

Commentary

Editor: Dustin Perry dustin.perry@bliss.army.mil

Troop Talk



"In this week's Troop Talk I want to share with you comments from the Secretary of the Army and the Army Chief of Staff about the accomplishments of our Army over the past year. The success we have had on all fronts can be directly attributed to our men and women in uniform and the family and community support from the homefront."

As the new year begins, it is fitting to reflect on the Army's significant accomplishments in 2005, thank senior Army leaders for their vital contributions, and look forward to an important 2006.

In Iraq, our Soldiers, as part of a joint team, enabled that country to continue to progress politically, militarily and economically. Successful elections were held in January for the Transitional National Assembly; in October for the referendum on the constitution; and Dec. 15 for the election of a permanent government. Each of these milestones reflects the Iraqi people's growing optimism about the future. Almost 11 million Iraqis voted in the most recent election.

Progress continues on other fronts as well. In March of last year, there were about 140,000 trained and equipped Iraqi Security Forces; today, there are 212,000 – a 50 percent increase in just the past eight months. Of the 112 trained and equipped battalions, a full one-third are capable of conducting operations independently. Less well known, but equally important, is the progress made in improving the lives of the Iraqi people: Great strides have been made in electricity and water production; 6.75 million Iraqis now have access to clean potable water versus the pre-war level of 5.5 million. In March 2003, there were about 400,000 cars in Iraq; today, there are 1.6 million. There are now 3 million cell phone users versus the pre-war level of 100,000. Among its many accomplishments to date, the Army's Project Contracting Office has completed or is in the process of completing more than 3,500 projects in the areas of water, electricity, oil, education, health, transportation, communications, security and justice. Of note, the PCO has completed four primary health care centers with another 138 that are underway; 784 of 800 schools which will provide classrooms for more than 300,000 students; and over 90 miles of roads.

In the ongoing debate about Iraq, some have recently said the Army is severely stretched. A few have even described it as "broken." These

comments are not true. To be sure, the Army is facing great challenges, but the more accurate description is a full-spectrum force that remains the preeminent land power in the world today. From highly successful combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, to maintaining worldwide security commitments - all while we simultaneously transform the force – today's Army is the most capable, best trained, best equipped and most experienced force our nation has ever fielded. It is also more ready, more lethal, more flexible and better protected.

Especially noteworthy is the contribution of the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve. Last year reaffirmed that we truly are an 'Army of One.' Thousands of Army Guardsman and Reservists rotated in and out of Iraq and Afghanistan. The 42nd Infantry Division completed the first deployment of a Guard divisional headquarters since the Korean War. Our efforts to win the Global War on Terrorism would not be possible without the commitment and dedication of our Citizen-Soldiers. Simply put, the Army could not perform full spectrum operations without the Army Guard and Reserve's tremendous contribution.

With mobilized Guardsman and Reservists, this is the largest force we've fielded in a decade with 616,000 Soldiers currently serving on active duty. Most importantly, the Army has more capability today than it did just a few years ago. Our actions to create more deployable units, to stabilize Soldiers and families, to attain the right mix of units and skills between the active and reserve component, and to increase the size of the warfighting Army are doing much to significantly increase overall capability. The Army's ability to surge more than 50,000 National Guard and active-duty Soldiers to the Gulf Coast in just over a week for hurricanes Katrina and Rita to quickly respond to disasters in Asia, Pakistan and Guatemala, while fighting the global war on terrorism, are only the most recent evidence of an increasingly capable force.

The Army made much headway in 2005 in the execution of its fundamental responsibilities of organizing, training, equipping and sustaining the force. Under transformation, the Army continued to build a force that is more powerful, more flexible, more rapidly deployable, and inherently more joint and expeditionary. We activated four new Modular Brigade Combat Teams in 2005 and with the activations in 2004, we now have seven new BCTs. We also made great progress in the transformation of existing brigades. We now

have 37 new or existing combat and sustainment brigades that have completed transformation or are well into the process of modular conversion. Furthermore, we initiated a plan to increase the size of the Operational Army from its current level of 315,000 to 355,000 by FY08. We realigned more than 30,000 of approximately 125,000 planned skill structure changes between the active and Reserve components. We also implemented life-cycle management for nine BCTs. Each of these efforts is also doing much to reduce personnel stress on the force.

In the area of modernization, we made great strides. The entire Army budget for FY05, composed of the president's base budget and the supplemental, totaled \$160 billion. This was a marked increase more than FY04's total budget of \$140 billion. In FY05, Congress appropriated \$2.9 billion for the Future Combat Systems Program. The Army also received \$10.1 billion for other RDT&E, \$5 billion for the Army Modular Force Initiative, and \$3.2 billion to fully reset over 9,000 pieces of equipment and more than 850 aircraft at the depot level. In April we established the Future Combat Force Strategy that formally links the Future Combat System Program to the Modular Force. This year eighteen of the FCS critical technologies are at technology readiness level 6 or higher - meaning a model or prototype has been field tested in a relevant environment. The Army remains totally committed to fielding this essential component of Army modernization to close the almost four decade gap in the modernization of our ground forces.

In 2005, we also initiated a comprehensive Army-wide Business Transformation to free up additional financial resources for the operational Army. This initiative is centered on re-engineering business processes by taking work out of our system through the application of the lean/six sigma methodology. Business Transformation extends the same mindset of Force Transformation to the Institutional Army to ensure its ability to provide the people, training, resources, quality of life, and infrastructure that are critical to the Army's continued success.

In the area of Force Protection, the Army has fielded more than 9,600 new Level 1, factory-built up-armored HMMWVs to Iraq and Afghanistan since 2003 – 4,400 of them in the last year alone. There are now more than 39,000 up-armored tactical wheeled vehicles in the CENTCOM AOR. We also made significant progress in countering improvised explosive devices. Through the Joint IED Defeat Task Force, more than \$1.2 million of counter-IED solutions were provided to Iraq and Afghanistan this year. This has enabled U.S. forces to locate or render safe 30 to 40 percent of all IEDs before detonation. We crossed a major milestone with the 500,000th Soldier being equipped under the Rapid Fielding Initiative. RFI has equipped an average of 23,000 Soldiers per month with the best individual equipment available and will reach the end-state of 873,000 equipped Soldiers by the end of FY07.

The Army also made significant progress in taking care of our most precious asset – our

★ OPERATION ELUSIVE CONCEPT ★



BY CHRIS ASHBY - WWW.ELUSIVE-CONCEPT.COM

See TROOP TALK, Page 7

The Monitor is an unofficial publication authorized by AR360-1 and printed each Thursday in the interest of the Fort Bliss and El Paso, Texas communities.

The Monitor is published by the Commanding General of Fort Bliss through The Laven Group, LLC, 1420 Geronimo, Bldg. E, El Paso, Tx. 79925 (915) 772-0934, fax: 772-1594 sflav@whc.net, www.lavenpublishing.com.

The contents of The Monitor are not necessarily the views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, The Department of Defense, the U.S. Army, or The Laven Group, LLC.

The appearance of advertising in The Monitor does not constitute endorsement of the products or services advertised. Any article or service advertised in The Monitor will be made available for purchase, use or patronage without regard to any non-merit factor of consumers. If a violation or rejection of this equal opportunity policy by an advertiser is confirmed, advertising from that source will be discontinued until the violation is corrected.

The Monitor has a circulation of 18,000 copies. Editorial content is prepared, edited and provided by the Public Affairs Office of Fort Bliss, Bldg. 15, (915) 568-4088, fax (915) 568-3749.

Items submitted for publication in The Monitor should be sent to The Monitor, Fort Bliss, Texas 79916, by noon on Friday before issue. All submissions become Army property and should be typed, double-spaced with the author's name, signature, and mailing address. Photos should have information attached describing photo and have photographer's full name. The editor reserves the right to reject or edit all submissions or advertising that do not conform to The Monitor's journalistic standards. All photos are U.S. Army unless otherwise designated.

The Monitor's classified ad page is a free service reserved for active duty personnel, military retirees, military family members and DAC's only. Because there is no fee, the only advertisements permitted to be published on this page are ads that cannot be considered commercial ventures. Ads must be written on the standard form published from time to time, or located at Bldg. 15. As classified ads are personal in nature, The Monitor cannot publish ads received through "Shotgun" mail or by fax.

The Monitor is a registered trademark in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office issued Jan. 12, 1988, #1472244.

Publisher/Commanding General	Brig. Gen. Robert P. Lennox
Public Affairs Officer	Jean Offutt
Managing Editor	Jim Gonzales
Editor	Dustin Perry
Homefront Editor	Virginia Reza
Photography Editor	Wilson A. Rivera
Off Duty Editor	Catrina Francis
32nd AAMDC	Maj. Randy Taylor
	Master Sgt. Steve Miller
	Pvt. Rachael Estes
11th ADA Bde.	Spc. Mark Miranda
	Pfc. Jessika Greendeer
108th ADA Bde.	Spc. Jason Stadel
4th BCT, 1st Cav	Staff Sgt. Brian Sipp
	Spc. Paula Taylor
WBAMC	Clarence Davis III
USASMA	Sgt. Maj. Lisa Hunter
JTF-North	Armando Carrasco

Submit articles to monitor@bliss.army.mil.