

TRANSCRIPT

Defense Writers Group

A Project of the Center for Media & Security
New York and Washington, D.C.

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October 26, 2016

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General Lengyel: -- may not have been entitled to, there were some indications of fraud. So this goes back essentially for us, it came to light about 2008 when actually there was a changeover of the individual who was in charge of the California Incentives Program. And the new person had come into the program and realized that hey, some of this is not looking right to us. We have to look at it. So this individual brought it to light and said you're right, we need to do an investigation.

The ensuing investigation found that there was indeed something amiss with the disbursement of [inaudible], the incentive program. Some of it was reenlistment bonuses, some of it was school loan repayment programs, other incentives that keep people inside the National Guard.

We found out that particularly related to this particular individual that was in charge of the program, she talked about 13,000 or so contracts or cases that involved the money. And so we did an audit. They said hey, we have to look at these programs. And oh by the way, let's not just look at California, let's look at this across the country. And when they looked at the rest of the country they found some errors, some erroneous contracts that were let, which we occasionally do. And basically they were corrected. But they weren't nearly as pervasive as in the state of California.

So in the state of California today what you're seeing is of these 13,000 or so, I'm giving you rough numbers here from California, contracts, they're broken down into basically four bins of contracts I would say. About 1100 of these have been looked at and evaluated. Yeah, these contracts were given to people who were not entitled to them. Whether or not the member knew it or not is still up for debate.

There were 4,000 of these contracts that were looked at and said they're fine, everything meets standards and these people should not be considered to have to reimburse the money. There were about 5300 or so of the contracts where something was wrong with the actual file. They didn't have the proper documentation. You know, not necessarily anything was, that a crime or malfeasance was committed in them, but they needed data to make the actual award of the bonus in accordance with the regulations. So some of these are fixable. If they needed a copy of a contract, or a copy of a high school diploma or a copy of some commitment that they can find or fix or redo, then they can fix those and they can be fine.

And then there was the last group which was about 3200 of kind of these people who we really, we couldn't find them, they're out of the service, they're out of the military, and those still are yet to be adjudicated, and they could be in any one of those other three bins that I talked to you about.

So at the end of the day what we want to make sure is that so far about 2,000 of those people have been told that hey, they're going to levy a debt on you because they've looked at this, and they have an opportunity and a process to go and try and get the debt, either fix the record. That's one way to do it. Get an exception to policy, that's another way to do it. Get the debt waived, that's another way to do it. Or finally, just have to repay the debt.

The process for each one of those steps takes a while to do because it's a long process, the California Guard. Once it's determined that the money was not awarded in accordance with regulations, the California Guard can't waive that. They can't go back and say we're not going to require you to do this.

So what we're trying to do here is trying to present the Secretary of Defense with some options to speed up the process and the review of these records. Obviously what our concern is, is most of these people frankly I think were not intentionally or took the money with any wrong intent. They were told they could take this money. They were told they were entitled to the money. They took the money. They reenlisted. They did whatever they thought they were doing and they went about their business and were given bad debts. So our goal is to try and go back and find out the story in a rapid way in each one of these things and adjudicate it to the best of our degree to protect the members if we can do it.

I think it's an ongoing process. We've been working hard with OSD, with the California National Guard, with General Counsel to find legal ways to quickly get in and adjudicate these remaining cases, to do it and give people an opportunity to make sure that they're not inappropriately fined.

We do think it's important that we look at each case. I mean it's the policy that when people are wrongly given money, the government generally goes and gets it back. And so, and it has in many other instances, in many other cases before when they do that. So we owe it to all the people who have taken bonuses or had bonuses incorrectly before

and had to pay it back, to go back and look at all of these cases and make sure that we're treating people fairly and that's kind of where we are on that right now.

DWG: Are there any blanket rules that apply here? Or does each case have to be weighed on its own individual merits?

General Lengyel: I think you have to look at all of the cases. We're still going through the process of hey, you know, is it possible for us to streamline this stuff and make assumptions like for instance if there's 100 records or they're missing high school diplomas. Are we allowed to go in and say well let's, that really has no bearing here on this fact. The person must have had a high school diploma because they got in the National Guard and here we go. So that's a technicality by which its members shouldn't be levied a bonus. But I think the only blanket rule is to do the right thing. I think the tie would go to the soldier, the runner, you know, as we do it. If their hands were clean and they were just soldiers doing their duties and doing their jobs, it is not our intent to try and enforce this hardship on them ten years later.

I know the fact that it was ten years ago, it seems like that was a long time, and a lot of these bonuses were awarded ten years ago. But the audits weren't done, really, to uncover this and discover this until about 2012 when they started. And then the California National Guard had to go back and look at each one of these individual cases and say what's wrong with these records. And that took years. It's taken a period of years to really go back and look at the debt.

DWG: Did you seek wholesale relief from Congress several years ago as has been reported?

General Lengyel: Did we seek it?

DWG: Did anybody? There was the notion that this was being dealt with and you guys were being [inaudible].

General Lengyel: I'm not, the National Guard Bureau did not ask for wholesale relief.

DWG: Do you know if anybody did?

General Lengyel: I do not.

DWG: We'll probably have more on this later.

I wanted to begin with a more strategical question which is you're still relatively new in this position.

General Lengyel: Yes.

DWG: And once upon a time when dinosaurs roamed the earth people joined the National Guard to serve two weeks a year and a weekend a month. Obviously that hasn't been true in a long time. It's regarded as a very operational force today.

As you look around your command and how it integrates with the rest of the Defense Department, what does it mean to you to be an operational force, and how well integrated is the National Guard right now?

General Lengyel: I think we're very well integrated and increasingly so more a part of the operational force. I'll tell you what the operational force means to me.

I think about the National Guard, all of it in basically three broad periods of time, okay? The first period was the militia period where we really, it as rather done, whatever that may be, come to the sound of the guns and you would go there. We weren't regulated and we didn't train to federal standards. That was 1636 to about 1903. After the Spanish-American War.

Then we became federally regulated with the Dick Act, the Militia Act. They said we're going to give you federal dollars to train to federal standards, okay? And that was in 1903. And I'd say that period came up to 9/11. All right? And we were considered essentially a strategic reserve which meant we're going to have plenty of time to give you warning to come assist the military and augment the military in time of war. We'll mobilize you with plenty of time to train and be ready, and then we'll send you off. We had older equipment and we were kind of kept at a much lower state of readiness, and it was not the operational force we are today.

What the operational force today means is that we are expected to and we will continuously have a part of rotational deployments in whatever happens to be going on around the world as part of the Army and the Air Force. And really, you can go back on the Air Force side which is about when I got in the National Guard from the active component, about 1991. The first Gulf War. The Air Force has been deployed in combat every day since 1991. Somewhere. Flying Iraq no-fly zones, Bosnia, whatever place that was. And I lived that transformation in the Air National Guard starting really in 1991. We were demanded to be a deployable, rotational, usable force. Our leadership was expected to go, and we were part of and remain part of today every mission set that the Air Force is in.

And on the Army side, we deployed in the first Gulf War in smaller numbers than the second. We came back from that. But the transition I think really happened in 9/11. In 9/11 the National Guard has been part of the operational force deployed on a rotational basis continuously since then.

At the height of the war in 2005 for us, we had 100,000 National Guard soldiers deployed in Iraq. There were 15 combat brigades. Eight of them were National Guard. And so on top of that in 2005 you had Hurricane Katrina which added another 50,000 folks.

So the operational capacity, forces that are trained and ready to deploy at any given time is much larger and it's a greater expectation that we're going to go.

Our equipment's better, our readiness is better. The personnel, training and medical readiness is as good as it's ever been. It's as good as the active component forces.

So that's what the operational force means to me is that we have forces that are ready to go every year, a portion of our force. One period deployed, five periods home, four periods home, depending on how you do the math. And that's what we need. We need predictability such that our employers, our business model is dependent on the preponderance of our force receiving their compensation from somebody else.

So I can't spring it on the member. I can't spring it on the employer. I have to give them something that is predictable that our members can react to and train to; that our employers can endure because they're still in the business of making a profit. So that's what the operational force means to me. You think about the three missions of the National Guard, what makes us different is the first thing we do is be ready for the warfight. That's what we do.

So when we're in dwell from that we do our second mission which is prepare for the homeland or take care of the homeland mission which is anything from augment in time of war to respond in hurricanes or any other national disaster that might be out there. We just saw Hurricane Matthew a couple of weeks ago. Nine thousand or so National Guard soldiers were out doing their duty.

And the third thing is partnership. So it's warfight, homeland, partnerships. That's the three things that we predominantly do.

And the homeland response piece for us is, we are the military domestic crisis response force. And being there under the command and control of our governors able to augment the organic response networks everywhere we go, that's what we do. And the better we are at the warfight mission, the more ready we are to do the homeland mission. We get all of our equipment and skills and leadership to come back and do the mission in the homeland, which we do every day. So that's what the operational force means to me.

DWG: Thanks for coming.

Can you give us any more clarity on the actual scope of these, you know, going back to the bonus recoupment issue. Can you give us a little bit more clarity on the scope of this problem? It extends beyond California, but it's very just fuzzy on how much that [inaudible].

And then also just to follow upon a previous question, the California National Guard says Congress knew about this issue two years ago and didn't do anything. They proposed some sort of legislation that could fix this. Is that true? What did Congress know two years ago?

General Lengyel: It is true. We did tell Congress that we found this. I can get you the specifics. I mind is fuzzy on exactly when we told them. I think it was in 2012 that we reported hey, that we found this. But as I said, I'm not aware of a request to do any blanket waivers or requests for relief per se from this.

There is a process to deal with erroneously awarded bonuses. It exists. It's existed for a long time. It was the expectation that the California National Guard was going through that review and going through that process. The problem with the process is, it's a timely one. First you have to go through the Army National Guard and see if they can fix your records. Then if they can't, they levy a debt on you and you have to go to DFAS, the Defense Finance and Accounting System. You have to ask for DFAS to waive it. And if that doesn't waive it then you have to go to DOHA, Defense --

Voice: Hearings --

General Lengyel: You have to go there. And if that doesn't work you have the Board of Corrections of Military Records and you can go there. And all of these processes take time. So we reached the point where just recently Lieutenant [Strather] who was on the news, the TV individual from California, he just got the majority of his debt waived for his bonuses after three and a half years of going through all of those processes and they waived for him his recruitment bonus. He still had to pay back his school bonus, but they waived for him \$15,000 of his debt. That's the problem.

We're trying to find a system that can first of all tell them the appropriate place to go. Your particular situation requires you to go here to fix it and we can help you do that and go ahead and do it, so that we can speed it up for the soldier.

We're not used to having, you know, we've had these things happen fairly regularly but the numbers of these cases is what makes this odd.

DWG: I'm sorry, so I wasn't clear, what did Congress know and then also the scope.

General Lengyel: The scope is, we're talking about 13,500 people in California. The total number of records that we're looking at. And the total amounts of money in there is somewhere I think around \$40 or \$50 million is kind of what they're looking at potentially.

The individual who actually, the individual I mentioned who was in charge of the incentive program, who went on file, was found liable for \$15 million. So that's it.

As far as Congress, I'm going to have to come back with you and tell you the specific times and what we told them, and I'll follow up with you to do that. Okay?

DWG: Thank you.

General Lengyel: Thanks so much for doing this, General. We appreciate it.

A two-part question related to the bonuses. Regarding the last response, the National Guard doesn't know how many soldiers, how much money, how many other states are affected?

And the second part of my question is, this is only the latest enlistment/recruitment scandal. You had the G-RAP, which there's been charges filed all over the country, most recently in Guam a week ago. You have NASCAR sponsorship where the Guard continued to sponsor NASCAR after the other services dropped it, even though it couldn't prove that it was increasing recruitment. You have the patriotism sports teams, NFL, many other major league sports, college sports. Congress had to pass a law to ban that practice.

Is this a pattern of mismanagement? And who's responsible in that regard?

General Lengyel: I think it's a great question and an important topic. One of the most important things we have I think is the trust and confidence of the American people, of the Congress, that we're going to be good stewards of our resources. So all the things that you have mentioned.

We have looked at ourselves hard, particularly with respect to G-RAP. Particularly with respect to this issue in California, with respect to marketing, and can we manage our money better and track it better? And we've spent a lot of time, you know, thinking about how to do that. We've looked at G-RAP and we've made some significant changes to our organizational structure, to how we do contracting, to how we oversee our money and our resources, to who's warranted to give contracts as a result of looking at G-RAP. And when you look at G-RAP, I mean it wasn't, I think it was on 60 Minutes just a few months ago. The ultimate amount of fraud and actual misappropriation of resources related to G-RAP was not anywhere near what it was reported to be.

DWG: Do you have a total number?

General Lengyel: Just under \$12 million in fraud. You know, compared to a \$400 million program that was done. They recruited over 100,000 soldiers into the Army National Guard at the time. By many measures the program was a success.

We did not properly have the oversight mechanisms in there to catch the amount of fraud that was there and we've made adjustments to that in the past.

You mentioned NASCAR. We looked at NASCAR. Many people would argue that NASCAR did create an image of the National Guard. It was successful to some degree. It was difficult, I would tell you, to specifically tie a return on investment to money spent to bringing in specific numbers of recruits. And thus with trimming back our budget and looking at that we decided that unless we could specifically in a business sense tie money spent to bringing in recruits, we couldn't afford to spend the money there anymore. Although I would tell you that although in the last couple of years the Army National Guard has made our end strength at the end of the year, we are having

challenges with meeting our recruiting goals. So as time goes on we're having to spend, and part of the National Commission on the Future of the Army has thought of better ways that we might be able to combine our recruiting and our marketing campaigns with the active component and with the reserve component and we're doing that.

But I think we take the oversight of our money, the fiscal stewardship very seriously. We have fixed this issue in California with respect to the bonuses. It caused us -- at the time we had delegated the authority to give bonuses to all the individual states. And we realized at the time, listen, we have to have greater oversight. So General McKinley who was the Chief of the Bureau at the time, he pulled that authority back up to the National Guard Bureau and said you're going to have to meet all of these thresholds to show that these people are entitled to this money and will validate it and then we'll approve that you can disburse the bonuses.

Before 2012 you could actually give away the money without having all the documentation in place to prove that the people were entitled to it. That's not possible any more. Now before you can give a bonus or pay a school loan, you have to be able to prove and you have to have the documents in place before you can actually execute those contracts.

So we are better at it, and it's a very important piece for us to maintain. I hope that answers your question.

DWG: Sir, just the first part of the question. I took it from your last response the National Guard doesn't know the scope outside California? You don't know how many soldiers, how much money, and how many states? And if so, doesn't that show a lack of oversight?

General Lengyel: I can tell you they did look at every state, is what I said, and I said they did find some contracts were disbursed erroneously. They were small numbers. And I can get you those numbers for what the contracts, what they found in the audits of the rest of the states. But it wasn't pervasive. It wasn't rampant as it was in California.

DWG: I'd like to have those numbers.

General Lengyel: Yes, sir.

DWG: Thanks again for doing this.

The standard government policy is if you were paid erroneously too much money you'd have to repay it. Right? Unless there's a good reason not to.

General Lengyel: Yes.

DWG: So it sounds like the presumption is, the burden of proof is on the service member, tell me if I'm wrong, to prove, you know, the presumption is that they owe the money unless they can prove otherwise, is that right? And what do they have to prove?

You mentioned all these places they have to go. What do they have to show? They have to show we did not know that we were receiving this money erroneously?

General Lengyel: I think that what we have to do is find out the specifics of each individual case. There were some cases where officers took reenlistment bonuses. They don't get reenlistment bonuses. I mean officers don't get reenlistment bonuses. There were some people that were enlisted but knowingly were going to become officers and they took a reenlistment bonuses for six years, and then they went to Officer Training Candidate School and they kept the money for a six-year enlistment bonus that they then, they knew that before the case was opened.

Until we look at these cases, we think there are a lot of people out there who were 22 year old soldiers who were given information and they thought by all means they were entitled to the money. So we're going to go back and do the right thing. We're going to look at this and make sure that --

DWG: That is the question that you're trying to get at, is did they know or not.

General Lengyel: Yeah. And was there intent to knowingly take funds you weren't entitled to, to trick the system, to take advantage of the fact that hey, there's apparently some new sheriff in town that's handing out bonuses and, you know, is there's an ability to look at this and figure out what the right thing is.

DWG: So if Congress is considering, as some are proposing, some kind of blanket waiver of these debts, and how blanket, how sweeping it would be would be determined, but it sounds like you would oppose any kind of across the board exoneration.

General Lengyel: Well, we haven't asked for that. I think we believe the right thing -- I mean, we want to protect. Unfortunately, mixed in with all of this was some proven intent to defraud the government in some cases. There was some intent to take money knowingly that you weren't entitled to by some people.

DWG: A tiny fraction? Or a big chunk?

General Lengyel: Probably a small fraction. Probably. But I can't, the state of California is doing the research. The state of California, it's much like the G-RAP case that I mentioned here. Once you've peeled it all back there was opportunity certainly for many people to do things badly. But when we really looked at it and investigated the cases, we found the vast majority of people did the right thing.

DWG: One last real quick one. You said there's 3200 cases that have yet to be adjudicated out of a universe of --

DWG: 3200 is a big chunk.

DWG: This could get considerably bigger.

General Lengyel: We'll find out what we find out. We have to go out to California, we have to put a team together that's going to help California go through this process quicker that's focused on helping the service member. Those service members who were doing the right thing, who were serving their country, who thought they were entitled to a bonus, to get this out of their past and out of their way. And we want to help California do that and help the service members do that as quickly as we possibly can. So we're putting options together for the Secretary to consider, for us to create this help that can go out there and do that. Whether it's go to California or set it up here. I don't know. We're going to come up with something that helps adjudicate this stuff faster.

DWG: General, recently the commander of U.S. Army Forces Command said that is readiness challenges stem from OpTempo, but he did mention that the National Guard forces that he employs in deployments and that sort of thing suffered readiness problems due to funding.

Describe what the readiness situation is from your troops and whether that is the case, that it really stems from funding.

General Lengyel: Readiness is, you've got to have time to do readiness, you've got to have time to train. That's one thing. So this is where the Army and the Air Force forces are, they're gone so much that when they're gone and they're deployed their readiness begins to break down and they lose the training and the skill sets that they trained to do. That's one issue with readiness.

One issue is you have, you know, readiness comes in buckets of people and training and equipment. If you have the money to train the people, if you have the money to have the people there, to have the equipment ready and is it working so that you can actually train on it, all that stuff, those are all funding issues.

We're funding predominantly to be a C3 which is a level of readiness. A C1 is the highest, go to war, out the door readiness that you go. Our business model is such that we don't inventory readiness above that. We determine that you're going to -- we have some small numbers of units that have higher readiness. They're in their what we call available year of forces. And that's why we're kind of a good deal. It costs a lot of money to train a brigade.

The funding for the National Guard statutorily has been built on, you know, you've heard the term 39 days a year. That's kind of the statutory training that we get to maintain individual readiness for our service members.

As the training cycle progresses, we give some small number of days above that such that in the five-year training cycle you get 39 days, 39 days, 45 days, and then 54 days. That's all money.

I say that like it's a small amount, but if you think about, okay, 39 days is, that's about two months' worth of work for an American -- you know, eight work weeks of five days essentially. And most of them do that on top of their normal training days.

So the money to bring people together, is what General Abrams is talking about, the money that it takes to actually bring people together, to move their equipment to places where they can do what they call collective training, which is they start to do maneuver forces training, more complex training, so it simulates war-like scenarios, it takes money. So that's where the limitations are on doing our readiness training.

For me, limitation, for our forces, is how much more available time does the citizen soldier have to give to do the training? Remember, my business model means he's got another job. He or she has another job some place. So there's limitations on how much we can do that.

We've found that employers, and frankly service members will endure higher levels of training and more time away from their jobs and their families if it results in a deployment on the other end. I mean if you're going to do all of this training, they want to and expect to be sent to go do something with it. Whether it's Afghanistan or Iraq or anywhere around the globe. Service members today expect to be deployed in their available year. They want to be deployed. So it's I think more of that in the future.

DWG: Firstly, just a quick follow-up on something that you said earlier. It seems like what you're saying is that it's necessary but not sufficient for those awarded a bonus erroneously to prove that they didn't know. For example, the -- you mentioned he did not have to pay back part of his bonuses, but did have to pay back school bonuses.

General Lengyel: Right.

DWG: Is that an accurate characterization of what the burden of proof is?

And then my original question, more broadly, do you foresee a continued high involvement in active duty operations in partnering with active duty forces? And what specific missions do you see the Guard being involved in in say the next 15 years?

General Lengyel: I think with respect to the bonus issue, it's hard for me to give you a specific, exact definition of. I would say the sense of the discussion is if there was a soldier at this point who was misinformed as to their availability to take bonuses and they took the bonus and did the right thing and served, and still serving, and didn't take a bonus and then change jobs, or take a bonus and then leave the Army or do something that knowingly was access to money, and no intent to serve as that bonus was given, I would say there's not a big appetite to take that money back. As it goes. So I think the urge is to find out that can we give this person an exception to policy based on what their secondary service was, what they did in addition to such that we can again give the benefit to the soldier.

There's no intent to go after this money on some sort of a technicality just because we can. So I'm just going to leave it at that, as we go through and try to sort through these records.

And then you asked about future OpsTempo. The Army and the Air Guard. The Air Force has built a system now that it can't do any operational mission without a portion of the Air National Guard. Sixty percent of the tanker fleet's in the National Guard. We've got 26 fighter squadrons in the National Guard. We've got guardsmen in space units, guardsmen in cyber units, and any operational mission that's currently going or that's going to on-go in the future will have members of the Air National Guard in it, operational, integrated with the active component and I just can't think of a mission set. We've got B-2 pilots in the National Guard. We're in places where we are completely, totally, seamlessly integrated with the Air Force.

I think the Army is moving towards a much more operational continuous model with the Army National Guard. General Milley has created, and I think many of you know and have been following relations with the Army and the Guard over the past several years, and they haven't been all that good. It's been a little bit of a rocky road. And I would tell you General Milley, General Abrams, his general officers, they can totally change the tone of the relationship, the access, the utilization of the Guard force structure. General Milley is planning on using the National Guard in an operational sense, deployed to Europe, deployed to Afghanistan, deployed to Iraq, deployed in theater security packages around the world. Again, with the restrictions of we need predictability we need funding to use National Guard forces. That's been a problem in the past. They've had trained forces but they didn't have funding to use them. The way the funding system was set up was they had active formations at home, maybe tired, maybe in training, resetting for readiness, but they had to send them to do operational missions because they didn't have the pay and allowances to pay the reserve forces to go. So now they have the funding authority, 12-304 Bravo you've seen as an authority where given notice and given in support of a combatant command and sending units, they can posture National Guard forces against known requirements and use those kinds of funding.

So funding has been a problem for the department as we have draquwn down funding, and the Budget Control Act and variations thereof, you know, the Bipartisan Budget Act. All of the things that have since changed our funding. Funding has been challenging.

So the answer to your question is yes, I see whatever mission the United States Army, the United States Air Force is in, the Army Guard and the Air Guard will be part of it. And they want to be. This National Guard, we talked earlier, some of you mentioned I think that it used to be the, hey I'm going to join the Guard not to deploy. People get in the Guard now because frankly, they don't know any different. They want to live at home, they want to have another job, they want to have another career, but they want to be part of the Army and they want to go deploy, and they're willing to commit to the training that it takes and take the risks that everyone who wears the uniform takes.

DWG: Sir, this is literally a bonus question, but it's not about bonuses.

General Lengyel: I'll take it. I'll take a bonus question. Maybe I'll stretch it out for 15 minutes. [Laughter].

DWG: I'd like you to look in your rear view mirror for a bit and pivot from California to Cairo. You were the top military guy in Cairo for a year after the fall of Mubarak.

General Lengyel: I was.

DWG: A couple of questions about that. How did we do? And how are we doing, dealing with that big Arab nation now, to your mind? And how unusual is it for the defense attaché to be a Guard officer? Does that have anything to do with you F-16 background? Or how did that come to happen?

General Lengyel: Actually the gentleman that I replaced was a reserve officer who had been in the Guard. His name was General Williams, and he was I think the first reserve component general to go in there. And quite frankly, prior to that it was probably a sleepy kind of, it was stable and we had a great relationship and we did have a lot of F-16 kind of operational kind of experience to go, so I was kind of surprised when I was sent. And frankly, just to be honest with you, when the revolution happened and I was expecting this call that says hey, we're going to send an Arabist over there and you're not wanted, and we're going to send somebody that can go over there and do this. But on a personal level, I found that assignment for me professionally and personally, was very very rewarding. I enjoyed the engagement. I had worked for Ambassador Patterson who is in my view a very competent leader, very well respected in the State Department and in the military, and enjoyed very much working with the State Department team during a really troublesome time.

And it was interesting to be the military leader there because the military at the time, as you know, was in charge of the country. The SCAF, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces led by Field Marshal Tantawi was actually the head of government, so anybody who came, State Department, delegations, everybody got to go and I got to participate in those. It was fascinating for me.

I got to know, what was your question? What did you want me to talk about?
[Laughter].

DWG: Tell us an anecdote that puts us there and then that illuminates some of the challenges we faced during that time.

General Lengyel: There's a couple of things that I think back on about that time. One was, I went during that time, it was one year after Libya had been liberated, and I went to their celebration. As they were thanking everybody, I was there in uniform, and I had come out of that ceremony and I was kind of crushed and rushed by the crowd there and they were demanding that the United States go assist Syria because 2,000 people had been killed in Syria at the time. I think back to that time and how much has happened along the lines. It's been an amazing unfolding of events across the Middle East and in Syria to what we're looking at today in terms of what's going on.

So I think about that in terms of perspective.

I got to know the president at the time, General Sisi. He was the head of the military intelligence when I was there. I found him to be a very interesting guy. He told me one time, General Joseph, that's what they called me, General Joseph, we want what you want. I said what's that? [Laughter]. He said, well, nobody owns the American people, not even the President. It's the people control the government and control the way forward in your country. That's what people fundamentally want in Egypt.

And of course he would tell me all the things, he had a big former residence of royalty in Egypt there, and we would sit in his tea room and he would tell me about all the things we were doing wrong and how we spend money and the like. But I think in general he is for tolerance. He's for secular institutional Egypt. He's not, they're not quite the Jeffersonian democracy that we view here in this country on how we see civil rights and freedom of the press and all those things. They're not there yet.

I worked a lot with their military as they were dealing with ongoing civil unrest in Tahrir Square and around the country, and they told me that, they reacted I think during the time of the revolution as a military in a pretty restrained way. I know there's been issues, I read the paper and individual cases where clearly people are treated poorly, civil rights and the like there. But I think, and they attributed that in some small measure, as to hanging around with us and the relationship and the exercises, the discipline, the civilian control. A different example in Egypt altogether. The military has a different way of getting funded and everything else than we have, but his model is, I thought, I didn't know at the time that he was eventually going to be president, but he had, it's a functioning \$90 million Muslim country with some Sunnis and some Christians and churches and institutions, and a lot of it works. And he would look here at our country and say well, you've got civil issues in Baltimore and Fergusons and you've got --

DWG: You've got Trump.

General Lengyel: We've got Trump. I'm not going to talk about that. [Laughter].

But I think Egypt's a very important country. It's an influential country. I'd like to see us maintain a good relationship. I think people, the money spent in Egypt, you know, with, since the Treaty of Peace, has maintained peace in that region for 40 years. In the previous 40 years there were five wars. You know. Now you look at Egypt and Israel and Jordan and you can see collaboration and you see cooperation and you see intel sharing and you see things that are good things, that are stable things that go for stability and peace in the region and shared common interests with us, with the United States, and support our national strategic interests.

DWG: Are you haunted by that Syrian request?

General Lengyel: Am I haunted by it? You know, I think --

DWG: Did you tell anybody in Washington? Was it well known at the time?

General Lengyel: Of course we talked about -- it was well known that they wanted American involvement there. And of course we did discuss it. Immensely. So it was a long time ago.

DWG: Many deaths ago.

General Lengyel: Many deaths ago.

DWG: Okay, we're down to our final ten minutes and I still have six reporters left.

General Lengyel: Oh, my goodness. I'll talk fast.

DWG: Individuals can forego the follow-ups at this point too. We'll move into the speed round here. Beginning with Jim and then Yasmin.

DWG: Secretary Carter has got the Force of the Future Initiative. Part of that is to make it easier to transfer among the components. What's the progress on that?

General Lengyel: Part of it is to be able to seamlessly go back and forth. It's pretty easy to come into the National Guard. It's not as easy to go back into the active component. He's working on specific tools, if you will, to allow people to leave the active component to go work in industry for a couple of years, go back into the active component, without hurting their careers. Traditionally if you leave the active component and then you go back, that period of time that you were gone is devastating to a career, so they're trying to find ways to shift that.

I think the Guard is the force of the future. When I look at us I go wait a minute, I have people every day that work in industry. It's one of my jobs, I think one of my main priorities is to harness that. It's readiness, it's people, families, employers, and it's innovation. I've got to find a way to actually harness the skill sets that I bring in the cyber industry and all the rest. I have people that actually do this stuff full time. So that's the way ahead.

DWG: If I were to ask a follow-up, how many people have taken advantage of that? To go from the National Guard back to the active duty?

General Lengyel: Do you count me? [Laughter]. It's hard to say. I was a pilot for Delta Airlines. I haven't flown a Delta Airlines trip in 12 years. But when I'm done with this I can go back to Delta Airlines. But I'm still technically in the Guard. I really am. I'm active duty. I'm full time. But there's a lot of people that, so much of our staff has transitioned really since 9/11 and served in full time careers and capacities, and do and will go back. It's a part of what we do every day.

DWG: General, you said earlier that relations have been a lot better between the Guard and the Army, and I was just wondering, do you have any concerns going forward still, or has that really been put to rest? And then I was hoping also you could talk about some of your modernization goals.

General Lengyel: I think the relations are great. But the relations are always great when the news is stable. We've had bad budgets and the news, all of the bad news has cascaded and permeated and it's out there and there's been no new bad news for a while. So it's easy, once you work through those kinds of things, it's okay to have a relationship.

So there's always going to be, when resources are an issue, there's going to be tension. Where is the best place to save money and take the cuts? And of course we feel like we're a good bargain and a good value and the Air Force does too, or the active duty Army. So there's always going to be tension. But what we have right now is we have great communication, we have transparency of process. So when somebody looks at hey, what gets cut, there's actually a system and a process, an involvement of everybody where there's some sort of trust that at least my story's heard. And I think, frankly, the involvement of my position as the Chief of the Bureau and a member of the Joint Chiefs, that hey, if there's a disagreement inside the services I at least get one more chance at the OSD level to raise this issue. Let's have another look at whatever the issue is. So I'm optimistic that the relationship's going to stay good.

And then modernization. In terms of equipment and those kinds of things, we have all the same challenges the services do. How do I upgrade the C-130s that are old, and we have all of the H model C-130s inside the Air Force fleet. There will be a time when that happens.

The F-15 fleet, it's old and we need money to either recapitalize it or put new fighters in there or do those things. So those challenges are out there. And the Air Force has real money challenges in trying to recapitalize its own fleet. The A-10s the tanker fleet, the new bomber fleet. They're all out there and we're all a part of it.

So same, we're right in there, you know, right on the wing of our Army and Air Force partners.

DWG: Thank you, General.

You mentioned already the deep integration between the Air Force and the Guard. The Air Force has said they're going to rely on the Guard and Reserve even more in trying to make up for their personnel shortages, whether it's pilots, maintainers or --

General Lengyel: Right.

DWG: Is the Guard ready for that going to the future? I know you mentioned that you had difficulty recruiting right now.

General Lengyel: I stand by, we need predictability. If you can give me predictability, I can probably find a way to give the Air Force the capability and the capacity that it needs.

Frequently, there's always two scenarios, right? There's always the two scenarios. You've got the ongoing rumble of the current day-to-day normal operations which are extensive -- Iraq, Afghanistan, Northern Africa, things going on in Asia, all around the world. There's a lot more of that, I think, that's contingency-like operations. And I don't see that changing. So there's that piece. That feed.

Then there's the feed of well what if one of the five scenarios, the China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, violent extremism piece, you know, beyond that. What if that pops up that requires a mass mobilization?

So if you allow yourself to be really flexible to handle the day in/day out operations, where you allow units to cross-flow, cross-level we call it. So I've got people who can't go, but I'll borrow people from other units to go. We do that routinely.

But if the other scenario happens where I need everybody, all the units, then I've broken myself because I've done that. That's an issue that we have to work through.

So yeah, I think the, going the way ahead, there's additional capacity for us to provide more, particularly in the Army, on a regular basis. We're deploying 10,000 or 12,000 soldiers a year continuously. We were used to, for ten years, having 60,000 soldiers a year, continuously deployed. So there's a piece in there where we have capacity, and it makes us better.

You know, if I'm continuously involved with the active and the deployments, it helps us integrate with the active component. It builds our leaders. It keeps us sharp. Our equipment stays ready. Everything gets better when we're part of whatever's going on in the operational force day in and day out.

DWG: To follow up on the [inaudible] capacity, you mentioned General Milley earlier. I think you said I want associate units like the Air Force I want to go back to round out brigades which were very controversial back --

General Lengyel: Yeah.

DWG: Where does that stand? What's been done so far and what might actually materialize on the ground over a year or two years, three years?

General Lengyel: He started I think I mentioned the associate unit pilot program that's ongoing. And that's 14 separate individual formations that have associated with each other. Which means hey, our National Guard units are teaming up with active component units, brigades. They're actually becoming, organizationally they're wearing each other's patches to show that they're similarly aligned. They align training, they align resources, they align plans.

Right now, so far, it hasn't evolved to the point where these units will actually pack up and deploy and go fight together. That hasn't happened yet. But I think that's kind of the long term goal is that these National Guard forces will become very integrated with

the active component or vice versa, and then when the forces do come to go deploy, that they will go.

The Air Force has done this for decades. But the Air Force deploys much smaller chunks. You'll take a 12-ship of airplanes and deploy it to Afghanistan and it will plug into a wing and an overhead structure that's an expeditionary wing. And the Army goes in much bigger chunks so it's a little bit more complicated.

But the fact that we are aligning our resources, aligning our training plans, that we're going together. Fundamentally it builds trust amongst the components. They know us, they see us, they look at us, they know our capabilities. We can communicate and critique each other and go. It's a challenge.

I mean the Air Force talks about this integration like it's been easy. It's been anything but easy. It's been hard. It's been a blending of cultures where the active didn't understand the Guard, the Guard didn't understand the active. And there had to be a come together to, everybody had to understand and work with the strengths of each component, that each component brought, and understand what they were. And so now I think the Air Force has held out, it's kind of nirvana in terms of component, in terms of integration, where it's gone. But the Army's well on the way to doing that.

DWG: The Army as nirvana. I can't wait to --

General Lengyel: Yeah. [Laughter].

DWG: I said the Air Force was, not the Army.

DWG: We have time for two more if they're quick. Dmitry and Laura.

DWG: General, National Guard units as you know, take part in the U.S. train and equip mission in Ukraine. I just wanted to ask you if this part of your mission is progressing as planned, as scheduled, or do you expect any changes to it for whatever reasons?

General Lengyel: Sure.

Have you heard of the National [State] Partnership Program? It's a great program. And the California National Guard of all people is aligned with Ukraine and they've been partners now for, I can't remember exactly how far back their partnership goes. More than a decade.

DWG: Oklahoma as well I think.

General Lengyel: Oklahoma is Azerbaijan. So this relationship, again, enables the units, the State Partnership Program, particularly in Europe, was initially designed to help integrate these new countries into Europe and the structure, and into NATO-like operations. And obviously, so the reason that the California National Guard is there is

to share all the things about the National Guard that are good. We typically go there and we build, we show rule of law, we show civilian control of the military, democratic --

DWG: Bonuses.

General Lengyel: Bonuses. How to recruit. Come on now.

So, but I think it's an ongoing part and we'll continue to do that with all of our partners including the Ukraine.

DWG: No expansion? Nothing of this sort?

General Lengyel: No, I don't see any other planned expansion or growth. It's a very aggressive program. I can't tell you the exact number of events that we will do with Ukraine. I think there's probably a continuous presence of Army National Guard folks who need training. As there are almost continuous presence in many of the other countries in Eastern Europe.

DWG: I wanted to ask about our RPA pilots. So can you just tell me about how you see the role of RPA pilots changing the National Guard, and whether you see their role growing as the Air Force moves to [inaudible] RPA pilots.

General Lengyel: Sure. It's been a big part of our mission. The remotely piloted aircraft, it's been places and it's been highly successful. We have, as the drawdown and budget issues have forced some structure realignments, and I saw many former F-16 units go kicking and screaming into the Predator mission and now, I mean almost, you can't go to one of these places and they won't tell you we regret resisting this. It's been a highly relevant mission. Ongoing everywhere. And no matter where you go, if you were to go to North Dakota, in Fargo, and see those folks. You've got kids going to the university at night and they're flying Predator missions in the day.

So I think that clearly RPA in general is a growing industry, and not just defense, but everything is becoming more and more automated and requiring less people actually at the controls of an airborne platform or a car or whatever it is. There will be more of that. I think it's a great mission for us.

We were concerned about ongoing, how does this mission fit with a mom who's going to fly Predator during the day, maybe do some war-like skills and take care of exterminating some bad guys and then go pick up the kids. And what's the long-term impacts of that? We've been able to build the enterprise such that the quality of life, work schedules for our guardsmen have been built in a more sustainable kind of battle rhythm, if you will. Rather than working 12 hour days, 6 days a week, like much of the active component was, there was some pretty innovative scheduling processes that came up and worked.

I know the Air Force is looking at the enlisted pilot issue here, and to be honest, I'm not an expert on exactly where that issue is, but I think the Air Force will test it. They're

looking at it, and whatever the Air Force does is eventually we may take a longer time to transition to it, but the National Guard will do it. So it's a great mission for the Guard. The Air Force needs it. It's an insatiable product that it produces. Its surveillance is something that you can't fight a war in today's world without the presence of overhead ISR kind of capability. And it's going to be a big part of any piece in the future.

And I don't know a single unit that isn't highly motivated and ready to do it.

DWG: So you said you saw some F-15 pilots that went kicking and screaming.

General Lengyel: Absolutely.

DWG: -- those pilots and future pilots, have you seen them sort of come around to the mission? Or --

General Lengyel: No, I absolutely have seen it. I mean they feel like they're engaged in direct combat operations every day, whether it's from Houston, Army Texas Guardsmen. We had the 147th Fighter Wing in Houston for decades in F-16s and fighters, and they did not want to transition. But they have transitioned and they have taken to the mission seamlessly. Fargo is another place that, I think you can have five CAPs of people, and you can man it and do it for a very long time if we had the actual ground control stations to actually fly the missions there.

So it's been hugely embraced by the communities and the units that are doing it. It's great.

DWG: We definitely could have used 90 minutes today, but it was good. Thank you very much. We appreciate it.

General Lengyel: I enjoyed it very much. Thank you.

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