

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

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FORT BRAGG, NORTH CAROLINA
UNITED STATES ARMY**

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**Lieutenant General William F. Kernan
Commanding General
XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg**

Lieutenant General William F. Kernan was born in Fort Sam Houston, Texas. He was commissioned in November 1968 from Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia. He holds a bachelor's degree in History, and a master's degree in Personnel Administration. His military education includes the Infantry Advance Course, the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, and the U.S. Army War College.

General Kernan's initial assignment was as Liaison Officer with the 1st Brigade, 82d Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Assigned to Vietnam in August 1969, he served with the 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, as a Rifle Platoon Leader, Battalion Reconnaissance Platoon Leader (Tiger Force), and Assistant S3. Following this assignment he returned to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and served as Company Commander, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 325th Infantry.

Upon completion of the Infantry Officer's Advance Course in March 1974, General Kernan was assigned to Recruiting Command as an area commander in Austin, Texas. Joining the 2d Ranger Battalion at Fort Lewis, Washington, in April 1976, he commanded two companies and was the Assistant S3 before departing in July 1978 to attend the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

In July 1979, he was assigned to the Military Personnel Center in Washington, D.C., initially to the DA Secretariat, and then to the Officer Personnel Management Directorate as an Infantry Branch Assignment Officer. In August 1981, he was selected to be the U.S.

Exchange Officer representing the 82d Airborne Division to the British Parachute Regiment where he commanded Company C, 3 PARA, for two years.

Upon his return from England in July 1983, General Kernan joined the 2d Battalion (Airborne), 508th Infantry, 82d Airborne Division, where he served as the Executive Officer and Battalion Commander. After completing the Army War College in July 1987, he assumed command of the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia. In December 1988, he assumed the duties as Deputy Commander, 75th Ranger Regiment, Fort Benning, Georgia, and held that position until June 20, 1989, when he assumed command of the 75th Ranger Regiment. On December 20th, 1989, he led the 75th Ranger Regiment in its combat parachute assault into Panama during Operation "JUST CAUSE." In September 1991, he was assigned to the 7th Infantry Division (Light), Fort Ord, California, where he served as the Assistant Division Commander (Maneuver). In July 1993, he was assigned as the Director of Plans, Policy, and Strategic Assessments, J5, United States Special Operations Command, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. General Kernan commanded the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) from February 1996 until February 1998 and assumed command of the XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg on 12 March 1998.

He is married to the former Marianne Purnell of Alexandria, Virginia. They have one son, Keith.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to testify on behalf of the great soldiers, civilians, and families of the XVIII Airborne Corps.

I am proud to report that the XVIII Airborne Corps remains trained and ready to rapidly deploy by air, sea and land to any point on the globe, and arrive prepared to fight and win any conflict, or accomplish any other mission as directed by the National Command Authorities.

XVIII Airborne Corps is an exceptional organization of approximately 85,000 soldiers, which provides the Army's crisis response, forcible entry capability. This dynamic Corps has four divisions assigned and each brings unique capabilities to the Corps from which we tailor our 'go-to-war' force against the mission received. The 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, provides the Corps and the nation the ability to begin executing a strategic airborne forcible entry into any area of the world within 18 hours of notification. Their primary mission is airfield and seaport seizure. Once on the ground, they provide the secured terrain and facilities to rapidly receive additional combat forces. The division is the nation's strategic offensive force, maintaining the highest state of combat readiness.

The 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, provides the Corps our second type of forcible entry capability through heliborne 'air assault' operations. Capable of assaulting a 4,000 soldier combined arms task force, 150-kilometers into enemy terrain in one lift, and possessing 281 helicopters, including three battalions of Apache attack helicopters, this division is the most versatile in the Army. For this reason, the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) is the division most in demand by combatant commanders.

The 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized) is the Corps' heavy force, stationed at Fort Stewart, Georgia. It provides us with the armored punch and staying power that, in conjunction with our other forces, can decisively confront and defeat any force on the battlefield today. Since June, 1998, it has maintained a constant presence in southwest Asia in support of Operations Southern Watch

and Desert Thunder, as well as, the heavy division ready brigade for worldwide deployment in support of Atlantic Command.

The 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), stationed at Fort Drum, New York, is a specially tailored infantry division that is rapidly deployable by strategic airlift to conduct a full spectrum of operations from humanitarian relief to combat. Over the last decade, the 10th Mountain Division has been involved in more deployments than any other division in the Army and will assume the mission for SFOR 6 in Bosnia beginning in August 1999.

These divisions are provided tailored support from the 13 separate brigades organic to the Corps which include both active and reserve artillery, aviation, cavalry, engineer, military intelligence, military police, medical, communication, air defense, and logistics organizations. With this force, the XVIII Airborne Corps can build the necessary organization to execute any mission directed and has successfully done so repeatedly.

Operations Just Cause, Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Hurricane Andrew, Restore Hope, Support Hope (Rwanda), Restore Democracy, Joint Endeavor, Joint Forge, and Hurricane Mitch are just a few of the major operations this Corps has successfully executed across the spectrum from peace to war in the last decade. We are not a 'stay at home' Corps. During the last 12 months, the Corps averaged over 5500 XVIII Airborne Corps soldiers per month deployed overseas in an average of 12 countries securing national interests and reassuring allies. Another 3500 per month were deployed away from home within the United States conducting exercises and executing missions. Even as these forces were deployed, over 3500 per month were preparing to deploy to execute a myriad of missions or exercises.

In order to sustain this continuous tempo of operations and exercises, every soldier and civilian in our organization has to be committed to the readiness of our Corps. Ensuring readiness has been an increasingly complex challenge as our Army grew smaller, our operational tempo (OPTEMPO) increased, and our fiscal resources became more constrained. The most recent supplemental funding by Congress and the proposed budget for FY '00 and the

Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) are going to provide some relief. I would like to thank this committee for its dedicated efforts on behalf of our soldiers, but challenges still exist in every aspect of readiness ---quality of life, infrastructure, and training.

QUALITY OF LIFE

I'll start with quality of life and how it affects our most critical concern, our people. Former Army Chief of Staff, General Creighton Abrams, is credited with saying, "The Army is not made up of people, the Army is people." Indeed, people always have been and will continue to be the Army's most precious resource. Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, stated that America's young men and women in uniform are truly "our national treasure".

In January our Chief of Staff, General Reimer, outlined the chronic shortfalls we believe have occurred in the areas of retirement, pay and quality of life. He also addressed the direct impact that these shortfalls are having on our inability to recruit enough new individuals, and retain enough soldiers at all ranks, but especially at the middle non-commissioned officer and junior officer ranks. What I will tell you from the foxhole level is that the combination of these issues causes our soldiers to feel like they are simply taken for granted.

Young men and women choose to join the Army for many reasons, but all of them join with the desire to be part of something larger than themselves, something intangible, something special. Camaraderie and pride in organization are the two factors most soldiers highlight as what they like best about the Army. This is followed closely by the diverse missions and travel opportunities. What they like least about the Army is eroding quality of life and high OPTEMPO.

OPTEMPO must not be simply defined as deployments, but as extended periods away from their families and their bunks for our soldiers. These periods are a combination of field training at home station, training away from home station, and operational missions. OPTEMPO keeps many XVIII Airborne Corps soldiers away from home five to seven months out of every year and in some

cases up to 10 months. While this may not in itself cause a soldier to leave the Army, the marginal quality of life their families endure while they are gone, and that they contend with when they return, is an equally compromising factor.

Medical and dental care continue to be a concern for our soldiers and their families. Since the end of the Cold War, the Army Medical Department has downsized 34 percent while beneficiaries have only declined 12 percent. While we have incorporated many efficiencies into our out-patient care programs and family practice clinics, we still have work to do with TRICARE. Adequate medical and dental care for their families is one of the greatest concerns of our soldiers.

Few people join the Army for the pay. The simple fact is that the pay gap between our soldiers and the civilian sector has grown over the last decade and currently stands at approximately 13 percent. This situation creates a personal financial challenge for our soldiers when we ask a Specialist with a wife and two children who are living from paycheck to paycheck with minimal installation support activities, to leave his family for six months to conduct peacekeeping operations in Bosnia or Egypt. Our Family Support Group network within our units helps tremendously, but even so, that soldier's family is still living on the margin as a single parent family for the whole period the soldier is gone.

Why would a soldier and family that goes through this type of lifestyle year after year stay in the service? The answer we are given is that they feel proud of what they do; they want to be on a team of dedicated professionals; they feel part of a bigger effort providing a greater good for their country. We demand a lot from our soldiers and they deliver every time. But they want their country and its leadership to appreciate and understand their sacrifice. And in appreciating and understanding their sacrifice, they would like their leadership to provide the ability to give their families and them adequate housing and an acceptable standard of living so that 'quality of life' becomes a positive instead of a negative term. I am hopeful that this will be the outcome in response to the pay raises, pay table reform and changes in retirement contained in the FY00 budget, as well as the Army's efforts to enhance barracks and improve family housing through its on-going privatization of housing initiatives.

INFRASTRUCTURE

In addition to quality of life concerns, the unsatisfactory state of infrastructure on our installations dramatically affects our soldiers and our mission. One-third of XVIII Airborne Corps soldiers return from deployments to barracks or quarters that were built in the 1950s. That in itself is not so damning, but the fact that over the last 10 years installation commanders have had inadequate funds to maintain these quarters, much less improve them, has resulted in soldiers living in buildings with leaking roofs, substandard heating and cooling, and plumbing in need of constant repair. Even worse, the lack of funds has caused us to become penny-wise but pound-foolish, many times spending funds to temporarily repair the most critical of these worn out facilities in a band-aid approach to installation maintenance.

Every installation on which XVIII Airborne Corps soldiers reside has lost support and services over this decade. Craft shops, recreation centers, and family support activities are just examples of facilities that were reduced or eliminated over the last 10 to 14 years, which can only be regenerated through funding for construction, hiring of appropriately trained personnel, and the time necessary to reestablish the function as part of the infrastructure. Additionally, many of the facilities and services that do remain must be operated by Borrowed Military Manpower (BMM) due to significant reductions in the civilian workforce.

In short, our budgets have simply not allowed us to sustain prudent infrastructure capitalization, or the types of comprehensive preventive maintenance programs that would extend the potential lifespan of our facilities. The result is workplaces and quarters on most XVIII Airborne Corps installations continue to erode and so with it, proper care for our soldiers and families. I urge the committee to support the Army's initiatives to improve its barracks and family housing.

TRAINING

We have the finest trained Army in the world. Our primary mission is to fight and win our nation's wars. We focus on the most difficult tasks which are combat related, but have also incorporated a broad spectrum of 'operations other than war' skills into our training programs.

Through a building block process of individual, unit, combined and joint training, we constantly prepare XVIII Airborne Corps soldiers for the increasingly complex tasks they will face in humanitarian, peacekeeping and combat operations. Our units demonstrate and enhance their training proficiency in the field at our Combat Training Centers (CTCs) and through simulation in the Army's Battle Command Training Program (BCTP) and the tiered joint task force training programs.

XVIII Airborne Corps' primary training focus is joint training. Our operational experience shows that we will always execute as a joint force with our sister services; whether we are conducting humanitarian operations such as Hurricane Andrew and Mitch, or peacekeeping and combat operations such as Restore Hope and Just Cause. Our training is conducted in a building block method called 'tiers', which starts with Army component training and ends with full-scale joint simulations. In the last 14 months, XVIII Airborne Corps has conducted extensive exercises in each of the three tiers of the joint training concept, Tier 1 – Army Component Training, Tier 2 – Joint Interoperability Field Training, and Tier 3 – Joint Task Force Simulation Training.

In these 14 months, the Corps' tier 1 training included all home station individual and unit training, 12 rotations to the Combat Training Centers (CTCs), and Battle Command Training Program (BCTP) exercises by three of our four divisions, as well as, the Corps headquarters. Unit and individual training at both home station and the CTCs is some of the toughest, most realistic training in the world. Our soldiers train to exacting standards in multiple battlefield tasks,

executing at night, in foul weather and under tremendous physical and mental stress. Live-fire exercises tie this training together as soldiers and leaders have to plan, coordinate and execute every aspect of combat operations. We validate our standards in live-fire environments. Routine training in this environment builds individual confidence and unit cohesion essential to battlefield success.

The Corps' tier 2 training during this period was highlighted by Joint Task Force Exercise Purple Dragon in February last year. During that exercise, the Corps operated as a Joint Task Force headquarters in command of a Naval Carrier Battle Group, Surface Action Group, and Amphibious Ready Group; a Marine Expeditionary Unit; an Air Force Expeditionary Wing; a Joint Special Operations Task Force; and a tailored Army force of airborne, air assault, and heavy organizations. Troop strength exceeded 41,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and civilians. During the 26 day exercise, our forces operated in a Joint Operating Area (JOA) of over one million square miles; from the coast of Maryland in the north to Puerto Rico in the South, and from Louisiana in the west to 300 nautical miles off the United States coast in the Atlantic Ocean. As in tier 1 training, live-fire exercises were integrated into these operations to finely hone our joint combat skills.

Tier 3 training is the capstone of this process in which the Commander in Chief (CINC) ACOM certifies an Army Corps as qualified to execute as a Joint Task Force headquarters through a simulation based exercise. XVIII Airborne Corps successfully recertified this last November in a Unified Endeavor exercise based against a crisis response scenario in Central America requiring operations in both peace and war. XVIII Airborne Corps again commanded organizations from all services and was required to synchronize 'transition-to-war', wartime, and 'transition-to-peace' operations across the joint services and other agencies of the government. This was the finest joint training XVIII Airborne Corps has received.

XVIII Airborne Corps maintains a very strong training and operational relationship with the reserve components. Throughout each tier, active/reserve component integration is exploited to enhance our total force capability across

the spectrum of operations. Future divisional teaming at Fort Drum, separate brigades executing training with both active and reserve subordinate units, and Command Post Exercises involving reserve and active component headquarters all work to establish the seamless Army essential for future operations. “One team, one fight, one future” is a reality in XVIII Airborne Corps.

In addition to this intensive training program, the XVIII Airborne Corps also executes a highly demanding Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercise (EDRE) program to ensure all our organizations can meet our crisis response timelines. Beginning with a portion of the 82nd Airborne Division and our Corps headquarters which must be ready to deploy within 18 hours of notification, most of our organizations have part or all of their units which must be ready to deploy within 120 hours of alert. To assist our units in maintaining this standard, monthly we alert, marshal, conduct crisis action planning and deploy a portion of the force without warning in order to refine these skills and validate this capability.

A final aspect of our total training program is our annual combined training with forces from other nations. Through the Reciprocal Unit Exchange program we conduct small unit training with German, French and British units both in their countries and ours. Through Operations Intrinsic Action in Kuwait, Bright Star in Egypt and Eager Light in Jordan, we maintain our operating capabilities with our Southwest Asian counterparts. Additionally, exercises in South Korea and simulations maintain our interoperability with Republic of Korea forces.

Our training resources and facilities are marginally adequate for the near term with some exceptions. Training facilities for operations in urban terrain are still lacking, as well as adequate aerial gunnery ranges that will allow for combat-like training for our attack helicopters; these requirements are being addressed in the FYDP and we look forward to putting these facilities on line in the near future. Adequate ammunition to properly train our soldiers for combat is becoming a concern. The FY00 budget and outyear spending plan includes increased funding for training ammunition which should ameliorate this concern. In the near future, the introduction of new technologies, such as Comanche,

Apache-longbow and Crusader, and the 'stand-off' capabilities of these systems, will require additional terrain for both individual and unit training. Our training is the best in the world. Even so, we must continue to modernize our facilities and equipment while improving our techniques to ensure that when we have to place our soldiers in harm's way they are prepared. No soldier should ever experience something for the first time on the battlefield that we have the ability to expose him to in training.

EQUIPMENT

The Corps' equipment status remains one of our strongest training and operational factors. The fielding and improvements of the Apache, Patriot, Paladin, Abrams, Bradley, High Mobility Army Rocket System (HIMARS) and Multiple Launched Rocket System (MLRS)/Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) provides our soldiers the finest combat systems in the world. These coupled with the Javelin, improved weapon's optics and night vision upgrades for our individual soldiers provides an unparalleled combat advantage. Supporting logistical improvements help ensure these systems continue to operate in the most demanding environments. Without question, we dominate any battlefield on which we place our forces. All of this we owe to our leadership's vision and your determined support to ensure our soldiers always go into battle with the technological edge.

Our concern is for the future. It has been addressed several times that we have recently let modernization slip to focus our money and efforts on near term readiness. Our current technological advantage has allowed us to accept this prudent risk. However, we need your support in ensuring we retain this technological advantage by fielding the Comanche, Crusader, Apache-Longbow, CH-47F (Improved Cargo Helicopter), Land Warrior for the light forces, and other critical combat support and logistical systems for our soldiers and units.

Equally critical is ensuring we have the depot stocks to support extended operations should we be called upon to execute a MTW. Every unexpected

operation, such as Hurricane Mitch or extended operation such as Joint Forge accelerates the aging of our systems. Without adequate repair stocks in place to maintain these systems, our operational readiness levels will erode and so our combat capability.

SUMMARY

XVIII Airborne Corps is prepared today to meet all of its specified missions. Our soldiers are true professionals in every sense of the definition. They are unparalleled fighters on the field of combat, but equally compassionate humanitarians bringing calm to chaos for the oppressed. They are dedicated, intelligent, selfless patriots who represent the very best of our society. It is because of their commitment that our readiness is so high, despite constrained resources. It is because of their attention to detail that our equipment is maintained to the highest possible standards. It is because of their sacrifice that they continue to execute despite economic hardships and erosion in quality of life.

But we can't expect them to continue to sign up when the sacrifice continues to grow and they perceive their benefits continue to erode. We ask these soldiers every day to be prepared to pay the ultimate price for their nation. Therefore, it is only right that we provide them the best in training and equipment, and an adequate living standard and level of compensation for them and their families for this commitment. General Abrams was correct, "The Army is people." Our readiness is assured through our ability to induct and retain these high quality professionals.

I look forward to responding to your questions on these issues during this hearing.