

Farewell Message

Army Chief of Staff
General Peter J. Schoomaker

35th Chief of Staff of the Army
9 April 2007



Tomorrow we will stand on the parade field at Fort Myer and the mantle of Army Chief of Staff will pass to General George W. Casey. It has been a tremendous privilege and honor to serve alongside you, the Soldiers, Civilians, and family members, who make the Army the world's preeminent land force, the ultimate instrument of national resolve.

Upon becoming 35th Army Chief of Staff in August 2003, I issued an "Arrival Message" to the force. In that message I spoke of standing in an Iranian desert in 1980, on a moonlit night, at a place called Desert One, where eight of our comrades lost their lives and others were forever scarred. I spoke of keeping a photo of the carnage that night to remind me of the grief and failure of that mission and the commitment survivors of that operation made to a different future.

Having now been in this Army for almost four decades, and having seen the Army my father served in for 32 years before that, I can tell you in no uncertain terms that today's battle-hardened Army does, in fact, reflect the different "future" we envisioned.

Standing on the shoulders of those who have gone before us, the men and women of today's Army have remained focused on our non-negotiable responsibility to the Nation. For almost 232 years, the Army has never failed the American people, and it never will. We have been resolute in the pursuit of our four overarching strategies – providing relevant and ready landpower; training and equipping Soldiers to serve as warriors and growing adaptive leaders; sustaining the all-volunteer force composed of highly competent Soldiers who are provided a quality of life commensurate with the level of their service; and providing infrastructure and support to enable the force to fulfill its strategic roles and missions. Furthermore, instead of reigning-in our drive to transform during a time of war, we have leveraged opportunities in this conflict to establish and accelerate the momentum necessary to reshape the entire force into a more capable campaign-quality force with vastly improved joint and expeditionary capabilities.

Specifically, as we serve alongside our joint and allied partners in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, we have improved the Army's ability to operate and dominate in any environment against current, emerging, and unforeseen threats. While working to grow the Regular Army by 30,000 since 2004, we now have authority to permanently increase our endstrength by over 74,000 Soldiers across all components – Active, National Guard, and Army Reserve. We have created far more capable and strategically deployable brigade-sized formations that are designed to receive and integrate new technologies and equipment as soon as they become available. There has been a significant expansion and enhancement of Army Special Operations Forces. We have and are continuing to increase Soldier and unit effectiveness and protection, as evidenced in our reset efforts and modernization plans. We have been developing a forward-looking doctrine which guides how we organize, train, fight, and sustain our forces. Finally, and perhaps most importantly given that Soldiers are our centerpiece, the Army's intellectual and cultural transformation is creating and maintaining a learning and adaptive force that will dramatically improve how we face future challenges. We are growing innovative Soldiers and pentathlete leaders through

training and education built on recent combat experience. Literally, every aspect of today's Army has been touched by change, with the exception of our enduring values.

During my tenure as Army Chief of Staff, I have seen our Soldiers continuously demonstrate why they are our greatest strength. Their adherence to the Warrior Ethos is as inspiring as it is necessary. Their ability to learn and adapt as we fight an ever-changing enemy and transform to meet complex future threats is essential. Their dedication and optimism about our future are contagious.

We must never forget that war is fought in the human dimension. Therefore, technology will always play an important but distinctly secondary role, because even our most sophisticated satellites and computers cannot get into the mind of the enemy, interact with local leaders, understand other societies and cultures, or make the instantaneous life or death decisions required to meet our 21st century challenges. Men and women with their "boots on the ground" are necessary to do all this.

Let there be no mistake, fighting and adapting today, while transforming for an uncertain and complex future against traditional, irregular, catastrophic, and disruptive threats is vital to America's security. Although those in uniform have borne a disproportionate burden during the opening engagements of this Long War, we are not fighting and cannot win this war alone. Defeating our enemies requires a shared understanding of the threat and a strategic consensus. It requires a concerted effort, utilizing all elements of power – diplomatic, informational, military, and economic. Finally, it requires a national commitment to recruit, train, equip, and support those in uniform and their families, something that is a matter of priorities, not affordability.

While prudence cautions against ignoring the effect of war weariness and our tendency toward cyclic national defense flat-footedness, let me assure you that from my vantage point, our men and women in uniform continue to enjoy the admiration and appreciation of every American. This is reflected both in public opinion and the Congress. This support has been and will be critical as we continue to fight this Long War.

The road ahead will not be easy and the stakes could not be higher. While there is much we don't know, I can say with certitude that sustained engagement of our Army will remain the norm, not the exception. Therefore, the Army must continue to demonstrate initiative, resilience, and innovation at all levels. The Army must continue to adhere to its non-negotiable Values and the Warrior Ethos. The Army must continue to learn and adapt. Yet despite challenges, everything I have seen as Army Chief of Staff encourages me.

When recalled from retired rolls nearly four years ago, I stated that "as an American Soldier, I had never left your ranks." It has been a great privilege to wear the uniform once again. I remain forever humbled by the courage, dedication, and selfless service of those who preceded us and those who remain in service to our Country. I am proud of you. You are indeed Army Strong!

God bless you – the United States Army.