

A Word from the



Marines during exercise in Kuwait.

DOD (R.D. Ward)

Chairman

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On recent trips to the Middle East and the Balkans, I have observed the superb job that the Armed Forces do in safeguarding national interests and maintaining the peace in a complex and dangerous world.

Therefore it is appropriate that the JFQ Forum in this issue once again spotlights U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), an organization which encompasses an area of responsibility that is both broad and far-reaching in its strategic implications. The

important role of U.S. engagement in this region was a recurring theme in my discussions with President Mubarak of Egypt, King Abdullah of Jordan, and King Mohammed VI of Morocco.

The men and women assigned to CENTCOM operate in a region of vital national interest. Daily they patrol the sky over Iraq, enforce sanctions at sea through maritime intercept operations, and assure the physical security of Kuwait.

But containing Iraq is not their most challenging task. They must also foster stability and cooperation with partners throughout the Middle East and Southwest Asia.

Efforts in this region are only some of the demands of global engagement. When Secretary Cohen and I testified before Congress at hearings on military posture we outlined priorities to keep the force strong. The Armed Forces are noted for their extraordinary people, technological edge, and warfighting skills. Overall the force is relatively healthy; but constant challenges arise in CENTCOM and other combatant commands which stretch resources. Although we remain capable of executing the national military strategy—including the most demanding scenario of two nearly simultaneous major theater wars—the risks have increased as we have dramatically reduced force size while taking on added commitments. Moreover, frequent and persistent deployments disrupt operating budgets, result in lost training opportunities, accelerate wear and tear

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GEN Henry H. Shelton, USA
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on systems and equipment, and jeopardize the retention of our most valuable resource—people.

Health Care

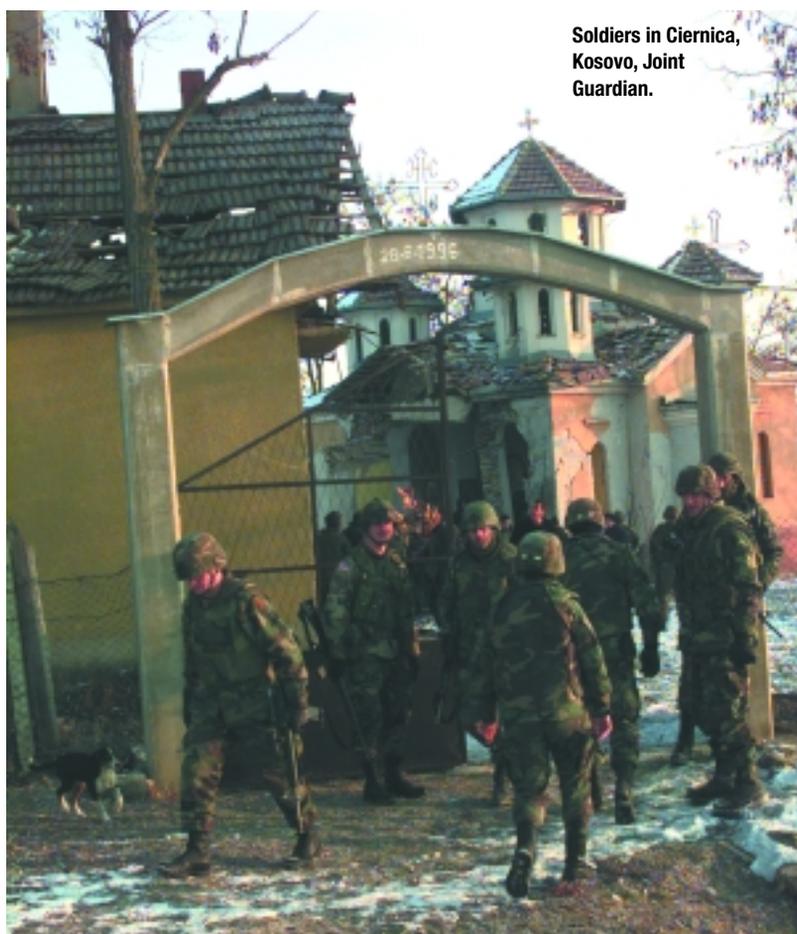
In testifying before Congress I stressed that my top budget initiative for this coming year is fixing TRICARE, the largest managed health care system in the Nation. This program is complex, confusing, and often not customer-oriented. While most will agree that the quality of care administered by doctors, nurses, and other health professionals under the program is outstanding, accessing the system is frustrating. Its region-based structure has resulted in a lack of standardization for appointments, benefits, claims, and enrollment across duty stations. Servicemembers, retirees, and families deserve better.

Some near-term improvements being pursued are straightforward: automatic enrollment for all active duty family members into TRICARE Prime that will be honored across regions; easy-to-understand enrollment materials; designation of primary care managers so that members know who is responsible for their care by name; and a claims system that ensures the government receives the bills, not the beneficiary. Other long-term enhancements will be more challenging, but the service chiefs and I recognize that there is a compelling need to provide more comprehensive coverage not only for active duty members but also for retirees. Fixing the health care system is necessary to keep faith with those who serve today as well as those who consider a career in the Armed Forces tomorrow. We ask our soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen to be ready to serve anywhere; they and their families deserve a more responsive health care system.

Readiness

My testimony also covered ongoing efforts to maintain readiness. With the support of the administration and Congress, last year's budget arrested a steep decline in purchasing power and enabled us to fund critical readiness requirements while increasing the recapitalization of equipment and facilities. Likewise, timely approval of the emergency non-offset supplemental appropriation for 1999 was key to meeting the unprogrammed costs of the Kosovo operation without having an impact on other programs.

To sustain this momentum, the President's budget for fiscal year 2001 funds critical service readiness requirements, supports quality of life initiatives, and satisfies the procurement goal set by the Quadrennial Defense Review of \$60 billion. The budget supports a range of programs



Soldiers in Ciernica, Kosovo, Joint Guardian.

55th Signal Company (Sean Terry)

aimed at protecting our national interests and forces against terrorism, chemical-biological attack, and other asymmetric threats. It also funds some of the lessons learned from Kosovo, such as forming additional EA-6B electronic attack aircraft squadrons, increasing funds for precision munitions, and providing more intelligence and surveillance capabilities.

Congressional approval is important not only for the annual budget but for added funding to keep readiness levels high. Continued prompt action by Congress to provide emergency non-offset funding to replace dollars already obligated is essential to protect readiness in the latter half of this fiscal year

and to avoid actions that would disrupt our capabilities and degrade morale in the future.

I also discussed plans to prepare today's forces to meet tomorrow's threats. For example, a new joint vision is being developed to meet future challenges, and the procedures of the Joint

Requirements Oversight Council are being refined to accommodate warfighting needs early in the acquisition process. Aggressive experimentation is underway to furnish better ideas on how to build the joint force. The Secretary recently designated the Commander in Chief, U.S. Joint Forces Command, as executive agent for this critical process, which complements experimentation being conducted by the individual services. The command will soon begin working with its first integrating concept—rapid decisive operations—which enables a joint force commander to employ the proper balance of land, sea, amphibious, air, space, and information-based capabilities in order to defeat any enemy.

Keeping Peace in the Balkans

A final issue I brought up with Congress was force commitments in the Balkans. Although sporadic violence continues, U.S. and coalition forces have built a secure environment to support the civil implementation program. While it may be necessary to make some minor adjustments to force size in the near term to meet security requirements, we must remain wary of shouldering new missions in Kosovo. The current mission is clear, and any expansion of it would require approval by the North Atlantic Council. But I am less concerned with mission *expansion* than with mission *extension*. Soldiers are not the long-term answer to the challenges that the international community faces in Kosovo. A lasting solution requires the accomplishment of a range of civil, political, and economic tasks, including establishment of the rule of law, a functioning judiciary, and an effective police force. The United Nations and other governmental and nongovernmental agencies must fill the void created by the lack of strong civil institutions. We must continue to press the international community to meet these challenges.

I am extraordinarily proud of the work that our people do on a daily basis in CENTCOM and other regions. To make their task easier, we'll continue to improve TRICARE, maintain readiness, and prepare the force for the future. The Armed Forces remain sound and capable of fulfilling their role in executing the national military strategy. With the help of Congress and the administration, we will guarantee their continued ability to do so in the coming years.

HENRY H. SHELTON
Chairman
of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

U.S. Joint Forces Command will soon begin working with its first integrating concept—rapid decisive operations