

**STATEMENT OF
GENERAL HENRY H. SHELTON
CHAIRMAN
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
BEFORE THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
ON
SEPTEMBER 27, 2000**

Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I am pleased to provide this written statement with my views on the readiness of America's Armed Forces and their ability to execute our national military strategy.

First, I would like to acknowledge and thank the Congress for its sustained and significant support to the men and women in our Armed Forces. We have made considerable progress these past two years in several key areas: increasing pay and allowances for the force; beginning the effort to reform TRICARE; initiating a new effort to provide adequate military housing; and, most importantly, arresting the decline in near-term readiness. I would like to commend this Committee, in particular, for your leadership role in this ongoing effort to support our men and women in uniform.

And let me join the Committee in paying tribute to our military members -- in the Active Force, the Guard and Reserves -- many of whom are deployed away from their homes maintaining the peace, and upholding America's interests around the world.

Since I last appeared before the SASC in May of this year, I have had the opportunity to visit U.S. forces throughout the United States, Europe, Southwest Asia

and, just last week, in South Korea and the Balkans. Wherever I went, I saw the same things: courage, spirit, and determination. In my 37 years in uniform, I have never been around better soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines. They are our most valuable resource and they represent the United States at its very best.

In the invitation to testify before the SASC, Senators Warner and Levin asked the Service Chiefs and me to provide our assessment of the readiness of our Armed Forces to meet our national security challenges.

The starting point for any such assessment must be our ability to execute the National Military Strategy, including the most demanding scenario -- fighting and winning nearly two simultaneous major theater wars.

As I have testified before this Committee from almost the start of my tenure as Chairman, and as the Department reported to the Congress in the last Quarterly Readiness Report, our review of overall force readiness indicates that forward deployed and "first-to-fight" forces remain capable of executing the National Military Strategy. But, as I have consistently testified, the risk associated with the most demanding scenario has increased over the past several years. Specifically, we continue to assess the risk factors associated with execution of the 1st MTW as moderate and for the 2nd MTW as high.

This does not mean that U.S. forces would not prevail in either contingency. What it does mean is that it would take us longer to respond to hostilities. In turn, this can mean territory lost and the potential for a longer fight with increased casualties.

This risk assessment for the 2-MTW scenario is based on many factors, including both traditional readiness issues voiced by the Services, and joint readiness issues reported by the Commanders in Chief (CINCs).

As the SASC well knows, the Services have reported declining readiness indicators in areas such as manning, training, and equipment readiness for several years, although not all Services have experienced problems to the same extent. While

the readiness deficiencies are most visible in the later deploying and non-deploying forces, some forward deployed and "first-to-fight" forces -- *though ready* -- have also experienced some of these difficulties. The Services have taken active measures to address these deficiencies and we are now seeing evidence that those efforts, in conjunction with the much-needed funding increases in the FY 1999 and FY 2000 budgets, have arrested the declines in most cases.

In addition, two other areas of concern must be recognized. First, while our materiel is ready for combat operations, our long-term ability to sustain that equipment is slipping. One cause is due to the negative effects of a higher than planned tempo of operations on our aging equipment. This high tempo and the associated wear-and-tear require more frequent maintenance and repair, further highlighting the need for recapitalization and modernization of our forces. Moreover, we have not been able to procure enough new equipment to reduce the average age of our force structure. It is also important to note that we believe this higher maintenance tempo has also had a deleterious effect on the hardworking troops attempting to maintain this aging equipment, which directly impacts retention of our quality force.

Second, while the focus on current readiness issues is necessary and has produced positive results, those results have come at the expense of our ability to provide resources for maintaining infrastructure. The Services will continue their efforts to balance resources to meet the competing demands of personnel, current readiness, and infrastructure. However, continuing to improve our current readiness posture to desired levels while preparing for tomorrow's challenges will require additional resources. Some of the required resources may be derived from additional Base Realignment and Closure rounds.

Our latest Quarterly Readiness Report submitted to Congress also highlighted the “joint readiness” concerns of the CINCs regarding their ability to synchronize and utilize forces to meet theater and national objectives. These concerns generally reflect *capability* deficiencies that highlight shortages of specific types or quantities of systems or the need for additional personnel billets, as opposed to traditional readiness issues that are managed by the Services. The report emphasized eight areas of strategic concern: command, control, communications and computer (C4) deficiencies; intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) deficiencies; mobility shortfalls; logistics/sustainment shortfalls; terrorist and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) challenges; information vulnerabilities; stresses on the force from ongoing contingency operations; and the ability to disengage quickly from ongoing operations to meet timelines for a 2-MTW scenario.

Many of these deficiencies are being addressed through the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS) process and there are ongoing programmatic efforts in place to correct them. Specific deficiencies and efforts to resolve them are classified in nature and are discussed in some detail in the classified portion of our Quarterly Readiness Report to Congress.

In summary, while we have the most capable force in the world, we will need additional funding from the Administration and the Congress if we are to simultaneously improve our current readiness, recapitalize our heavily used equipment and our aging infrastructure and modernize the force so that when we place our men

and women in uniform in harm's way they continue to have substantial technological advantages. The exact requirement for additional funding will be predicated on the coming Quadrennial Defense Review which will address future force structure.

Regardless, we must continue to maintain our focus on maintaining our quality force, which is our most decisive edge, by providing the quality of life which they and their families deserve.

The Service Chiefs and I appreciate the opportunity to meet with the SASC and to share our views.