

“Frank Assessment Up and Down the Chain of Command”

Major General Paul D. Eaton, U.S. Army (retired)

Many members of the U.S. Army were extremely unhappy with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s treatment of General John Shinseki.¹ I was not among those critics, at first. When Mr. Rumsfeld first took office, I was a fan. I liked what he was trying to do. I liked the idea of the lean infantryman, equipped with technology, going forward to fight the American war. I thought the poster child for this idea—a man from the Army Reserves unit from Parksdale, Louisiana, on horseback in Afghanistan calling in airstrikes from B-52s—was a pretty good idea, worth exploring.² That honeymoon phase eroded over time, as we saw a failure on the part of the Secretary to adapt to the environment we were in. What happened next began in the middle of March 2006.

I. My Own Background

Let me first explain that I lost my own father during a war in Vietnam that, at the time and ever since, has been a subject of enormous debate. I didn’t lose him right away. All I got in January of 1969 was the news of that aircraft lost in a tearful phone call from my mom. I was 18 and a plebe at West Point, and we just didn’t know what was going on. Ten years later, we got the death certificate, and we had a little ceremony, got his awards, and that was it.

Roll forward a little bit in time: about three days prior to the Christmas, 2006: I had my own kids in the car, two sons (by now, both soldiers) and my daughter. We were gathering for Christmas. I got a tearful phone call from my mom again, telling me that they found my dad’s body. We had been tracking this at the Joint Task Force Full

Accounting, so we knew. We finally had the funeral that dad deserved, with full military honors and a B-52 flyby. It was a great reunion of friends and family. A small piece of bone was in the coffin. That's it. But this country, because of Joint Task Force for Full Accounting and the work of some pretty darn brave people, put that together.

I have two sons. One served as a special forces captain in Afghanistan, and the other is a sergeant who served with the 82nd Airborne in Afghanistan. Both sons re-enlisted when the time came in 2006. In addition, my wife is a veteran, and my father-in-law is a Naval Academy graduate, class of 1945. So that's the family context. I have a brother-in-law who is a Marine pilot, a second brother-in-law whose an army pilot, and a former brother-in-law who is an Air Force enlisted, so you might say that a tradition of military service is kind of "in the family."

That was the personal context. Let me add a professional context. In 2002, I was sitting in the bleachers at West Point at the football stadium watching my son graduate, and President Bush took the podium and delivered the speech that laid out the pre-emptive strike on Iraq.³ I was sitting up there with my wife, looking down at the West Point graduates. I've got the parents of my future daughter-in-law sitting next to me.

I said, "This is a meaningful speech, and we have an interesting road in front of us." Like most people, I thought this was a reasonable idea, and I'm not now, nor have I ever debated the decision to go to war. My recent trip to Vietnam to receive my father's remains has added emphasis to my position. I cannot, of course, be certain, but I firmly believe that history will reveal the wisdom of what we did and what we're doing in both Afghanistan and Iraq at some point. We have a lot of politicians who declare going into Iraq the greatest foreign policy disaster that has befallen us. I'm not sure if they're

referring to the decision to go to war or just the sheer incompetence of the prosecution of the initial phases of the war, which are two, quite different issues.

What I am very certain of, however, is that on July 1, 1968, I took an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic. I took that oath if memory serves at about 1700 hours, after a brutal day of reception at the military academy. It didn't dawn on me at that time that I was giving up my rights to dissent, that I was giving up my rights to challenge the nature of government.

As time went by, I was a good soldier. I did all those things that we're expected to do and to the best of my ability fulfilled my requirements for the military profession, its ethics, and ethos.

II. Iraq: The Military Backlash Begins

So what triggered my writing the op-ed piece that started all this business about the so-called "revolt of the generals?"⁴ Actually, I don't think I deserve credit for having started it. General Anthony C. Zinni, U.S. Marine Corps (retired), had already been very active in his discussions and his critique of what was going on in Iraq. I was not the first guy out there. I was a two-star general. He was a retired four-star.*

During the third month of my retirement, I was at a Starbucks near where I live, getting out of the house while it was remodeled. I called my wife and said, "I just read a disturbing document." I had been grouching about Mr. Rumsfeld for some time, and my wife is my sounding board, and a lot smarter than I am. She said, "Well, what are you going to do about it?" And what she meant was, "Okay, big boy, I've heard you talking

about it, so what are you going to do?”

I said, “I’ve just read this document that calls for the reduction in size of the Army, but we continue to build Virginia class submarines at the rate of one a year. We are going to maintain 10 or 11 aircraft carrier strike forces, pretty close to what we had during the Cold War, and we’re going to maintain the joint strike fighter and the F-22 programs. Yet we’re going to reduce the size of the Army.”

This was February of 2006. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in congressional testimony had stated we were at a spike in demand for ground forces, but somehow we didn’t need to grow the Army.

There was a modest reduction in the size of the Army in the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and a very modest fifteen-percent increase in the special forces of the United States. So then I started googling “QDR reaction” and “QDR and Congress” and found nothing. No discussion. So I was reviewing a flawed document, a document that did not reveal the reality of what was happening in Afghanistan and Iraq. My son had just completed a fifteen-month tour in Iraq and was already getting ready to go to Afghanistan. He’d spent fifteen months as a rifle platoon leader for the 25th Infantry in the Fourth Division, First Division Area Officer, in firefight after firefight, and now he was going to be a Special Forces captain leading an operational detachment alpha (ODA) in Afghanistan. My other son was getting ready for a fifteen-month tour with the 82nd in Afghanistan. What I was reading was therefore wrong, and yet there was no commentary about it.

Who was defending the Army? Congress wasn’t. Congress was asleep. It was Republican-dominated. What I didn’t know was that the minority party cannot trigger an

investigation. The minority party cannot subpoena. The Democrats whom I criticized proceeded to inform me about that little bit of civics.

What really offended a lot of people about my editorial, however, was that I asked for Secretary Rumsfeld to step down after I declared him “incompetent strategically, operationally, and tactically.” I made the case for each of those, and then at the end of my editorial, I gave recommendations, one of which was for Congress to become much more actively engaged in oversight.

Army Ranger regiments periodically go through an analysis of their leaders. They call it “a 360,” by which they mean “360⁰-feedback,” a full evaluation of their capabilities and performance by subordinates, as well as by peers and superiors. Well, I quite didn’t realize the full extent of what I was doing when I wrote that op-ed piece, but as it happens, I had just given Secretary Rumsfeld his first “360,” and it was pretty inflammatory. We evaluate our peers, we evaluate our subordinates, and you can evaluate one level up. A major general will evaluate all the major generals he knows, all the brigadiers he knows and all the lieutenant generals he knows. I figured I was just giving my assessment of the Secretary of Defense. Now in this case, the evaluation was a bit more than “one level up,” but at the time, nobody was saying anything about the conduct of the war or about the long-term well-being of the armed forces of the United States. That QDR was the trigger point for me finally to do just that.

My younger son taught me about an internet web site known to many of you here as “Strat Four,” and got me on their web page. Strat Four showed a graphic about how to change public policy. Let’s say you want to change the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy. You have some outliers in the very beginning. Typically, they’re gay, and they want a

change. They start talking about it. They band together and become little groups, and then they become bigger groups, all voicing their opinion. Next, they approach mainstream organizations—VFW, AMVETS and politicians—and they're en route to a policy change. That process with "don't ask, don't tell" has been going on for years. General Clark, when he was running for president in 2004, came out in favor of changing the policy. General Shalikashvili has come out in favor of changing the policy. In the graphic, the knee in the curve, where things start to accelerate, is your credibility.

So what happened when these generals decided to do what they did? It gave credibility to what a lot of people were thinking. A lot of people were thinking, "Iraq is not going well, and this Secretary of Defense is not adapting to the reality of the fight there."

The military couldn't even use the insurgency word for months, when simply having acknowledged that we were in the middle of an insurgency would have triggered a change in our prosecution of that war. The Secretary of Defense kept pushing back, and he kept stubbornly to his agenda, in the way that some Army captains do. Typically at the rank of captain in the Army, we discover whether a given individual is going to become an adaptive leader. If a captain isn't adaptive and responsive, then he will make the mistake of just laboring over a "great plan" that he has created. He won't adapt the plan, or his behavior, to changing conditions. His original plan will collide with bad weather, or the enemy won't cooperate, or something else happens. No plan survives first contact with the enemy, but the unadaptive leader is nevertheless going to take that great plan and drive it to fruition. . .except it doesn't work.

This, in my estimation, is the kind of futile leadership that the Secretary of

Defense exhibited. So in the spring of 2006, we had silence upon the land. We had a bad policy in Iraq, and we had an Army under tremendous stress, and nobody was speaking up for the Army. That's why I wrote that op-ed piece.

After I wrote it, I sent it to a buddy of mine at the *New York Times*, who sent it over to the editorial board. That board called me the next morning and said the newspaper would publish it on Sunday, March 19, on the third anniversary of the attack into Iraq. I didn't time it for that, but that's what happened. They put it in the Sunday op-ed section, and it hit the fan. At five o'clock that morning, Wolf Blitzer's guys phoned me. I was trying to leave for a scuba trip in Hawaii. Every news organization you can imagine called—Al Jazeera, Australia, New Zealand—I mean everybody. They just loved the idea of a retired general attacking the man. The press, the liberal media in particular, just loved it. The Democrats loved it.

So they went after other generals, including John Batiste, who actually is a far more credible actor in all this. John chose to retire instead of doing what they were asking him to do. That was a tough call on his part to turn down a third star. Others stepped forward, and then came a *Vanity Fair* article called “The Night of the Generals.”¹ The original action was not coordinated. We were independent in our actions. It was not: “Hey, let's get after the Secretary of Defense.”

That's why I chose to do it, and I heard from my sons, as you might imagine. My sergeant son, who was then a specialist, came into the orderly room and was asked, “Any

¹ Ed's note: David Margolick, “The Night of the Generals” appeared in *Vanity Fair* magazine (April 2007), and can be accessed at: <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2007/04/iraqgenerals200704>

relation?”

“That would be my dad,” he answered.

My captain son asked, “Dad, where are you going with this?” It was not universally popular in his group. He had guys who supported me and guys who didn’t know me. It looked anti-republican, anti-president, but none of us attacked the President or the Vice President. Rumsfeld was a political appointee.

So I asked a few things in return. Why is my opinion, declaring Mr. Rumsfeld incompetent, any worse an action than an active-duty, three-star general in uniform on “Fox and Friends” lavishing praise all over Mr. Rumsfeld, and then getting an assignment to command ground forces in Iraq? Is it appropriate that we have the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in uniform in public, on TV, defending and praising his boss? Is it appropriate that the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers “explain” to the public that General Eric Shinseki “was kind of pushed” into a corner by Senator Levin, and that his response hadn’t been vetted through either Gen. Myers himself, or through the Secretary of Defense?

Let’s remember the provisions of the Goldwater-Nichols legislation. Here we had the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff wishing away and pushing away General Shinseki’s remarks in the latter’s sworn Congressional testimony. Senator Levin didn’t want the opinion of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. He didn’t want the opinion of the Secretary of Defense. He wanted the opinion of the soldier who was testifying. I find that whole environment toxic to the profession of arms.

I’m not going to go through the litany of failures that could be directly pinned

upon the breast of former Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, but we were in a position to know. We had a lot of people out here who were uncomfortable with the Secretary of Defense. I had subordinates who approached me and said, “You’re not going to believe who I just got a call from,” and the White House and the National Security Council and the Secretary of Defense office immediately went into spin control and attack, attempting to discredit the guys talking. All those people who felt that something was wrong concluded, “These guys seem to know what they’re doing.”

I viewed this situation as an extraordinary circumstance, one in which Congress had “fallen asleep at the switch,” and an Executive Branch had consolidated or just plain collapsed power into the hands of only three people: the President, the Vice President, and the Secretary of Defense. The rest of the President’s cabinet and the rest of government had been isolated and marginalized. I didn’t yet think myself that we had a genuine Constitutional crisis, but I seem to recall that someone else called it just that in another article written at the time. I wasn’t smart enough to say, “I’m responding to a Constitutional crisis. By golly, I’m going to go after the Executive Branch,” but that was in fact my own assessment, because nobody else had taken action. Nobody else was controlling an executive that had run amuck and collapsed power in the hands of three people and was making very serious decisions on behalf of 300 million Americans and the rest of the planet.

But another guy said, “You’re the President of the United States, and you look out at that long table, and there are all your generals. Which one of those guys is going to stab me in the back?” That’s a valid question. Do you trust your generals? Do you trust your admirals?

I wrote another article that didn't get a whole lot of traction. It was called "The Rise of the Admiralty." This was after Admiral Mike Mullen was appointed to succeed Gen. Pace as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. I've never met Admiral Mullen, but I worked for his predecessor as Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Vernon Clark, for seven months after I had been General Pace's executive officer. Admiral Clark was a pretty serious guy. I was his "exec," so I was the "running dog" outside his office. He had been there about a week when he said, "Hey, Colonel, you come in here."

I came in, and there was a chair sitting right in front of his desk. Not good. I sat down, and he proceeded to rip my tail. I said, "Admiral, we're on it." We treated him exactly the way we had General Pace, who has a far more easygoing personality.

The next guy to get summoned into Admiral Clark's office was Tim Keating, who was a rear admiral (lower echelon) at the time, assigned to J-33. When he came out afterwards, he said words to the effect, "That's one of the better wire brushings I've ever had." Now all of these admirals have taken over the Defense Department: PACOM, Admiral Keating; SOUTHCOM, Admiral Stavridis; CENTCOM, formerly Admiral Fallon; and Admiral Olson appointed CO of SOCOM. You've got Admiral Mullen as Chairman, and Marine General James Cartwright as Vice-Chairman. Why?

I learned something about them all from watching Admiral Clark. He just didn't care a whole lot what people thought. In the book that Bob Woodward wrote, *State of Denial*, Admiral Clark gets a very strong vote, because he was not picked to be the parrot on Rumsfeld's shoulder, in contrast to the warning that General Jim Jones gave to General Pace before General Pace accepted the job. General Jones at that time was SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander in Europe), and he and General Pace were

friends and colleagues from way back. Jones advised Pace not to take the job. But General Pace did, and it didn't go well.

Now we have all these admirals out there who are in positions of authority. I believe that admirals are being picked because of the new Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, is a wonderful person and doing a great job. I don't take personal credit for him going in there, but I do believe that I helped that "knee of the curve" appear that stimulated an eventual change in the office of the Secretary of Defense. It stimulated debate.

I believe that this new Secretary of Defense likes debate. I believe that he wants the guys to walk into his office and say, "Boss, you're not wearing any clothes today, and I recommend thus and such." I am convinced that the naval service has fostered just this attitude in their leadership. Admittedly, I've studied only a very small sample—Admiral Clark—but looking at a few other Navy guys that I worked with over time, I think there is an attitudinal difference. You put that guy in command of a ship in his early forties, and he's God on that ship. I watched Admiral Willard, who was in my CAPSTONE class. We went aboard the Aircraft Carrier *Lincoln*, and it was like I was with a rock star. This guy was loved by the crew of that ship.

I think these new appointments are part of an effort to undo the damage that Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld did to the general officer and admiral corps. During his tenure, every flag nominated to three or four stars went into his office, and there was a discussion, and it was just that officer and Rumsfeld. I've talked to a few of those guys, and it's an interesting discussion, and there are things agreed upon. Every three- and four-star flag officer on duty right now has gone through that process, and you now have

a new Secretary of Defense. If you study what's going on, there is an effort being made to correct the damage done earlier.

General Petraeus was brought out of theater to chair the brigadier board that took place a few months ago. What does that mean? I'll tell you what it means. He's got guys on his staff who should have been generals a long time ago, but General Petraeus is not the most popular four-star general in the United States Army with the other four-star set. I personally think that he's pretty darn good, and I'd like to see more like him. The fact that H.R. McMaster is not a major general by now isn't right. I hope that will soon be corrected, and we will see a rapid ascent of the guy who wrote the book, *Dereliction of Duty*.

One final comment. My brother is a lawyer, and he sent me an article written, I think, by Fred Kaplan: "Can Rumsfeld court-martial the Generals?"² I'm reading that, thinking, "That didn't occur to me." I did not take that into consideration, so I contacted the staff judge advocate at Fort Lewis. I got this young major, and she says, "Well, sir, let me take a look at that."

She called back and said, "You can be court-martialed under Articles 10 and 98 of the "Uniform Code of Military Justice" (UCMJ), but the offended party is the Secretary of Defense, so he can't proffer charges. It's got to be his boss, and so that would be maybe the Vice President and the appellate authority, and then it's the President. So you're probably pretty safe, but you are subject to UCMJ." The audience may find that amusing, but I found it an unpleasant surprise. On that somber note, I'll take any questions.

² Ed's note: Fred Kaplan, "Can Rumsfeld Court Martial the Retired Generals?" Slate Magazine (April 26 2006), available at: <http://www.slate.com/id/2140616/>.

Audience Discussion

Questioner

We've gotten used to retired generals routinely endorsing political candidates in global kind of ways. That seems far more offensive than using expertise in a focused way to bring your military expertise to comment on particular policy, yet somehow the former seems uncontroversial, and the latter seems controversial. Did you have any thoughts about that?

Major General Eaton

Well, as one of those guys who has endorsed a candidate, I think it stinks. But we're there, and I didn't start it. I have very strong views on what I want to happen in the White House, so I went after what I could do to help that. It's very uncomfortable for my younger son, and my older son is somewhat more sanguine about it, but your point is well taken. What's with this stable of generals who have clustered around candidate X? If we go back to Admiral Crowe, he made a big splash by endorsing Governor Clinton to be President. His tangible reward was to go to the Court of St. James as our Ambassador to Great Britain. Pretty plum assignment!

How much difference is there between General Eisenhower running on a Republican ticket to be President of the United States, General Wes Clark running for office, or General Ulysses S. Grant running for office, to my merely supporting a candidate running for office? It's not the same, and I am personally uncomfortable about it. Had I been an ambassador, had I been a lawyer, had I been anything but a retired

general, it would be probably okay. If I was a governor of a state, it would be okay, but being a retired general causes me and others discomfort.

Questioner

When you criticized Secretary Rumsfeld, you were doing it on the basis of 30 plus years of military expertise, commenting specifically on his implementation of military policy. So in terms of the profession of arms, what you're doing is providing expertise which one might argue is to the benefit of your fellow citizens who don't have it, right?

Major General Eaton

Correct.

Questioner

On the other hand, when you endorse a political candidate, frankly, your global assessment of who is the best candidate in no way draws on your military expertise. That's because there are so many other policies that are involved regarding which you have no special expertise, grounded in your profession, on which to comment at all. And yet, somehow we're used to that. What I don't understand is why the first thing is controversial, and the second thing is relatively uncontroversial.

Major General Eaton

That's a very logical question to lay out. With respect to the candidate business, I stay in my lane. When I get questions on immigration reform and health care, I say, "I do foreign policy, and I do application of armed force." We have taken it as a matter of

common event that these guys are given a global assessment. I hadn't thought of it in those terms, but it's a concern.

Questioner

Sir, you raise the issue about the Navy and its admirals and refer to their idea of command accountability. Why didn't you demand the relief of General Schumacher, and for Iraq, the relief of General Abizaid?

Major General Eaton

I am unhappy with what General Schumacher did as the Chief of Staff, but I did not want to dilute my argument. I chose to focus on a political appointee rather than look like a disgruntled retired general. A lot of people have criticized, and one criticism is: "Why didn't you speak out on active duty?" The other is: "He didn't get his third star, so he's just mad, and he's talking."

If I went after the general officer corps, it would break faith with that loyalty to the team. Even though I can be critical of them within my own sphere and was, I chose not to do it in a public fashion, and I resisted all of that to stay in my lane. I went after a political appointee.

Questioner

So you chose to make it political rather than make it an issue about the Army and the size of the Army?

Major General Eaton

I chose to go after a political appointee. I did *not* choose to "make it political." I chose to be an advocate of the Army, and I cannot criticize the senior leadership of the

Army and be an advocate for the Army at the same time. In one interview, Paula Zahn attacked me for hurting troop welfare while we're at war by being critical of the Secretary of Defense. General Casey was going through a very tough time at that point. I was not going to criticize senior Army leadership with 160,000 families with soldiers deployed overseas, so I was not going to be a guy critical of senior uniformed leadership. I was after the man responsible for a flawed implementation, and I stayed in that lane.

Questioner

Sir, assume for a moment that you were Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Richard Myers, at that time. What exactly should have happened then? You say that he should have gone to the President directly and/or gone to Congress or somehow gotten Congress to request him to come and testify? What exactly should have happened?

Major General Eaton

He should have behaved the way General Powell behaved. General Powell, General Shalikashvili, and General Shelton were strong, empowered chairmen. Now they happened to all be Army guys, which belies my earlier comment about the rise of the admiralty, but they're a different generation, and General Powell is the template for the behavior of the chairmen.

Rather than approach General Myers, I'll use General Pace, because I used this incident in the *New York Times* editorial that I wrote. General Pace was at the podium, and the discussion point was what a soldier should do if he comes upon an act of violence or criminality in Iraq. I believe that question was posed to the Secretary of Defense, and Rumsfeld's position was that the soldier should observe and report. General Pace said,

“No, he needs to act to stop it.” It went one more round, and I said, “Great. We’ve got a chairman right now after this wandering in the desert that we had with General Myers. We have a chairman who is going to take on Rumsfeld and stop some of this business.”

Well, the next day General Pace recanted. What the chairman should do is publicly challenge the Secretary of Defense if he disagrees, and demand, as Goldwater-Nichols states, since he is the primary military advisor, to go to the President of the United States without having to go through the Secretary of Defense.

General Zinni could have been the chairman. Can you imagine that man going through what we have been through with Generals Myers and Pace? No. He just told us what he would do, and that’s what I expect to see in the behavior of our four-star set. Four-star generals are the interface between policy and execution. All three-stars and two-stars, all the way down to private, habitually are saying, “Roger that, boss.” That’s our role. You give advice to your next level or maybe to the next higher level. Four-stars are the interface between policy and execution, and if they don’t like the policy, they have to do something about it, which includes throwing their stars on the table. That was Harold K. Johnson’s dilemma, described in the book *Dereliction of Duty*. En route to the White House to throw his stars on the President’s desk, he stopped, turned around, and to his enduring regret, did not do that.

Questioner

One of the consequences of the revolt of the generals is the question about whether Article 10 of the UCMJ should be removed. Would you be in favor of that change? After all, you were apparently technically liable for court-martial, and it would have been under that article.

Major General Eaton

Could you read the article for reference?

Questioner

I just have the footnote from Col. Don Snider's essay here. Article 10 simply says that retired members of the active duty force are fully members of the force. They do not resign their commissions, and they are still under the jurisdiction of UCMJ. And then the writer points out although that would imply that retired generals have the same obligations as active officers, in fact, it is ignored in a vast majority of cases with the media consultants and television commentators and all the rest. It's a law not being used very much anyway. The forthright thing to do would just be get rid of it if you think, in fact, generals at the four-star level who are retired should have the right to go out in public and make their case, and then there's no hypocrisy about it.

Major General Eaton

Technically, if a retired colonel commits adultery as a retired colonel, you can be prosecuted for adultery. The issue is are we subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice, even in retirement. I would hesitate to change the UCMJ.

Questioner

We have seen a dramatic change in our reserve forces. They are no longer reserve forces in the classical sense of the Cold War. They are rotational forces, so they move in and out of uniform every couple years for a year-long assignment. We have personnel who are serving in uniform today clearly subject to UCMJ, and tomorrow, they're serving in

Congress. They're serving in the Senate. They're serving in the state legislature. They're actively working with a political party in their capacity as a businessman, a doctor, a lawyer, and then the next day, they put their uniform back on. And I'm just curious if that has ever come up in one of your conversations around this firestorm you've had.

Major General Eaton

I advise an organization called "Vote Vets," and "Vote Vets" is a bipartisan outfit that collects money for any Iraq or Afghan War veteran, Republican or Democrat, to help them in their election pursuit. The chairman of this outfit is a guy named Jon Soltz, who is an inflammatory young captain in the reserves. When he takes his uniform off, he's the chairman of Vote Vets, and he's on TV. He is a firebrand, but that goes to the heart of the question. He is very aggressive politically, and he will then put his uniform on, and he is a company commander of a company in Pennsylvania. That's a disconnect that is now upon us, and I don't know how to get after that, but it is an issue.

Questioner

We now have a significant veterans' deficit in the Congress. A veterans' deficit occurs at any time in our history when, proportionally, there are less veterans as a percentage of the 565 members of Congress than there are in the population. Since about 1994, the deficit was negative. I don't think it's without cause that one reason the Congress was so silent is because they had nobody who understood the nature of war and what was going on in really responsible positions.

We had not been in that position since prior to World War II. It is a significant

issue for political scientists that we have one branch of the government with immense responsibilities for the prosecution of war, and in fact, it's not all that well equipped to deal with it.

Major General Eaton

They feel tentative. I've talked to all the legislators in my state, and some are more or less aggressive, but there is this tip-toe around things military, because they don't think they know enough to do what they need to do.

Questioner

The Congressional Research Service has an offsite meeting in Williamsburg for new members of Congress. I noticed that prototypically the new member of Congress was a small businessman or woman, and they came from a background from a nonmilitary family, and the knowledge that they had of things military was simply not there.

Another participant

I don't buy that argument, and I don't because we've got a Pentagon full of officers that are at the beck and call, not only of the President but of the Congress as well. The liaisons know that if they want a question answered, they can pull a senior officer or one of their advisors out to advise them, because our Constitution pays full time all of these four-stars and all the three- and two-stars that work for them and all of their aides and coffee pourers in the Pentagon to do this. This is precisely what their job is, and that's why we've got the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. It doesn't matter whether we've got a deficit in Congress or not. We've got full-time people in Washington in uniform

whose job it is to provide sound military advice when requested.

We have a chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. We've got the service heads, who are four-stars. We've got all the people who work for them, and if we can't trust that process, if we think that we need outside help from our retired community to do what the active duty can't, then maybe we've got a national crisis that's bigger than whether we think one secretary is going to do better than another secretary.

Major General Eaton

I think that's what General Zinni alluded to when he talked about the *Dereliction of Duty* sequel that we can anticipate seeing. I recommended in my op-ed piece that an aggressive Congress make the military testify. That's when I found out that the minority party can't do it. The Republican majority didn't want it. We had a Congress with a resource that they were not using.

Another participant

The Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), from a Congressional point of view, is not that significant. When we move into discussions of appropriations and budgets, however, that's the critical point at which Congress weighs in, and that's when they bring military experts up to the "Hill" to testify, and have COCOM commanders deliver their required annual reports in front of Congress.

Questioner

I have to disagree on that. In my time working with people on Capitol Hill, I talked to many congressmen. Their focus is a million miles wide. They would tell me: "I went from meeting with the Potato Farmer Association for my district, to talking about a

subcommittee on pharmaceuticals, and then I was dragged in because I'm on some subcommittee for armed services." We demand that breadth with pretty small staffs, which is the second factor in the equation.

As far as getting advice and assistance from uniformed people, I would harken back to the Crusader³ incident. I wasn't a big fan of Crusader, but you may remember that what happened was the secretary decided to eliminate that program. It was low-hanging fruit, and I'm all for that, and there was some discovery that a certain member of the Army staff actually led by the current Secretary of the Army at the time, Tommy White, actually provided some information to members of Congress. Talk about a public wire brushing! The Defense Secretary took all those guys out to the woodshed.

Two last points I would make. The QDR just blew my mind away as well. When I was sitting in meetings in Washington hearing the Army is getting smaller, and we're going to keep buying all of this stuff, I mean what in the hell was it for? I had a briefing with senior officers who were telling me how many bombs a B-2 bomber can engage, and I'm thinking, "what good is that going to do you in Iraq?"

The QDR in 2001 was short-circuited obviously by 9/11. 2006 was the classic example of the failure because they had been working this problem for 5 years. This was the stated expertise of the uniform military, presented by the SECDEF, and is the outline of where we think we need to go. Yet that outline was 120 or 180 degrees out of alignment with reality, without a doubt. Our process has some real flaws.

³ Ed's Note: Part of the Army's "Future Combat Systems" (FSC) project, Crusader is described on the "GlobalSecurity.com" website as "a full spectrum, standoff precision attack system that transforms land power on the 21st century network-centric battlefield." The project was finally cancelled during the first term of the George W. Bush administration. See: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/ground/crusader.htm>

Finally, the biggest flaw is that now, a retired four-star general will show up in the office of that same congressman, who may not know that much about it, and say that what we really need to do is buy more F-22s or more Virginia-class or SCS or whatever the hell it might be, because he or she is drawing a half a million dollars a year consulting for one of the major defense suppliers. That to me in some ways is a hell of a lot scarier than somebody writing an op-ed in the *New York Times*.

Major General Eaton

When I was a major at the Commander General Staff College, a brigadier said to us that attempts at humor could be detrimental to your career. So here's my attempt at humor about Crusader. I was sitting across from Secretary Rumsfeld in Baghdad, arguing for an increase in budget for the project that I had to develop and train the Iraqi army. Rumsfeld put his finger in my chest and said, "Just don't make this look like the U.S. Army."

I thought, "Okay, should I be offended by that, or does he not want me to goldplate the Iraqi army?" So I just turned to Ambassador Bremer and said, "Well, sir, we've already removed Crusader from the equipment list."

Questioner

I am very cynical of the position that some of the members of Congress, especially the senators have, given that they serve for six years and aren't all up for election every two years. Why couldn't a member from the minority party go to a news agency or get a camera in front of them and say, "I'd really like to talk to "General Smith" or whomever, but the majority party won't bring him forward, because they're the

majority.” Especially in an election year, that would have been huge, and again, being cynical, I think the reason none of that happened is exactly because of the timeliness of the general’s article in 2006. That was an election year, and there was a prevalent belief in the Democratic Party that the reason they lost the presidential election and didn’t get the House and the Senate back in 2004 was because they had been too critical of the war effort. To come out critical again in 2006 would have been fodder for the Republican Party.

I appreciate the rules, but I refuse to believe that the minority leader of either the House or the Senate couldn’t have gotten in front of someone and said, “Hey, we want to talk to this general and, you know, we can’t.” So I understand, but I don’t buy that as an excuse. I think that if we are going to write the sequel to *Dereliction of Duty*, we can devote whatever we want to to the military, but there needs to be a big piece about Congress as well.

Major General Eaton

I appreciate that and endorse what you’re saying. They did have an out. I will also tell you that the majority party was pretty darn scared as well. The ability of this administration to martial attacks on its critics and dissenters is unmatched in my memory.

Questioner

You did not mention Washington, the first officer who made the transition fairly gracefully from military service to public service. Yet what you yourself have done stands squarely in that tradition. When you were deciding to do this, were you thinking at all about the idea of the citizen soldier? Because Washington said that when we

assume the obligations of the soldier, we do not lay aside the obligations of a citizen. Do you think that's an important idea for you and for people to think about when it comes to acting in a disinterested way on behalf of their country, that doesn't necessarily meet the narrow definitions of their expertise and their role?

Major General Eaton

What was more powerful an influence for me, personally, was General George Marshall's behavior, both as an active-duty soldier and as a retired soldier. I was far more conscious of his advice than of any other in our past. He was intensely apolitical to the point where he did not believe that active-duty military in uniform should vote. That's what kept nagging in my brain: What would General Marshall say? That was the dominant influence. I did not consider Washington's model of the citizen- soldier specifically, but I asked myself: What is my right? What is my duty? What are the expectations? What are the downstream effects going to be for my children, for my sons in particular, and for my colleagues past and present?

¹ For an account of these events, see Tom DeFrank, "How Donald Rumsfeld Complicated Erik Shinseki's Last Administration Exit," The National Journal (31 May 2014): <http://www.nationaljournal.com/white-house/how-donald-rumsfeld-complicated-eric-shinseki-s-last-administration-exit-20140531>.

² This image of U.S. Army Reserve troops on horseback in Afghanistan, calling in B-52 air strikes, is mentioned as a favorite image of Secretary Rumsfeld by Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz at the end of a speech to the Adjutants General Association of the U.S. (Washington, DC: 1 March 2004): <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=102>.

³ For a text of President George W. Bush's "West Point Address" (1 June 2002), see: http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/images/20020601-3_westpointgradp18166-515h.html.

⁴ See Paul D. Eaton, "A Top-Down Review for the Pentagon," New York Times Op-Ed (19 March 2006): http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/19/opinion/19eaton.html?pagewanted=print&_r=0.