



CG Column
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Recent national and international events highlight the ever-changing strategic environment in which we operate. The Secretary of Defense provided a glimpse of what may be the new direction of the Department of Defense; the launch of the North Korean missile was a stark reminder that we cannot “hope” for peace, we must defend it vigorously; and in all of this we must maintain a flexible and credible capability.

This month I want to touch on two topics: first, the flexibility we will need to address future challenges and second, to farewell two key leaders who leave government service.

Flexibility

Last month several key national leaders addressed a missile defense conference in Washington, D.C. While each of the speakers provided different points of view about the current state of missile defense, there was a common thread – we can ill-afford to conduct business as usual.

Marine Corps General James Cartwright, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff probably, stated it best. “Would you buy, in tough economic times, something that does one thing well or something that does a hundred things well?” he said.

The topic was missile defense, but the idea of flexibility is applicable to many areas of our economy and especially within the Department of Defense.

The Secretary of Defense threw down a marker in the form of his recommendations for the FY10 Defense Budget. The recommended budget is a long way from its final version. First, the President must approve it and then Congress has its constitutional responsibility to debate, authorize, and appropriate the funds. Nevertheless, the impetus is still there – we must change how we do business.

What does that mean for USASMD/ARSTRAT? I believe it means we should review how we do business as well – our processes, our intent, and what we expect to gain from our efforts. Are we doing things because it’s easier or because it’s better?

When developing systems we need to look for maximum flexibility and not just something that will fulfill a single-purpose. Can we afford to have only one solution or a single-purpose platform? Can the High Altitude platform provide communications and ISR? These are questions that we need to ask in the coming weeks and for the foreseeable future. It’s not just fiscally responsible; it’s also the right thing to do.

Farewell

Now let me transition to a part of Army life that is inevitable, but never joyous. We bid fond farewells to two very special leaders who have devoted their lives in service to our nation: Mr. Michael Schexnayder, deputy to the commander for Research, Development and Acquisition and COL John Hamilton, chief of staff, USASMD/ARSTRAT. Each of these leaders leaves an indelible mark of excellence on the Army.

Mr. Schexnayder retires after 38 years of combined military and civilian federal service. Over the course of his federal service, he has gone from employing some of the Army’s largest artillery pieces on the ground to providing oversight in the development of some of the most complex systems in the air and space. His Army career began as a Regular Army officer in the Field Artillery branch assigned to Honest John, 8-inch and 155-millimeter artillery units. He has had a remarkable career in the civil service and has been a member of the Senior Executive Service since February 1999. Mr. Schexnayder has been directly responsible for literally billions of dollars worth of programs over the course of his career. His oversight of some of our most critical defense programs has enhanced the security of our nation and ensured the Warfighter was a priority.

COL Hamilton retires after 30 years of military service and truly embodies the “Golden Rule” in how he treats people. It’s infectious and it permeates throughout the staff. COL Hamilton’s journey started in 1979 and involved holding critical Air Defense leadership positions throughout his career. While he excelled as a leader at all levels – tactical, operational, and strategic – his most important legacy he will leave behind are the thousands of Soldiers he lead and mentored.

Mike Schexnayder and John Hamilton have superb people replacing them in Dr. Steven Messervy and COL Kendal Cunningham respectively. However, no one will replace their singularly unique approaches to serving the nation. We wish them both good luck and fair winds in their retirement.

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