

THE DEFENSE MONITOR

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Future Combat Systems

Is the Army's Modernization Project Worth it?

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THE FUTURE COMBAT SYSTEMS (FCS), introduced in 2003, is the U.S. Army's major modernization effort for the next 20 years. It envisions integrating 14 aerial and ground components into an advanced communications network (System of Systems Common Operating Environment, or SOSCOE) to provide better situational awareness. The network would enable substantial armored vehicle weight reductions so that FCS brigades could be transported quickly by aircraft.

Concerns about FCS abound: costs have increased dramatically, development has yielded few tangible results, and it is questionable if many components can realistically be fielded. The relevance of FCS capabilities for current and future strategic needs is also debated.

The Preliminary Design Review (PDR) scheduled for February 2009 may be the last opportunity to restructure the program before production commitments are locked in. The review will seek to answer three questions: 1) Are FCS capabilities relevant for current needs; 2) Can FCS be completed under the current schedule and budget; and 3) Should FCS be kept as is, restructured or limited? Based on an examination of FCS progress and the contemporary combat environment, this analysis concludes that FCS must be restructured and limited.

FCS Snapshot

The Army's current estimate of program costs is \$160.9 billion – a 76 percent increase from the Army's initial \$91.4 billion estimate in 2003. Notably, in 2006, when four of the 18 FCS subsystems were eliminated, the \$160 billion price tag stayed approximately the same. The contract has been revised twice and eight



The Small Unmanned Ground Vehicle minimizes soldiers' exposure directly to hazards, by conducting military operations in urban terrain, tunnels, sewers and caves.

Photo © U.S. Army

years added to the development phase. Also, FCS's Lead Systems Integrator (LSI) approach – where a contractor is appointed to oversee requirements for development, design and selection of major system and subsystem contractors – means that the Army will cede some management and hiring authority to the Boeing Company, which has been selected as

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the LSI. This method has been criticized for lack of oversight and Boeing's particularly high profit margin.

As of May 2008, few necessary technical components are ready for demonstration. Assuming research, development, testing and evaluation eventually concludes and procurement begins sometime between 2015 and 2022, the Army expects to spend at least \$10 billion per year on procurement for FCS equipment. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates this may reach \$16 billion per year. Little is left for other priorities, such as upgrading the aging armored vehicle fleet – predicted to cost \$2 billion annually from 2010 to 2016.

One of the original goals, that a 20-ton armored vehicle could provide adequate protection in an environment of rising lethality, has proven unfeasible. As a result, deploying FCS brigades by C-130s is unlikely.

Though the Senate fully funded fiscal year 2009 (FY 09) FCS requests, influential House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa., and House Armed Services Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Neil Abercrombie, D-Hawaii, suggested the FCS budget may be further limited, and the Armed Services Committee is expected to vote to cut \$200 million from the program.

Where is the program today?

All 44 critical technologies were supposed to reach Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 6 (model or prototype demonstration in a relevant environment) by 2006. Currently, only 32 critical technologies have reached TRL 6; the other 12 are not expected to until at least 2009. The Defense Department's policy preference has been to have technologies reach TRL 6

before starting the systems development and demonstration phase – but FCS started this phase in 2003, before readiness requirements were met.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) expressed concern over the FCS schedule because production decisions are being made soon after, or even before, adequate testing is completed. However, the Army rejected the GAO's assessment of a less concurrent schedule, arguing the GAO is using a single weapons system mindset. The Army's logic seems to be that the more complex a system is, the less it requires assurance that everything works before production decisions are made.

For example, plans are to field the Non-Line of Sight Cannon (a manned ground vehicle) by FY 2010, before there is evidence of technological readiness of necessary components. Its Active Protection System (comprehensive hit avoidance system) will not reach TRL 6 until after the PDR. And, the Director of Operational Test and Evaluation (DOT&E) reports, "It is not yet clear whether their [Active Protective System] performance will make up for lesser levels of MGV

[manned ground vehicle] armor protection." Furthermore, even if the vehicles perform to expectation, their survivability depends on the SOS-COE network, which is not scheduled to be demonstrated until 2012. If allowed to press ahead, the Army will produce this MGV without assurance that the network is a viable product.

There will be pressure from the defense industry and Army leadership to ignore failures and lock in production commitments. However, sustaining the program in its current form fundamentally contradicts Defense Undersecretary John Young's insistence that DOD adopt a "fly before you buy" approach to acquisition.

Because the thousands of system requirements have progressed unevenly, the Army is testing and producing FCS components in "spin outs." Spin Out One, which started in 2008, tests unattended ground sensors, the Non-Line of Sight Launch System, two Joint Tactical Radio System (JTRS) radios, integrated computer systems, and battle command software subsystems at Fort Bliss, Texas. Spin Out Two is scheduled to start in 2010, and tests the upgraded



The Multifunctional Utility/Logistics and Equipment Vehicle will support dismounted and air assault operations. It carries equipment and rucksacks for dismounted infantry squads while following them through complex terrain.

Photo © U.S. Army

JTRS, the Active Protective System (APS), and mast-mounted sensors for Stryker armored combat vehicles. Spin Out Three is scheduled to start in 2012 and will test small unmanned ground vehicles, unmanned airborne assets, and full FCS battle command capability. Plans are to outfit 15 FCS brigades (of the 48 planned for post-modularity transformation) at \$6.7 billion per brigade (originally projected to cost \$5.3 billion in 2003). The idea that the FCS equipment will reach less than one-third of Army combat forces raises serious questions about the program's utility.

Even if SOSCOE functions, networked information cannot replace killing power and inherent survivability, especially in close combat. Surprises such as mines, RPGs, chemical agents and air defense systems will persist. Also, FCS equipment promises to be so expensive that the Army may not be able to afford its loss, an untenable position for ground combat forces. Not only have projected FCS costs increased significantly, FCS has not yet reached the critical design review (2011); it is after this that most cost growth occurs!

CBO estimates FCS costs could grow by 60 percent, and two independent entities estimate costs to be significantly higher than Army projections. Moreover, FCS success depends on more than 50 complementary programs with their own schedules, budgets and additional costs. These include the JTPS, the Warfighter Information Network-Tactical and the Air Force Transformational Satellite Communications Program. Together, they cost \$80 billion, \$29 billion more than original estimates. The DOT&E reports that they "remain a significant risk area for the FCS program."

Additionally, FCS may not have

strategic or tactical relevance. In an era when DOD Directive 3000.05 elevates stability operations to the level of combat, and Defense Secretary Robert Gates emphasizes human elements of doctrinal change, FCS's design for technological dominance in an open battlefield seems out of place.

In current missions, where the population is the center of gravity, mechanizing and automating conflict may remove soldiers from the situation on the ground. Counterinsurgency doctrine suggests the most useful information is gathered by developing key local relationships. Also, it remains unclear if FCS data is capable of discerning enemy insurgents planting an improvised explosive device (IED) from a group of men working alongside a road.

Falling back on technology is a dangerous premise. Retired U.S. Army Col. Douglas Macgregor asserts, "When the systems fail, when the network goes down, when the tactical operations center is partially or completely destroyed, the danger exists that soldiers will not be able to construct a coherent view of operations, a profoundly intellectual activity that is largely independent of technology." Cyber attacks or operators applying the wrong filters to the automated intelligence system could leave FCS brigades vulnerable.

This is not to say that engaging with locals should substitute for armor. Rather, faith in the FCS network should be limited. FCS vehicles have less armor because of presumptions that the network gives brigades first-strike capabilities. If technology fails, they are especially vulnerable. The Army currently needs *heavier* vehicles that can withstand IEDs and explosively formed projectiles.

Though the Army insists each FCS

component is "non-negotiable" and that "the issue of affordability ought to be taken off the table," funding priorities and development stagnation will require FCS restructuring, which Deputy Undersecretary of Defense James Finley confirms is likely.

Recommendations

Six years into program development and on the cusp of production decisions, it is a reasonable time to expect the original potentialities of FCS to be materializing. As this is hardly the case, it is imperative that FCS requires realistic and successful testing of prototypes before production decisions, has more comprehensive oversight, establishes a better business model for scheduling decisions, and is restructured based on which technologies are proven, ready and relevant.

Congress also needs to play a more pro-active role in oversight. Despite GAO, CBO and CRS reports voicing concerns about the progress of FCS, the Senate fully funded FY 09 FCS development and procurement requests, and the House budget reductions were both minor and non-relevant to the major issues. Congress needs to tie funding availability to capabilities that are actually demonstrated in a rigorous, objective test and evaluation environment under a realistic schedule and a contracting set up for contractors to have an incentive to stay on schedule and budget.

Limiting FCS to components that are proven effective, more readily producible, and relevant for current and likely future needs creates the possibility that FCS will prove valuable in warfare as it actually exists. Otherwise, it is very possible that most of \$200 billion in taxpayer dollars will be found to have gone to waste. ■

Has a \$200 Billion “Plus-Up” Helped the Air Force?

BY WINSLOW T. WHEELER, STRAUS MILITARY REFORM PROJECT DIRECTOR

SINCE EARLY 2001, the U.S. Air Force has received more than \$200 billion above and beyond what was then planned for it in the medium-term future. This \$200 billion “plus-up” does not include any of the approximate \$80 billion the Air Force has received to support its operations in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Has this extra money been put to good use? Is today’s Air Force any larger? Is its equipment inventory more modern? Is it better prepared to fight?

In early 2001, the Pentagon anticipated an approximate budget of \$850 billion for the Air Force for the period from 2001 to 2009. Not counting the \$80 billion subsequently received for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Air Force’s “base” (non-war) budget was increased by more than \$200 billion to \$1.059 trillion.

Did this additional \$200 billion reverse three central, negative trends that have beset the Air Force for decades? Did the extra \$200 billion stem the tide of a shrinking and aging tactical aircraft inventory, and a force becoming less ready to fight?

Inventory

Consistent data on Air Force budgets for the entire post-World War II period are readily available to the public, but data on the size of the Air Force in terms of aircraft are not. In lieu of a year-by-year count of actual tactical aircraft for this period, the Air Force Historical Research Agency

(AFHRA) at Maxwell Air Force Base has published an analysis of “wing equivalents” of the Air Force’s force structure since the late 1930s. Although this analysis does not track the shrinkage and growth of the Air Force combat aircraft inventory with the best measure (actual aircraft) and may overcount the forces available in more recent times compared to the past, it is used here as the only Air Force data available to the public from 1947 to the present day.

The tactical (“wing equivalent”) inventory of the Air Force is as small today as at any point in the post-World War II period. From a 1957 high of 61 “wing equivalents,” it persistently hovers in the 21st century at 16 to 18. The trend has clearly been the significant shrinking of the force over time, despite some ups and downs.

The budget, however, shows a very different story. There have also been budget ups and downs, but the overall trend is for the budget to remain constant (in inflation adjusted dollars), and today the amount of spending for the Air Force is above the overall trend line. Thus, at a level of spending today higher than the

Upcoming in the September/
October issue: \$174 Billion “Plus-Up”
Scuttles Navy Ship Acquisition

historic norm, we have an Air Force tactical inventory that is as small as it has ever been since World War II.

Despite the increase in the planned “base” (non-war) Air Force budget by \$200 billion, nothing has happened to reverse the historically shrinking condition of the Air Force’s tactical aircraft inventory. Moreover, existing Air Force plans for the foreseeable future anticipate that the inventory remains at its current reduced state, assuming the Air Force’s plan is executed with no further costs overruns or production reductions – which is both very unlikely. (See “Air Force Active Fighter and Attack Wings” graph for the existing “plan.”)

Aging

Since the start of the George W. Bush administration in 2001, an already shrunken Air Force inventory has aged further. The negative trend Chuck Spinney found in the late 1990s has not reversed, it has worsened.¹

The unclassified data Spinney used for his analysis is not publicly available, so it has not been possible to update Spinney’s analysis using the same type of data. However, surrogate data is available from the Air Force Association: each year, its journal, *Air Force Magazine*, publishes an almanac that presents data on the “age of the Active Duty Fleet.” The 2001 almanac shows the aver-

1 See Winslow Wheeler’s introduction to the “Drowning in Dollars” Force Structure Series in the May/June 2008 *Defense Monitor* for more on Franklin C. “Chuck” Spinney’s analysis, “Defense Death Spiral.”

age age of the total Air Force “active duty fleet” (all types of aircraft) to be 21.2 years, which was then a historic milestone. The 2007 almanac shows the current fleet to have further aged to 23.0 years, a new historic “high.”

An additional \$200 billion above previously planned budgets has bought an older inventory. In the future, the average age of Air Force aircraft will be significantly older.

Readiness

Perhaps the most important measure of readiness to fight effectively in the air is pilot skill. One way to measure that is the number of hours each month pilots practice air combat in the air, known as “flying hours.” The anecdotal evidence to update Spinney’s findings is discouraging.

In 2006, Air Force representatives informed the author that F-22 pilots receive just 10 to 12 hours of air combat training (in the air) per month. Air Force budget justification data assert that F-16 pilots receive 16 to 18 hours per month. In the late 1990s, Air Force fighter pilots were receiving

18 to 20 hours per month. During the Vietnam War, 20 to 25 hours per month was considered just adequate. In the 1960s, when they were at the height of their proficiency, fighter pilots in the Israeli air force were getting 40 to 50 hours per month. Anywhere from 10 to 18 hours per month, now being provided to U.S. Air Force fighter pilots, is completely inadequate. In wartime, one would hope and expect air combat training hours to rise. Instead, American Air Force pilots receive fewer hours in the air than they did before the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

More Capable?

The standard Air Force position on these issues is, and always has been, that the technology it pursues may cost more, but it more than compensates for any force shrinkage by bringing extraordinary results on the battlefield. The F-22 is a typical example. As a fighter, it depends on the efficacy of a technological road that has not proven itself in real war. The “beyond visual range” radar-

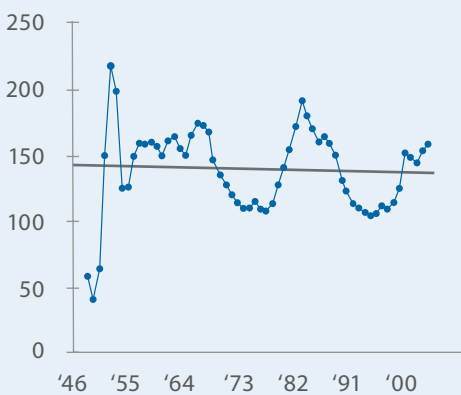
based air war the F-22 is highly specialized to fight – a hypothetical construct – is yet to be proven workable, let alone effective, in real-war aerial engagements involving more than a few contesting aircraft. Moreover, some serious experts, including the designers of highly successful combat aircraft such as the F-15, F-16 and A-10, argue that the F-22 is a huge disappointment in the actual performance characteristics that count in real-world aerial warfare.

The Air Force also claims huge, indeed “revolutionary,” levels of success in actual air campaigns. One typically cited example is the air war of Operation Desert Storm against Iraq in 1991. However, barely any of the Air Force’s claims of extraordinary success for its “silver bullets” and other high cost and complex systems were able to stand up to serious, independent scrutiny.

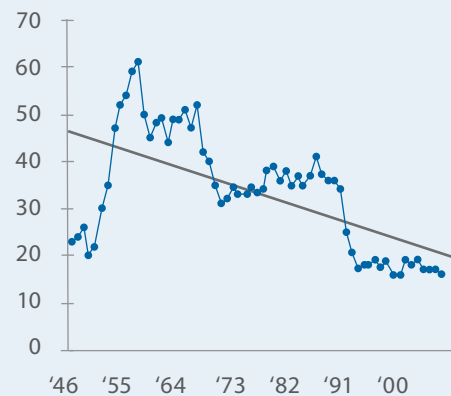
Moreover, the costs to acquire these “highly capable” systems are far more than what the advocates will tell you. The dollar’s value has inflated by a factor of 12 since the end of

AIR FORCE BUDGET

(Billions, FY 2009, w/trendline)



AIR FORCE ACTIVE FIGHTER & ATTACK WINGS (equivalents, w/trendline)



Sources: National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 2009, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) March 2008 and Air Force Historical Research Agency (Maxwell AFB) analysis, “Force Structure, United States Army Air Forces and United States Air Force.”

World War II. But the cost of the F-22 has inflated by a factor of 273 times the cost of a 1946-1947 fighter aircraft. Surely, the F-22 performs at a level barely imagined in 1946 by the designers of the Air Force's first jet fighter, the P-80. But, just as surely, the F-22 does not bring an increase in effectiveness against its likely enemies that even remotely matches its cost increase.

Air Force costs have outstripped performance so much so that fighters like the F-22 have become, quite literally, unaffordable. The more we buy, the weaker we become.

Conclusion

Today, as it has each year since the mid-1990s, the Air Force is seeking additional funds to enable it to address its problems. Specifically citing the shrunken size of the Air Force's aging aircraft inventory, the recently resigned chief of staff of the Air Force, Gen. Michael Moseley, submitted a \$18.7 billion list of "unfunded requirements," also known as a "wish list," to complement the \$143.7 billion budget he already submitted for 2009.

Taking into account the amount by which the 2009 budget has already been increased over and above

the extrapolated 2001 plan for 2009, \$35.4 billion, it is apparent that the Air Force is actually seeking a \$54.1 billion "plus-up."

Given the failure of the more than \$200 billion the Air Force received from 2001 to 2009 to stem, let alone reverse, its shrinking, aging, less combat-ready nature, there is no reason to think that more money will do anything but perpetuate, if not deepen, the problems. Clearly, a completely new modernization and operating strategy is needed. More money for business as usual will only result in more deterioration. ■

Air Force in Free Fall

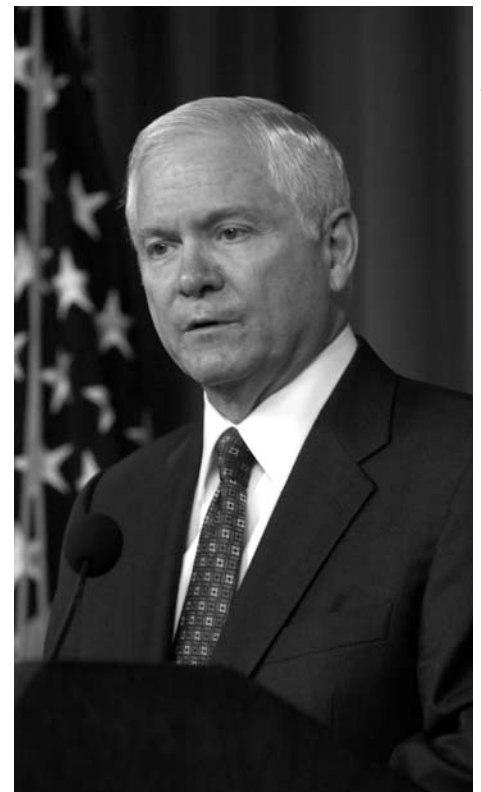
BY WINSLOW T. WHEELER, STRAUS MILITARY REFORM PROJECT DIRECTOR

LAST APRIL 21 AT MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates admonished his Air Force audience to adapt better to the radically changing circumstances of war in the 21st century. Six weeks later, he fired its two most senior leaders, the Secretary of the Air Force Michael Wynne and Chief of Staff Gen. T. Michael Moseley. Then on June 18, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) told the Air Force its selection process for a new air refueling tanker aircraft was so deeply flawed it should start the process all over again – for the third time.

Ostensibly, these events were about technology: using more unmanned aerial drones (how most press interpreted the speech at Maxwell), mishandling nuclear weapon components (the immediate reasons for firing Wynne and Moseley), and what air refueling tanker better meets the Air Force's hardware needs. However, to see the underlying issues as only technological is to misunderstand the crossroads the Air Force has come to.

The epitome of the Air Force's

self-image is the F-22 fighter. At \$355 million for each of the 184 purchased, it is history's most expensive fighter aircraft. However, it is yet to fly its first sortie in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and it likely never will. As an air-to-air fighter, it is irrelevant to those conflicts. It may even be a gigantic flop against the non-existent conventional air force it is designed to fight: too few are affordable to deal with a major foe; it is an aerodynamic performer that on close inspection is a huge disap-



R.D. Ward, DOD

Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates during a press briefing in the Pentagon on June 5, 2008 where he announced that he had accepted the resignation of both Secretary of the Air Force Michael W. Wynne and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. T. Michael Moseley.

pointment; and it relies on a radar-based “beyond visual range” air-to-air combat hypothesis that has failed time and time again to deliver effective results in real air combat.

And yet, the shadow over the Air Force is darker than the arguments over the efficacy of its technology. Despite the F-22’s inarguable irrelevance to our current wars, the Air Force’s leadership dedicated virtually the entire institution to buying more of them than the Pentagon and the White House were willing to purchase. Indeed, unauthorized Air Force lobbying for more F-22s had become so commonplace on Capitol Hill and in oblique (and not-so-oblique) comments to the press that it was clear the Air Force saw the president’s budget as just the starting point, and not the final word, for what spending is authorized. And despite being the least involved American military service in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Air Force has been seeking the biggest of all unauthorized supplements to its already historically huge annual budget.

Nowhere has the Air Force’s sense of self-entitlement been more obvious than in the unending scandals surrounding the acquisition of new air refueling tankers. Its 2001 plan to “lease-purchase” Boeing 767 airliners as tankers at costs well above the price of just purchasing them came to a demise only after Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., and the Justice Department found an Air Force official colluding with a Boeing corporate manager (both were subsequently jailed). With that grimy background and the world watching over its shoulder, one would have expected the Air Force acquisition process to be on its best behavior when it re-

started its tanker acquisition. It did so – properly at first – with a solicitation for competing bids from Boeing and Northrop-Grumman-Airbus. Despite voluminous assurances from the top of the Air Force that the competition was fought and won fair and square, the GAO issued an extraordinarily strong-worded ruling on June 18 that found the Air Force contract award process to be heavily biased, this time in favor of Northrop-Grumman.

These are not technical, or even technological, flaws. They are instead failures of intellect, and more importantly, ethics. Gates has done

Nowhere has the Air Force’s sense of self-entitlement been more obvious than in the unending scandals surrounding the acquisition of new air refuelling tankers.

the right thing by calling the Air Force leadership into account. However, it is very unclear how far he is willing to go to explain his firings and to fix everything that is wrong.

The individuals he has nominated to lead the Air Force come from backgrounds that offer some hypothetical hope. Gen. Norton Schwartz will, if confirmed by the Senate, be the service’s first-ever chief of staff to come from something other than the service’s fighter or bomber bureaucracies. He does, however, come from the Transport Command, where under-the-table lobbying for the C-17 cargo aircraft has been rife. The new secretary of the Air Force, Michael Donley, has an accounting background, but as the Air Force comptroller, he did not clean out the Augean stables of the service’s financial non-accountability, which

continues to this day.

In his speech at Maxwell Air Force Base, Gates described the abiding ethic of American military reformer and strategist Col. John R. Boyd, whose legacy includes the F-15 and F-16 fighters and, more importantly, a new way of thinking about human conflict. Among many things, Boyd taught that the moral choices one makes are what really determine who wins and who loses. As Gates accurately put it, Boyd said you can choose “to be” somebody – to become a member of the club but also to make crippling moral compromises. Or, you can choose “to do,” to sacri-

fice personal and bureaucratic interests in favor of actions that address the real needs of the nation and even the Air Force, even – nay, especially – when almost no one else sees it that way.

Gates summarized Boyd in saying, “In life there is often a roll call. That’s when you have to make a decision: to be or to do.” The Air Force came – reluctantly but ultimately completely – to embrace the aircraft Boyd gave it, but the service ignored his broader teachings. Now, the Air Force is living the consequences. It remains very unclear if the Air Force now has the leadership that Boyd and his work epitomized, or whether it will just be a matter of time before the service’s new leadership presides over yet another embarrassment that comes from its long-term focus on being, not doing. ■

A Different Kind of Enemy

American Soldiers Face Mental Health Challenges After Returning Home



BY BRETT SCHWARTZ, WSI, WASHINGTON PRISM CONTRIBUTING WRITER

DUE TO MEDICAL ADVANCEMENTS AND IMPROVED HOSPITAL CARE, more soldiers today are surviving injuries that might have killed them in past conflicts. However, the cruel irony is that these soldiers may then face a different kind of enemy once they return home – the enemy of depression and mental trauma.

While some soldiers may suffer physical injuries which force them to adapt to life in a wheelchair or learn to function with a missing limb, many others may return home with what a recent RAND report describes as the “invisible wounds of war” – the psychological wounds resulting from experiencing firsthand the horror and dangers of combat. Even soldiers who were not physically injured during their deployment may have experienced what researchers call “combat stressors,” scientific jargon for the all-too-real experiences facing military personnel during warfare.

Five years ago, the term “post-traumatic stress disorder” (PTSD) was perhaps familiar only to mental health experts and researchers. Today, however, it has entered our nation’s lexicon as an alarming percentage of soldiers return home from Iraq and Afghanistan showing symptoms of PTSD. According to RAND, their April report is the “first large-scale, nongovernmental assessment of the psychological and cognitive needs of military service members who have

served in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past six years.”

The statistics paint an alarming picture of the far-reaching impact of this mental trauma as well as the inadequacies of the existing medical system to care for the returning soldiers. Using data from 1,965 military personnel who served time in Iraq and Afghanistan, the researchers extrapolated that around 300,000 service members – close to 20 percent of those returning from these conflicts – are experiencing PTSD and/or depression from their exposure to combat. The report also concludes that around 320,000 of the deployed personnel may have been the victim of a traumatic brain injury (TBI), caused predominantly by improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that have become the weapon of choice for insurgents in both countries. Particularly concerning is that over 50 percent of those who may have experienced a TBI did not receive professional treatment for it. The report also argues that for the service members who did get medical attention for mental trauma, “just

over half received minimally adequate treatment.”

These sobering statistics reveal that scores of returning military personnel are facing damaging mental trauma alone and without sufficient support and guidance. For too many veterans, this struggle has ended in suicide. A groundbreaking investigative report by CBS news correspondent Armen Keteyian in November 2007 reported that 120 people who at some point served in the U.S. military take their own lives each week (based on reporting from 45 states), resulting in 6,256 veteran suicides in 2005. The statistics gathered by CBS also revealed that veterans between the ages of 20 and 24 (those who have served in Iraq, Afghanistan and other locations since Sept. 11) were the demographic most likely to commit suicide – at a rate three times that of civilians the same age. The startling numbers have convinced some observers that eventually more soldiers and veterans of the post-Sept. 11 wars will die by suicide than in actual battle. In early May, Thomas Insel, the head of the National Institute of Mental Health, told reporters that it was “quite possible that the suicides and psychiatric mortality of this war could trump the combat deaths.”

These statistics are “painful and upsetting,” commented Lisa Firestone in a recent interview with *Washington Prism*. However, she feels that these numbers are “only the tip of the iceberg.” Firestone, director of research and education at the Glendon Association, points to multiple, extended deployments to the dangerous and ill-defined battle zones of Iraq and Afghanistan as the major factors resulting in PTSD and suicidal tendencies among some soldiers. Jameson Hirsch at East Tennessee State University agrees that the “horror experiences of war” no doubt play a major part in the development of these mental traumas. He adds, however, that these pressures are further amplified by “the existence of a military culture in which suicide is viewed by some soldiers as a viable solution to the problem ... whereby soldiers feel they must be ‘strong’ and show no weakness,” he wrote via e-mail. Firestone believes that this is a reason many male soldiers in particular do not seek out help. “Men generally are more resistant to getting mental health help,” she says.

Not surprisingly, this issue has become a key concern on Capitol Hill. In May, the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs held a hearing entitled “The Truth About Veterans’ Suicides” as a follow-up to a December hearing that focused on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)’s plan of action for addressing the crisis. Committee Chairman Bob Filner, D-Calif., was highly critical of the VA’s handling of mental health and suicidal patients, particularly after an e-mail written by Ira Katz, the deputy chief of the VA’s mental health office, became public during a class-action lawsuit in San Francisco. Dated Feb. 13, 2008,

the e-mail reads:

Shh!

Our suicide prevention coordinators are identifying about 1,000 suicide attempts per month among the veterans we see in our medical facilities. Is this something we should (carefully) address ourselves in some sort of release before someone stumbles on it?

Filner bluntly addressed Katz and the secretary of veterans affairs, James Peake, in his opening statement: “You are not performing your job in an effective way,” he told Katz. As for the VA in general, Filner said: “The pattern is deny, deny, deny. Then when facts come to disagree with the denial, you cover-up, cover-up, cover-up.” Officials at the VA have argued that it has been difficult to keep up with the drastic increase in the number of liability claims as a result of the higher demand from veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as from the aging veterans of Vietnam. 838,000 claims were filed with the VA in 2007 alone, a 45 percent increase from the 579,000 filed in 2000, prior to commencement of the “War on Terror.”

This is no excuse, says Aaron Glantz, author of “How America Lost Iraq” and editor of the website “The War Comes Home” which focuses on veterans issues. Glantz told *Washington Prism* that the government should have mobilized personnel and resources at the VA the same way the military mobilized troops in preparation for the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Glantz also says that there has been too much emphasis on the stigma of mental health preventing troops and veterans from seeking

support, which has been put forward by the government and VA “to excuse their incompetence.”

Over 2,800 miles from Washington, in a federal courthouse in San Francisco, U.S. District Judge Samuel Conti had been deliberating on the class-action case *Veterans for Common Sense vs. Peake*, the lawsuit that brought to light Katz’s February e-mail. The plaintiffs, Veterans for Common Sense and Veterans United for Truth, hoped that Conti’s decision would result in a fundamental change in the way the VA operates and responds to veterans. However, Conti dismissed the case at the end of June, saying that the veterans’ groups failed to show a “systemwide crisis” within the VA that would justify intervention by the courts.

Any change within the federal government or military will take time given the size and complicated bureaucracy of both. “I fear that such bureaucratic separation, paired with a militaristic approach to a very ‘human’ problem, might cause a solution to be a long time in the making,” warns Hirsch.

Following CBS’s report in November, Sen. Daniel Akaka, D-Hawaii, issued this concerned statement: “For too many veterans, returning home from battle does not bring an end to the conflict. There is no question that action is needed.” It will take more than words, however, to make a change. As more and more veterans return home with these “invisible wounds,” it is the responsibility of the government that sent these men and women off to war to provide them with the best healthcare and support upon their return. Anything less than that surely runs counter to the ideals and principles of the United States. ■

United Nations Considers Arms Trade Treaty

BY RACHEL STOHL, CDI SENIOR ANALYST



IN DECEMBER 2006, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 61/89, entitled “Toward an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms.” The resolution called for the UN secretary-general to seek the views of all UN member states on the “feasibility, scope and parameters for a comprehensive, legally binding instrument establishing common international standards for the import, export, and transfer of conventional arms.” Further, the resolution established a group of governmental experts (GGE) tasked to examine these same issues.

The resolution passed by a vote of 153-1, with the sole dissenting vote from the United States. Since the resolution passed, over 100 states have provided their views on a potential Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) to the UN secretary-general.

The Arms Trade Treaty would be the first conventional arms treaty to establish guidelines, criteria and standards for countries to take into consideration when determining whether to export arms. It is intended to prevent irresponsible arms transfers that undermine human rights and democracy, hinder sustainable development and contribute to armed conflict. The United Kingdom has led the most recent efforts at the United Nations, but the idea of an Arms Trade Treaty has been in discussion for over a decade. Various iterations of arms trade treaties have been proposed by governments and nongovernmental organizations, stemming from former Costa Rican President Oscar Arias’s Nobel Laureates Code of Conduct for Arms Exports in the early 1990s.

In fulfilling the obligations of Resolution 61/89, the secretary-general also established a 28-member GGE. I was appointed as the consultant to this group of experts, which has allowed me to have a unique perspective on the sessions and insight into

what may result from the process. The GGE is scheduled to report to the UN General Assembly outlining views on feasibility, scope and parameters of a potential ATT, as well as recommendations for a way forward. The GGE met from Feb. 11-15 and May 12-16, and will hold their third, and perhaps most contentious, session from July 28-Aug. 8. Ambassador Roberto Garcia Moritan of Argentina serves as chairman of the group, with other experts representing Algeria, Australia, Brazil, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Romania, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Although countries like China, Russia, Cuba, Egypt, Pakistan and India have expressed their skepticism of the ATT and the UN process, the United States has been the most publicly vocal in its opposition. The United States did not submit a report of its views on the ATT to the secretary-general and decided only to participate in the GGE after the first session had already begun. U.S. opposition to the ATT and the UN process has been based on concerns that any eventual treaty would have lower standards than

those already enshrined in U.S. law.

The U.S. position has confounded its closest allies. In addition to strong domestic legislation and regulations on arms exports, which could be used as a model for other countries or an ATT, the United States is bound by law to undertake negotiations on an international arms trade treaty. In 1999, the U.S. Congress passed the International Arms Sales Code of Conduct, which outlines specific criteria for U.S. arms exports – including that U.S. arms transfers go to recipients that promote democracy, respect human rights, do not engage in acts of armed aggression in violation of international law, do not support terrorism, do not contribute to nuclear or WMD proliferation and will not be used to “exacerbate regional arms races or international tensions.” In addition, the code also requires the president to begin negotiations to “establish an international regime to promote global transparency with respect to arms transfers.” Although the United States has yet to officially begin international negotiations under the terms of the resolution, the UN ATT process is consistent with the congressional mandate and would fulfill its obligations under U.S. law.

As the most important GGE session is set to commence later this summer, the outcome is still unclear. In my role as consultant, I have witnessed the politics that are behind much of the deliberations and discussions throughout this undertaking. Although an ATT is still several years away, this process is the first step in a long path towards its reality. ■

The Responsibility to Protect

An International Norm in the Making?

BY MARK BURGESS, WSI BRUSSELS DIRECTOR

THE CONCEPT OF the Responsibility to Protect – or R2P as it is known in policy jargon – has been in the news lately as a result of the (partly man-made) humanitarian crisis that unfolded in Burma after Cyclone Nargis struck the country's Irrawaddy Delta.

The debate over whether the Burmese government's failure to allow sufficient international aid in or provide such aid itself warranted the invocation of R2P remains far from settled. The cyclone also highlighted the degree to which the concept is contested and often misunderstood, even if it brought a new urgency to a discussion that must continue if this emerging international norm is to be fully developed and operationalized.

R2P: From Concept to Emerging Norm

R2P was initially conceived by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), an independent body set up by the Canadian government in September 2000 in response to then-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's challenge to the international community that it establish consensus on the issue of humanitarian intervention – a reaction to the world's failure to meaningfully intervene throughout the 1990s, most particularly in Rwanda and the Balkans.

The commission proposed a new norm for international relations which built upon the notion of sovereignty as responsibility that came out of earlier work by Francis M. Deng and others at The Brookings Institution in Washington D.C. As originally envisaged, R2P insists that governments have a responsibility to protect their populations. That

responsibility passes to the international community when a state is unable or unwilling to protect its people from serious harm arising from insurgency, internal war, repression or state failure.

The concept – as articulated by ICISS – actually comprises three responsibilities: prevention, reaction and rebuilding. Of these, prevention is the most important. Any reaction such as intervention only occurs when prevention has failed. Military intervention is a last resort and only justified if ethnic cleansing or large-scale killing is occurring.

Other limiting factors are right intentions; proportional means and reasonable prospects for success (with the consequences of nonintervention considered worse than intervention); appropriate authority; and sound operational principles.

The timing of R2P's emergence was inauspicious, with the commission's final report published in December 2001, when the world was transfixed by the recent terrorist attacks on America. Despite this, extensive lobbying by its architects and supporters saw elements of R2P eventually accepted by the world's governments in paragraphs 138-139 of the 2005 UN World Summit Outcome Document. That R2P has come so far so soon is remarkable, however, as the recent debate over Burma shows, the concept



U.S. Air Force personnel unload supplies in Yangon as part of humanitarian operations to provide aid to Burmese citizens in the wake of Cyclone Nargis.

Senior Airman Sonya Croston, U.S. Air Force, DOD

R2P AND WSI BRUSSELS

R2P is not without its controversies or problematic elements. Yet if it is to be effectively operationalized, its potential contradictions must be fully explored and reconciled. Other concerns and misunderstandings about the concept must be adequately addressed. This is especially true when it comes to the question of the potential use of military force.

Further discussions of R2P's conceptual underpinnings are far from being just academic exercises. Rather, this examination is crucial if R2P is to make the transition from principle to practice. If that happens, R2P may well prove the world's best hope to combat the scourge of genocide and mass atrocities. It is with this in mind that WSI has entered the R2P debate.

Our latest contributions have included participation in two recent events in Paris and Brussels. On June 26, WSI Brussels Director Mark Burgess addressed civil society representatives during a conference put together in the French capital by Human Rights Watch, Oxfam France and the Institute for Global Policy. Burgess also spoke at a European Security Contact Group R2P event on July 1 in the European Parliament, organized by ISIS-Europe, together with the International Crisis Group, and hosted by Irish MEP Colm Burke.

is still a ways away from being fully agreed upon or operationalized.

Burma and R2P

Few would dispute the accusation that Burma's government neglected, mishandled and actually worsened the crisis caused by Cyclone Nargis. But it was far from clear how help could be delivered to the victims without the permission of the Burmese leaders.

Suggested solutions included using military force to deliver aid and air-drop supplies. How such a use of force could take place without making matters worse, or who would carry it out – together with exactly how aid and the know-how to safely and effectively distribute it could be delivered – was rather unclear. Indeed, it was far from apparent that the responsibility to protect should even pass to the international community. The most sensible discussions of this concerned the question of whether the Burmese government's behavior could be considered a crime against humanity – a cited reason for intervention in the Outcome Document's adopted understanding of R2P.

No intervention ultimately occurred in Burma, since some measure of cooperation was eventually secured from the country's military government via negotiation and engagement. Meanwhile, early assessment reports suggested that the number who died as a result of the Burmese leadership's failure to allow in sufficient international aid or provide such aid itself may not be as high as initially feared. The nature of the cyclone (which killed outright rather than leaving large numbers of injured), the sheer hardiness of the people affected, and efforts by some

private citizens to deliver aid are all quoted as mitigating factors. However, even if the death toll is found to be mercifully low, it does little to diffuse the charges that Burma's government failed to discharge its responsibility to protect its citizens.

RIP R2P?

The wider debate about R2P continues. To some it is a much-needed international norm that lessens the emphasis on military force and shifts the focus from sovereignty to individual and human security; it is the international community's best answer to existing and developing humanitarian crises. To others, it is a Trojan horse that lets countries use humanitarian intervention as cover for neo-imperialism and regime change – a charge substantiated to some degree by the war in Iraq and the rhetoric of some of its apologists – as well as posing an unacceptably high threat to the concept of sovereignty.

Some contend that the failure to invoke R2P in Darfur – where the clearest and most urgent case for such action currently exists – has effectively killed off the concept. However, as the debate over Burma shows, rumors of R2P's demise have been exaggerated, even if much the same can be said for claims that it is a fully accepted or effective international norm.

Fears have also been expressed by some of R2P's strongest advocates that it was damaged by its invocation over Burma. However, it could be argued that the cyclone and its aftermath breathed new life into the debate surrounding the concept. The shame, as is so often the case, is that this fresh impetus came at such a high cost in human life. ■

SUMMER 2008

WSI INTERNS



From l. to r.: Vanessa Johnston, Brian Mahoney, Vince Manzo, Valerie Reed, Rick Redmond, Galina Shmeleva (Anna Janney DeArmond Intern), Tim Casey, Chelsea Dilley, Eugene Marder (Deblinger Research Intern), Kartik Bommakanti.

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