

**Remarks Delivered**

**by**

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**For**

**POW/Missing Personnel Affairs**

**DoD Personnel Recovery Conference**

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**Crystal City, Virginia**

- Good morning and welcome to the fourth annual Department of Defense Personnel Recovery Conference.
- It is gratifying to see the level of attendance this year.
  - More than 450 registrants, almost twice the level of attendance of any other year.
  - More than 34 flag officers and civilian equivalents. Thanks especially to you who have taken time out of your very busy schedules to concentrate on the topic of personnel recovery for the next two and a half days. It is critical that the operators who work day in and day out realize that you view this critical function as a priority.
  - Conference participants represent all the combatant commands, all the Services, the Joint Staff, and key offices in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.
  - For the first time ever, we have representation from some of our allies and friends. Thank you for joining us.
    - ✚ It is unlikely that the United States will unilaterally engage in conflict any time in the future. It is critical that these allies voice their concerns.
  - We are pleased with the level of participation by our industry partners. This conference is a unique opportunity for us to express our requirements and for you to offer solutions to the challenges we face.
- We've come a long way since our first conference at the Army War College in 1997.
- Our conferences have improved year after year, and the issues you have raised have become more focused toward the actual source of the problem.

- The potential of the Department of Defense to recover its isolated personnel has improved significantly since the enactment of the Missing Persons Act in 1996.
- We have come a long way, but much remains to be done.
- Personnel recovery continues to be an issue of the highest national priority.
- Our service men and women, our allies and coalition partners, must believe that if they become isolated we will do everything in our power to ensure they return with honor.
- A moral and ethical thread runs through the fabric of the American character, and nowhere is this thread more lasting than in the military.
  - Americans expect us to make every possible attempt to rescue or recover our people.
  - It was not the fact that we rescued Vega 31 and Hammer 34 in Kosovo that impressed our allies.
  - It was the fact that we even attempted the daring recoveries.
- In every future conflict, the need for personnel recovery will arise and we will have to address it.
  - Americans are committed to rescuing their own – we do not willingly leave anybody behind.
  - Personnel recovery has been done deliberately in a coordinated manner and it has been done in an ad hoc fashion.
  - It is up to us to ensure the war fighter has a reasonable chance of success by providing a policy framework, planning guidance, and methods for coordinating the already-existing

capabilities within our government, across the entire spectrum of conflict.

- On another front, the combat survivor/evader locator system or CSEL is back on track.
  - This system is critical for both the isolated person and the recovery force. It will give the survivor the ability to communicate over the horizon with the Joint Search and Rescue Center.
  - More importantly, for the first time our recovery forces will have the survivor's accurate location prior to prosecuting a recovery mission.
  - We have worked together with the CSEL program office;
    - 📌 The Combatant Commands;
    - 📌 The Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics;
    - 📌 The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Command, Control, Communications, and Intelligence; and others
    - 📌 . . . to identify funds for research, testing and development of software requirements that were levied on the system after the acquisition process began.
  - We have sought and secured funding to ensure half of the total CSEL radios are procured over the next six years.
  - If technology doubles or triples every five years, it behooves us to look far into the future and plan for follow-on or replacement systems that will enhance our recovery forces.

- CSEL gave us two-steps forward. The budget process gave us \$7 million for research and development of new personnel recovery technologies, and this takes us many steps into the 21st century.
- Technology can only be a force multiplier behind the talent and hard work of our service men and women dedicated to returning our isolated personnel.
- A silent weapon in their arsenal is personnel recovery training. If we are to continue to succeed in bringing our men and women home, we need to arm them with this training.
  - We fought and won \$78 million in funding to continue much-needed Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) training, sustain the instructor staff levels, and create a Kosovo lessons-learned program.
- The Department of Defense also continues to play a vital role in civil search and rescue.
- Just like in combat recovery, we need to ensure that our operational forces have the tools and training needed so that when called upon to support civil search and rescue, they can do so effectively and safely.
  - Regardless of where you stand on the level of commitment the Department should devote to the civil search and rescue function, the fact remains that we are involved.
    - ✈️ The Air Force Rescue Coordination Center at Langley Air Force Base plays a pivotal role in civil search and rescue as the single agency responsible for coordinating on-land federal search and rescue activities. Since the center opened in 1974 their efforts have resulted in more than 12,000 lives saved.

- ▶ Department of Defense operational units conducting search and rescue operations have saved thousands of civilian lives.
- ▶ None were more evident than when the Department's assets were called on in 1999 during Hurricane Floyd. The hurricane ravaged the East Coast of the United States and the U.S. military rose to the occasion.
- ▶ In North Carolina alone there were some 1,500 people needing help to escape floodwaters caused by heavy rains; the military provided helicopters to conduct roof top rescues.
- ▶ The daring rescue by U.S. Navy helicopter squadron HS-11 of seamen stranded in 30-foot seas after their ship sank hundreds of miles off of the northern coast of Florida, emphasizes the necessity for DoD to be prepared for such missions.
- ▶ Additionally, in March 2000 when more than 23,000 people in Mozambique lost everything they owned to cyclones Connie and Eline, conventional and special operations Air Force assets deployed.
- ▶ The conventional rescue forces arrived first, followed shortly by the special operations forces. Together they delivered almost 200 tons of food and supplies to the flooded countryside.
- Civil search and rescue is also gaining momentum as a major theater engagement tool.
- ▶ This tool allows the combatant commanders to engage nations on a life saving issue that is advantageous to both parties.

- ▶ We need to ensure that when commands engage in civil search and rescue cooperation as a means of engagement that they do so only when there is reasonable justification on a search and rescue basis.
  - ▶ When using search and rescue activities as a means of engagement, the commands must carry out such actions consistent with their national search and rescue responsibilities, and must ensure they are sufficiently informed to do so.
  - ▶ They must support global search and rescue principles, arrangements, and standards of the National Search and Rescue Plan, the International Civil Aviation and the International Maritime Organizations.
  - ▶ We need to lean more heavily on our Coast Guard brethren and ensure we coordinate our activities fully with these search and rescue experts.
- Over the next three days we will address a broad range of personnel recovery topics from Combat Recovery to Civil Search and Rescue to Non-conventional Assisted Recovery.
  - The goals of the conference have remained consistent since the inaugural conference in 1997:
    - To heighten awareness of personnel recovery at the highest levels of the U.S. Government,
    - To exchange ideas within the recovery community,
    - To identify and resolve policy-level issues pertaining to personnel recovery within DoD and the interagency community, and
    - To chart a course for the future of personnel recovery within the Department.

- Keep these goals in mind.
- Over the past four years these conferences have served to energize the DoD leadership, to focus our efforts toward common ends . . .
  - That our policies support operational requirements
  - That our acquisition, and research and development efforts provide the right equipment
  - That our force structure ensures the right recovery assets are in the right place at the right time.
- The success of the conference depends on you.
- We must hear from you.
- You have an opportunity to raise issues, exchange ideas and provide recommendations on how DoD addresses personnel recovery.
- Open your minds and participate to the fullest extent.
- Thank you again for taking time out of your busy schedules. I look forward to hearing the results of your efforts.