

# Chiefs Tell Senate DoD Needs Money for Modernization

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**W**ASHINGTON, Sept. 29, 2000 – “We cannot mortgage future readiness,” Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Henry Shelton told the Senate Armed Services Committee Sept. 27.

“We are collectively robbing Peter to pay Paul, or robbing modernization, which is long-term readiness, to pay for current readiness,” Shelton said. The chairman testified along with other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They stressed shortfalls in modernization accounts throughout DoD.

The members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff say current readiness is fine, but the military will need more money to fund modernization programs.

Shelton said the “first-to-fight” forces of the U.S. military are undoubtedly ready to fight. But, he said, many other units are not. “For example, the airborne tanker fleet, our strategic airlift fleet, and our intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance units, all of which provide crucial capabilities to our warfighting forces, are not as ready,” he told the senators.

He said these strategic units and other combat support and combat service support units – along with the training base – are “in some cases suffering the consequences of resources that have been redirected to sustain the near-term readiness of our first-to-fight forces.”

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Eric Shinseki, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. James Jones, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Vernon

Clark, and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael Ryan echoed the chairman’s remarks.

“The price for achieving that kind of readiness in our early deploying units has been to accept risk elsewhere in the force,” Shinseki said. “First, we have diverted soldiers from other organizations to fill our high-priority warfighting formations. Second, we have for years mortgaged our future readiness – this modernization effort – in order to assure that our soldiers had in the near-term what it takes to fight and win decisively. And finally, given the increased operational tempo because of the more diffuse and more demanding strategic environment, we have leveraged our warfighting readiness on the backs of our soldiers and their families.”

Shinseki also told lawmakers that preliminary data show the Army needs more people.

Clark said the Navy needs more ships and planes per year to maintain long-term readiness. He said the current rate of between six and seven ships per year is inadequate to sustain the rate called for in the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review. The Navy needs about 10 ships per year, Clark said.

Ryan told the lawmakers that even with the money added to the DoD budget, “that our near-term readiness in the United States Air Force has not turned around. Combat unit readiness has dropped well over 20 percent, and our mission capability rates on our aircraft are down by 10 percent over the last decade.”

He said these decreases in readiness can be attributed to past underfunding of spares, high operations tempo, loss of experienced airmen, and an aging aircraft fleet. He said retaining experienced people is a crucial concern to the Service as well as modernizing the fleet. "Our aircraft are aging out at a rate that has us very concerned," he said. "We must recapitalize this force."

He said the average age of Air Force aircraft is 22 years. "In 15 years it will be nearly 30, even if we execute every modernization program we currently have on the fiscally constrained books," Ryan said. "We've never dealt with a force this old. It has taken an inordinate amount of time, work, and money to keep the force airworthy and ready."

Ryan said the budget means the Air Force is buying about one-third of the aircraft needed to stop the aging of the force, "and we are on a 250-year replacement cycle for our infrastructure, where our people work and live."

Jones said that under the current budget the Marine Corps will reach a "steady state maintenance level," meaning the Marine Corps would never really get to modernize. He also said the way the Services buy new equipment means money is wasted. "With regard to acquiring some new systems, we also have to work hard to make sure that we buy them more efficiently," Jones said. "We tend to buy things and then spread them out over long periods of time; then it drives the unit cost up ... The V-22 is a good example of that.

We can actually, by investing more money toward modernization, accelerate the full operational capability of some systems, and thereby save a lot of money as well."

Shelton said part of the problem is that Congress has not approved two new Base Realignment and Closure rounds. DoD estimates are that the Department would save about \$3 billion per year from closures of unneeded bases. This is money that would go directly to modernization, Shelton said.

That said, even with BRAC money, DoD would need more money. The chiefs estimated that about \$50 billion more per year is needed to fully fund modernization. Shelton said the next Quadrennial Defense Review, set for 2001, would be able to address these numbers better.

All of the chiefs spoke about modernizing the military while at the same time improving servicemembers' quality of life. All stressed that while modernization is important to future readiness, having quality people is crucial. All the chiefs addressed problems of increased operations tempo, and all praised the Senate for their work on pay raises, pay table reform, and retirement changes.

**Editor's Note:** Garamone is a public affairs specialist with the American Forces Press Service. This information is in the public domain at [www.defenselink.mil/news](http://www.defenselink.mil/news).