'm not trying to set up a food fight because we're all Americans, it's one team first, but I am seeing this myself, the idea that with the anticipated flat budgets and growing threats in Indo-Pacific, the Army will have to do less. So, the Navy and the Air Force can close the gap in Indo-Pacific, a theater which calls largely for naval and air forces.

You've responded a little bit. Let me just tag onto that to add a new wrinkle to this because you've covered some of this already. One of the key pay-fors that seems to be out there as idea that we can cut Army end-strength, to some degree, to pay for other priorities. Let me just go right at it. How big of an Army do you think our nation needs, General?

MCCONVILLE: Well, I think we've done studies, we've done testimony. I said about active duty, probably about 540,000 to 550,000. We're not going to get that. I can tell you right now, quite frankly. We don't have the resources right now, and we've been very well-resourced. So, if we want to modernize and keep the Army ready, then the end-strength will not grow to that level.

That doesn't mean we don't need it. It means the OPTEMPO on our troops is a lot higher, but again, people are going to talk about cutting end-strength, or flattening end-strength, I think that what we can afford and what we probably need, acceptable with a certain amount of risk, is high 400,000s. 490,000, 495,000, we could probably live with that and do what we need to do, if we have the right forces in place and we're very efficient and effective. I think as we start to come below those numbers, we accept a risk that I would not recommend as Chief Staff of the Army.

BOWMAN: Well, that's very helpful. Thank you for that. So, one of the –

MCCONVILLE: Can I just say something? Just since we're talking end-strength. People say we don't need a big Army. And I say, "Okay, I agree with you there. We don't have a big Army." The Army I came into active duty was 780,000. During the peak of Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army on active duty, that was Guard and Reserve, was 720,000 soldiers. And we were doing 15-month tours because we didn't have enough soldiers. That was just for a regional fight. This was not

Great Power Competition. This wasn't a great fight. So, we just need to put that in perspective of what it would take if we ever went to a great power conflict with the end-strength that's needed.

BOWMAN: I'm glad you added that in again, as you know well, it takes time to build units and to build a Sergeant First Class and to build a Major, right? These are not things you can turn on and off overnight, to state the obvious, but it's an important reminder. And one of the great answers that I often hear through the years to people like me who ask questions, what kind of Army do we need is, well, what do you want the Army to do? And, what missions are you asking your Army to accomplish?

One of the ways I measure myself, the proper coordination strategies, coordination ends and means is whether we have that mix right between what we're asking the Army to do, and whether we have the sufficient Army to do it is the deploy to dwell ratio or the BOG: Dwell ratio.

In other words, you know this well, but for the listeners, how much time does an individual soldier or unit spend at home versus deployed? And my data is a bit old. I'm confident you have more current data. But when I was looking into this issue earlier this year, there were key parts of the Army, Army aviation, which you know well, air defenders, Special Forces and others who were struggling, if I remember correctly to be at a 1 to 1.5 ratio, even down some near a one-to-one ratio.

And for the listeners, understand what I'm saying, I'm saying you're home for a year. You're deployed for a year, or home for nine months. Something like that, or you're lucky if you get 18 months. These are patriotic people who want to serve the country. They want to be out doing things to defend our country, but just imagine what that does to an individual, to a marriage, to a family, if you're gone that long, not to mention the time, as you know well, General, you need when at home to train. So, would you be willing to provide just kind of an update on what current deploy to dwell ratios are and how, if you have a cut to say 470,000 active duty soldiers, what does that do potentially to deploy to dwell ratio?

MCCONVILLE: Yeah, I think as you said it, you got it about right. Almost all the units are sitting somewhere at 1.5, 1.8. What that means, I'll give example. One of my sons, he was in a division. He came in there and what you don't see is the training. So, they have to go to the field, they train a bunch, then they go through a combat training center, which is usually 30 or 40 days. Then they're deployed to Afghanistan for nine months. That was a good deployment. They come back and they get ready to go into another training cycle when they train a bunch. Then he went over to Europe and did a 10-month rotation there.

So, he was in that division about 36 months. And again, not home that much. And so, we're trying to reduce that OPTEMPO on our troops. So, you'd have to reduce the mission or you have to increase the amount of troops. As people talk about end-strength, there's not a lot of talk about increasing end-strength. At least, you may have heard a different story, but I haven't heard a whole lot of people arguing over in Congress that the Army must have increased end-strength. I might've missed that, but –

BOWMAN: ... In our remaining time, General, I have a few more reporter questions here, if I can. One of them is from Jen Judson at *Defense News*, and this is kind of the elephant in the room that we haven't talked about, the COVID-19 pandemic. She'd like to whether the Army is thinking that you'll have to scale back the Defender Pacific exercise next year due to the Coronavirus.

MCCONVILLE: Yeah, we don't know yet. We're hoping, and I know hope is not a method, but with the vaccine that we're seeing. And again, we're starting to see very, very positive feedback on at least two vaccines. We have General Gus Perna, who is the Head of Logistics for Operation Warp Speed. So, we're hoping that that comes to fruition. And what we'll do is we plan on executing the exercise, we're doing some fairly significant tests around that with the convergence. We're going to do a big hypersonics test, so there's going to be a lot of things that are going to be associated with that Defender series. And we plan on going forward with it. But again, we'll do the same thing that happened with Defender 20. We're an agile organization. If it's not safe, it's not safe for our troops, we can't mitigate the risks, then we'll take the appropriate actions to do that.

BOWMAN: That's great. Jen Judson at *Defense News* also is wondering if you might be willing to provide an update on how the Army or how you're thinking about Army Prepositioned Stocks in the Indo-Pacific. Obviously, that's classified, a lot of it, but are there any unclassified details that you can share about how you're thinking about APS and how it might need to change in the future?

MCCONVILLE: Yeah, I think when you think about – we have a term, we call calibrated force posture, just like you mentioned earlier, is places that we want to have our equipment forward. We have equipment on ships. We have equipment in certain countries. And what becomes important is to have some type of access and presence so we can bring troops in there very quickly. Of course, the country has to be willing to do that. And we are working with various countries in the region to have those types of discussions, but really don't want to go into further which countries are actually –

BOWMAN: Understood, understood. Just the importance of having the right equipment in those prepositioned stocks, and that it's well maintained and ready to go, like you implied earlier.

A question related to Korea, you were just in South Korea. There's some news that our Apache unit there has been restricted in some of the training that it can conduct. I don't believe – has that been resolved, and do you have any concerns that if this kind of continues over the long-term, the ability of our Apache crews in South Korea to do the training they need to do?

MCCONVILLE: Yeah. We had a discussion. I think I won't get specifically into the Apache crews, but it's just the discussion about the importance of no more Task Force Smiths. And the way you do that is that our Apaches, our tanks, our Bradleys, all those systems we have over there, they have to train regularly, or you're not going to get the benefit from that. And I think that's very, very important. We had those types of discussions, always ongoing.

But again, if you're a civilian in a lot of places you, I don't like the noise. I don't, this stuff bothers me. I try to understand that, but at the same time, I remember I was in Romania and our Stryker were conducting an exercise. You'd go through a village. And one of the villages complained about some of the dust the Strykers kicked up, and she called the local police man and police station.

And they said, "Well, would you prefer American dust or Russian dust?" She says, "Oh, no. I'm fine with that." So, I mean, there is sometimes a price for freedom. We want to be good neighbors when we're doing training, but it's really important that our troops train so they're really ready for the big game. No professional football team would go into a game without practicing, or if they do, they wouldn't be very, very good. And that's really what our training is all about. It's about practicing, it's like a professional football team or any type of team getting the repetition. So, when the real big game, the Super Bowl comes up, they're ready to play.

BOWMAN: Well said. The South Koreans are such great allies and partners, and we've stood shoulder to shoulder for so long. We also know from top defectors from North Korea that one of the primary reasons North Korea has not invaded South Korea has been the presence of U.S. forces. So, when I was a Black Hawk pilot years ago and we'd get the phone call about noise complaints from the neighbors every now and then, they'd call complaining about the 'sounds of freedom' a little bit.

MCCONVILLE: I mean, we do want to mitigate, we're working very closely.

BOWMAN: Absolutely. Want to be sensitive to those concerns.

MCCONVILLE: For some folks, they just don't realize. I understand their perspective, same thing with helicopters. If they're over your house and it's not, we need to be careful about that.

BOWMAN: Sounds good. That makes sense. Well, General, I think we're about out of time. So, I want to sincerely thank you for your decades of service to our country and your current leadership of the Army. I've really enjoyed this conversation. I think it's been substantive and informative. I hope the audience agrees.

On behalf of myself and the whole team at FDD and our Center on Military and Political Power, thank you. Please thank all the great soldiers that you lead for what they continue to do to keep us safe during these extraordinary times. I really appreciate it. Thank you again.

MCCONVILLE: Thank you. It was great being with you.

BOWMAN: Thank you. And for our audience, this concludes our discussion. Thanks for watching. For more on FDD's Center on Military and Political Power and our China Program, please visit us at FDD.org.