Claude M. Bolton Jr.
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Acquisition, Logistics and Technology)
Talks to Defense AT&L

A former Defense Systems Management College commandant, Claude M. Bolton Jr., serves as the Army acquisition executive, the senior procurement executive, and the science advisor to the secretary of the Army. Bolton is also the senior research and development official for the Department of the Army. His responsibilities include appointing, managing, and evaluating program executive officers (PEOs) and program managers (PMs); managing the Army Acquisition Corps; and overseeing research, development, test, evaluation, and acquisition programs.

On Aug. 16, 2004, Paul McMahon, DAU liaison to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, with the assistance of Christina Cavoli, *Defense AT&L* contributing editor, interviewed Bolton in his Pentagon office. Bolton covered a broad range of topics, including new combat systems; budgetary and personnel challenges facing the Army; AT&L education and training; the basics of terminating a program; and a new uniform that he dubs "the best thing since sliced bread."

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Your office is responsible for providing weapon systems and equipment for the Army. You have often said that in your position, you serve the soldier. What are you doing to help soldiers accomplish their missions successfully and return home safely?

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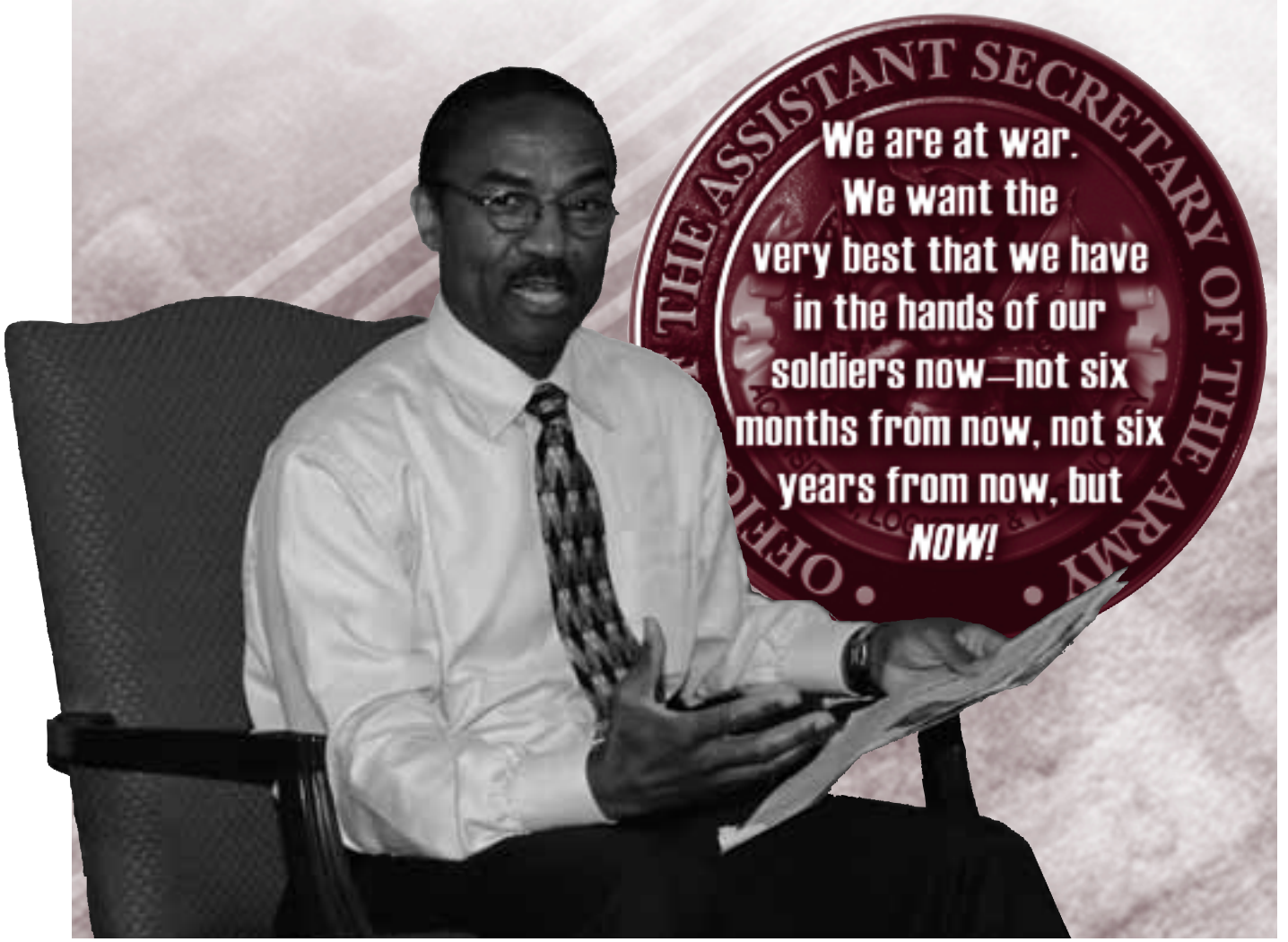
We have two focuses. One is the immediate concerns of soldiers, particularly those in Afghanistan and Iraq. For the past 18 months, we've had our acquisition and logistician folks on the ground. That involvement led to something we call the rapid equipping. We sent a colonel to Afghanistan to ask, "What do the soldiers here need?" What we needed in those days was to clear caves, which put soldiers' lives at risk. So he took over PackBots—robots that soldiers used to clear caves.

That became a larger initiative: we will field to the soldier from zero time to 90 days. We've fielded things to them in as little as 12 hours. When

Paul McMahon (left) and Christina Cavoli confer with Claude M. Bolton Jr., assistant secretary of the Army (AL&T), before the interview.

Photographs by Staff Sgt. Kevin Moses, USA



we needed to check wells for caches of weapons, we modified a camera and put it on a tether within six hours, and it was on a mission 12 hours later. Within the first mission or two, we were able to find large caches of weapons. This initiative provided shims to open locks. Locks may not be that expensive to you and me, but for homeowners in Afghanistan, locks *are* expensive. Initially, we had to destroy locks to gain access, but now, with a simple metal shim, we can open the locks, clear the building, and lock it back up. It helps everybody out.

The initiative that looks at the longer term is the RFI—the rapid fielding initiative—done by PEO Soldier [*Program Executive Office Soldier*]. A couple of years ago, we outfitted about 20,000 soldiers with about $3,000-worth each of arm pads, knee pads, weapons optics, and soldier-type items. This year, we will outfit over 176,000 soldiers.

IBA—interceptor body armor—consists of SAPI [*small arms protective inserts*] plates and the outer tactical vest that provide body armor for the soldier. We've gone from a couple of thousand sets a month to 25,000 sets a month and from two contractors to six contractors. A year-plus ago, we were producing about 12 fully up-armored Humvees® [*HMMWVs—high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles*] a month. Since then, we've accelerated production to 350 a month, and starting in October, we'll produce 450 a month with the same two contractors. I've been very impressed with the way industry has stepped up to the task of helping soldiers.

There are two parts to this. The first part is tactical: Got to have it right now. The second is more strategic: What are we going to do in the future? That really gets into how we are reorganizing acquisition and sustainment and how we are working with contractors and the industrial base to help ourselves in the long run.

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The Army is working to increase capabilities for the soldier by merging the sustaining and equipping sides of the house. Can you tell us about this initiative?

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Gen. Paul Kern, commanding general of U.S. Army Materiel Command, and I recently signed an MOA [*memorandum of agreement*] that formalized the process of bringing together the sustainment part within the materiel command and the acquisition side. The idea is to grow the staffs and the processes together. What the commanders are doing now is writing an implementation

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Claude M. Bolton was sworn in January 2, 2002 as assistant secretary of the Army (acquisition, logistics and technology).

Bolton was formerly commander, Air Force Security Assistance Center, Headquarters Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC), Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, where he managed foreign military sales programs with totals exceeding $90 billion that supported more than 80 foreign countries. As AFMC's center of excellence for international affairs, Bolton's responsibilities also included managing the command's international cooperative programs and its foreign disclosure policy.

Bolton received his commission in the Air Force in 1969 through the University of Nebraska's Air Force ROTC program, where he was honored as a distinguished graduate. He is a command pilot with more than 2,700 flying hours in more than 30 different aircraft. During the Vietnam War he flew 232 combat missions, 40 over North Vietnam. He was a test pilot for the F-4, F-111, and the F-16, and the first program manager for the Advanced Tactical Fighter Technologies Program, which evolved into the F-22 System Program Office. He has served in a variety of other positions during his career, including squadron and wing safety officer, instructor pilot, wing standardization and evaluation flight examiner, scheduler, and acquisition professional.

During his tour at the Pentagon, Bolton was the F-16 program element monitor and also saw duty in the Office of Special Programs. He was the deputy program director for the B-2 System Program Office, program director for the Advanced Cruise Missile System Program Office, then inspector general for Air Force Materiel Command. He served as commandant of the Defense Systems Management College, as special assistant to the assistant secretary of the Air Force for acquisition, and as director of requirements at AFMC headquarters. He also served as the program executive officer for Air Force fighter and bomber programs with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition.

plan: How does this really work? What does the workforce really do? Even better, there are metrics—as you may recall, I like the big "M" word—and they allow us to understand how well we're achieving what we want to achieve and how to change it for the better.

Here in the Army, we have program evaluation groups, or PEGs, for the development and management of budgets in our separate functional areas—equipping, manning, installations, sustaining, and training. We're in the throes of rethinking our "equip" PEG. We're saying, for equipping and sustaining, "Bring 'em together!" One PEG, and call it "life cycle PEG." The job is to figure out what capability is needed over the program objective memorandum—DoD's five year planning horizon—by year for the soldier. Not, what is acquisition supposed to be doing? Not, what should logistics do? But, together, how do you put that to the field to make it work?

We see nothing that should stop us except ourselves. There are no statutes to prevent us from doing this. We've got support from Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Mike Wynne's shop. We're going to make this work.

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How has the industrial base capacity been impacted by the ongoing, increased OPTEMPO [operations tempo]*?*

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My way of looking at the industrial base is to include our organic capabilities—depots, arsenals, ammo plants—and defense contractors, commercial and foreign. I've got nothing but kudos for all in the way they respond to the soldier's needs. Everyone is leaning forward, anticipating what will be next.

The entire industrial base has stepped up to the plate. That's a tactical thing. I'm planning this fall to ask another question: How do we go from taking months to maybe a year to come up to speed to as little as days or weeks? And how do we do that when we are not at war? I think we can do it, but we obviously can't do it without industry and associations, so we'll sit down and think it through together.

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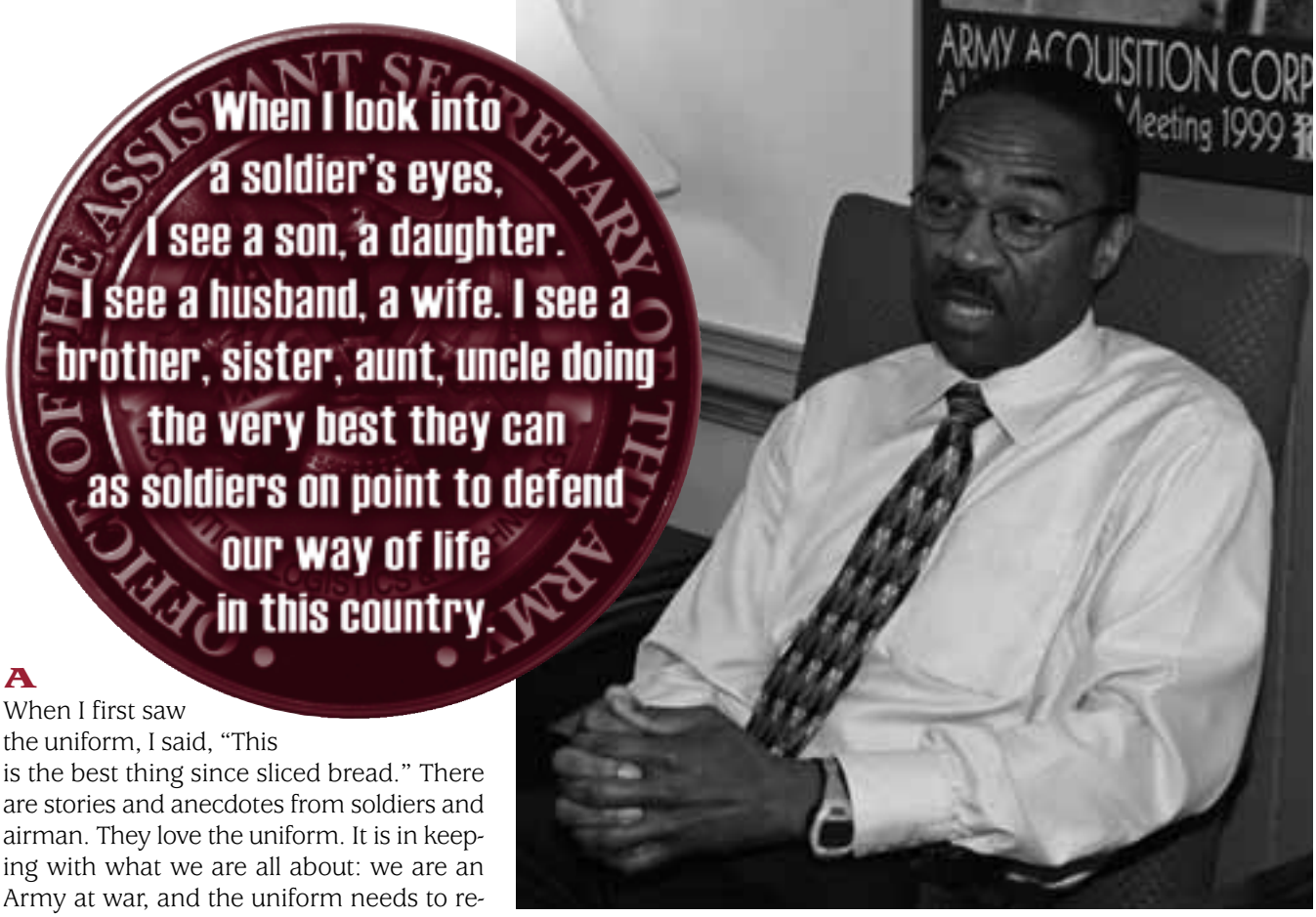
What has been the reaction so far to the new Army combat uniform?



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When I first saw the uniform, I said, "This is the best thing since sliced bread." There are stories and anecdotes from soldiers and airman. They love the uniform. It is in keeping with what we are all about: we are an Army at war, and the uniform needs to reflect that. The pockets are positioned so that you can actually use them; there's a lot of Velcro®, so you don't have to sew things on; you don't have to press this uniform because of the materials. It's a practical uniform.

The uniform was designed by an E7 and taken to the field during the design process to get input from deployed troops. I'm particularly pleased that the enlisted corps went out and created this. The troops have some recommendations to make it even better, and the next go-round we'll take a look at those.

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It seems that you have programs the soldiers like. The next question deals with Stryker, the highly deployable, wheeled armored vehicle that combines firepower, battlefield mobility, survivability, and versatility with reduced logistics requirements. Why is that so popular?

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I tell folk—our critics too—they shouldn't talk to me. Talk to folks who are in the Stryker, both stateside and in Iraq. It sells itself. Why? First of all, we went from an idea to deployment in four years. Not, "Gee, we got a group here and we're ready to go," but in the field, fighting, in just four years. Just to get the vehicle normally takes us 10 to a dozen years, let alone getting war-fighting capability. We asked for 80 percent capability, and we got well over 90 percent. It's an infantry carrier, a recon vehicle, a command vehicle, a medical vehicle, a fire support vehicle, a mortar vehicle, an anti-tank vehicle, and it will also be an NBC—nuclear, biological, and chemical—vehicle and a mobile gun system. It provides far more protection than getting in the back of a truck, or, as we traditionally do, walking to the fight. Now soldiers can get in a vehicle that goes around 40 to 60 mph and is networked with the rest of the combat team. That's the most important thing. You can sit in a vehicle and know what you are supposed to do when the ramp goes down. The commander knows where he is, he knows where other folks are, and he has an idea where the enemy is. You've also got a lot of protection with the armor. Operationally, it's been superb. Very little damage has been sustained, even by RPGs [*rocket-propelled grenades*]. Since the 3rd Brigade's deployment, there have been 56 incidents associated with improvised explosive devices resulting in no hull penetrations and no loss of life. There have also been over 26 RPG attacks with the added protective armor defeating all but two of the RPGs. Again, no loss of life. And, because it moves quickly and quietly on wheels, not tracks, we're able to surprise the enemy.

But don't listen just to me. There are a lot of reports from veteran reporters and a lot of reports coming back from the troops themselves that extol the Stryker.

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You've had some experience with program terminations. Is there anything that comes to mind for the AL&T workforce in terms of lessons learned?

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As a program executive officer in the U.S. Air Force, I was required to participate in an executive development course at DAU. During that program, I picked terminations as my project. I had looked around the Defense Department and noted that we have no process to terminate. You wake up one morning, you have no money, and someone says, "Okay, that's it!" I felt that we ought to have a bit more of a method, so I devised a one-page, three-column termination template.

The first column talks to the health of the program. I typically use a cumulative earned value that goes from that last major milestone of the program where the milestone decision authority said, "… and that's your baseline," to where you are today.

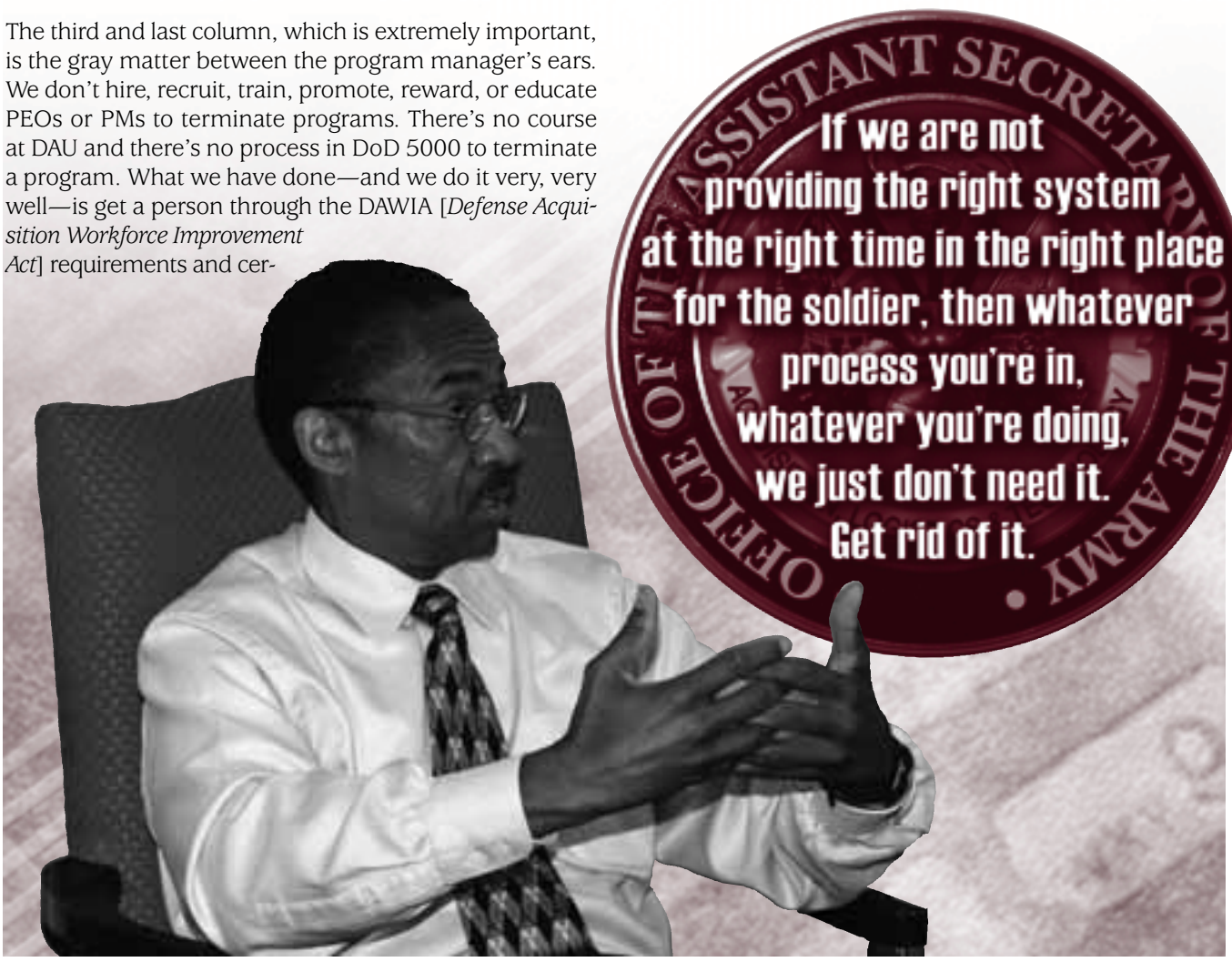
The second column deals with the politics. You go to whoever wanted the program, in the field, in the Pentagon, in the Services. You bring it to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, take it over to the Hill, to the contractors, the media, whoever was involved. That's probably the most difficult and the longest part, to soften the blow and get it just right.

The third and last column, which is extremely important, is the gray matter between the program manager's ears. We don't hire, recruit, train, promote, reward, or educate PEOs or PMs to terminate programs. There's no course at DAU and there's no process in DoD 5000 to terminate a program. What we have done—and we do it very, very well—is get a person through the DAWIA [*Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act*] requirements and certifications and teach PMs how to pull rabbits out of a hat. They're very good at that, even when we take the rabbits away and they have to find a new hat.

I give the template to PEOs, not to PMs. It's not the PMs' duty: Their job is to concentrate on doing programs. I tell the PEOs, "You have a portfolio of programs here. Your job is to advise me on which of these we should press forward on and which we should terminate, based on this template."

In the Army, we have terminated some 72 programs since I walked in the door. No one's heard about most of them, except those people directly impacted, because we followed the template. On the day the president delivers his budget to the Hill, I call the affected members of Congress to tell them what is going on in this or that program, and what it means to them. In the two-and-a-half years I've been here, I've received only two letters. I wrote a note back to each explaining again what had happened, and there was no further inquiry after that.

The termination of Comanche is going along very well. Before it got to the media, we had talked to the contrac-



tors, we had talked to members of Congress, and we had talked to President Bush and the people in the Pentagon. We promised that every dollar that came out of Comanche—which is just over $14 billion—would be plowed back into aviation.

Things change. Comanche started its road in 1983. It was reprogrammed several times, but it was clearly a vehicle designed for the Cold War. When we looked at what was going on today and what we project in the future, it didn't fit anywhere. We can better use that money to retool Army aviation.

Even though we are fighting a war, we are in a budget-constrained environment, and we will be even more so when the fighting stops. We have to make sure we understand what's needed to accomplish what the people of this country want the Army to do. If programs don't contribute to that, then we have to get rid of them.

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I know that elimination of the chemical weapons program is near and dear to your heart. How is that program proceeding?

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Over 50 years ago, the people of this country authorized the manufacture of chemical weapons. In the last decade-and-a-half, the United States has signed a treaty with the rest of the world that says we're going to get rid of them, and the Army has been put in charge.

We have four operational sites right now—one in Aberdeen, Md.; one in Tooele, Utah; one in Anniston, Ala.; and one in Umatilla, Ore.—that are progressing very well. The Umatilla facility processed its first chemical weapon on Sept. 8, 2004. Aberdeen will probably be finished by January 2005. Anniston, operating for only a year, has already destroyed all of its sarin rockets. Tooele has destroyed all of its sarin munitions and is expected to complete destruction of all of its VX [*nerve agent*] munitions next year. My hope is that by next year at this time, we'll have all six Army sites up and running. The idea is to get rid of this stuff as quickly as possible. It's not fine wine; it doesn't get better with age. We have leakers, and every time we get an alarm in a storage igloo, it means putting workers in harm's way.

The people involved with this program do an expert job. These facilities have logged millions and millions of man-hours without a lost workday and without harming the environment. We completed the elimination mission at Johnston Atoll in the Central Pacific Ocean and closed down that facility. According to independent environmentalist groups, the environment there is healthier now than it was before we got there years ago. The director of the Chemical Materials Agency, Mike Parker, showed me a letter today from the Sierra Club stating that he is going to be one of this year's awardees because of the job he has done.

It's not an easy job. We have to abide by federal rules, state rules, local rules. State and local rules are all different, and they change regularly; it's an enormous challenge. We are spending $1.62 billion on demilitarization this year. That's a lot of money, but there's no price you can put on this. Continued storage poses risk to the local communities. The stockpiles are terrorist targets. The sooner we get rid of our chemical weapons, the better off we are going to be.

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In the Army, there is a high visibility initiative to spiral technology to the current force in order to grow the future force. Can you elaborate on that?

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When Army Chief of Staff Gen. [*Peter J.*] Schoomaker came in, he said he wanted the current force to grow into the future force *now*. If technology is ready today, it should be put in the hands of the force today. We are at war. We want the very best that we have in the hands of our soldiers now—not six months from now, not six years from now, but *now*! And so the rapid fielding and rapid equipping initiatives, along with what we've done with SAPI plates and up-armored Humvees, began.

As the staffs looked at that initiative, they started talking about taking technology from the FCS [*future combat system*] and spiraling it into the current force. While a good idea, it doesn't meet today's needs, and so a new process had to be created. Rather than relying on the technology from the FCS, it is necessary to go to the technology base where all the technology for the FCS originated. The concept had previously been to take technology from that base and put it into something that would show up somewhere. For us, that was the FCS, a system of systems, composed of a C4ISR [*command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance*] network and 18 manned and unmanned systems that are centered around the soldier.

Schoomaker's idea was to keep that going, but I want to take technology from the base and put it into the current force right now. Great idea. We have no money, and we have no process, but that's not the chief's problem, it's our problem. So we went off to put a process together. The first public view of that is what we've recently done with the FCS. We will start spiraling from the FCS into the current force starting about 2008. By around 2014, rather than one unit of action that is not quite capable with all the technologies, you can expect the better part of the Army to have at least some portion of what the FCS will have and one entire unit of action that has all the tech-

nology. We think that's a better way of working the spirals, and now we are in the throes of once again working with all the contractors.

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The Army acquisition workforce has been reduced dramatically, and it's been reported that one-half of the current workforce will be eligible to retire within the next two to three years. What's your perspective on that?

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If you go back 12 years or so, we had about 120,000 people in the Army acquisition workforce. We're now at about 47,500. Today about 19 percent of the workforce is eligible to retire. Today! In five years, another 18 percent will be eligible to retire and in 10 years another 22 percent. The various commands are working on recruiting folks. Some have teamed up with commercial sides, and there is a dot.com called < www.USAJOBS.com > to let folks know what's available in the Army. As part of our strategic plan, we have a campaign plan to work this issue. We don't just need to replace the people who're leaving. The workload continues to go up, so we must recruit new people with new tools, new education, new training, and new processes to make all this work.

Of all the things that we've talked about—aside from all the things that are impacting soldiers who are fighting today—the most critical thing is the workforce. Without the workforce, all the other things I've talked about do not happen.

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We appreciate that. I understand you have some other specific areas you might like to focus on and share with us.

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When I walked in here, then Secretary of the Army Thomas E. White said, "Bolton, I'd like you to take a look at programs, the workforce, and the industrial base." I had to keep that simple in my mind, so I thought, "OK—three Ps and an I: programs, people, production, and improvement. P^3I."

These are the instruments that I use to provide the soldier the right product in the right place at the right time at the right price. About price: soldiers in the foxhole don't care, and that's OK. They shouldn't care about the cost. That's my problem and that's the Pentagon's problem. But soldiers *do* care that they get the right system at the right place at the right time.

The hardest part of that is deciding what's right. I boil it down to this: If we're not providing the right system at the right time in the right place for the soldier, then whatever process we're in, whatever we're doing, we just don't need it. Get rid of it. That means a lot of institutions have fallen—and a lot more will fall—by the wayside.

Because of this organization and because of what the Army did before I walked in, I'm able to take a look at acquisition, logistics, and technology from a policy standpoint all in one shot. Our job is to bring all this together so that we ensure we've captured the right product, right place, right time, and right price. That's what we're all about, and I haven't deviated from that since the day I walked in here.

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From your perspective, especially as the former commandant of the Defense Systems Management College, what can the Defense Acquisition University do to help the Army AL&T workforce?

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My observation over the years is that DAU has been on the forefront of acquisition education and training in trying to understand what we need and providing it to the field. You see it in the distance learning courses that are available now, a lot more than when I was there, and you see it in the rapid deployment training, improvement in the various regions, and increased strategic partnering.

When I left DSMC, I said that in spite of all the good things we had done in the three years I was there, I was concerned that we were still behind the power curve. We obviously weren't getting out to the field enough because there were things going on in the field that were not part of the curriculum. You have to guard against that.

What about spiraling? How many courses do we have on spiraling? We are creating a process in the Army to do this, but it is more than just the acquisition. The requirements part has to change. The resourcing, acquisition, sustainment—they all have to change. Rapid equipping force. Every Service does it—until the shooting stops, then they stop. Every time the need arises, we have to reinvent the wheel. How do we keep it going when no one is shooting?

Consider the FCS. It's the most complex, the most ambitious project that the DoD has ever done—true systems of systems. My program manager didn't have one course in how to deal with a system of systems. Nor did the PEO. Where is the training for all this?

Training and educating the workforce for the challenges of today and for what is coming along in the future is absolutely paramount. There is no way we're going to be able to do the job that I see coming within as little as two years without taking care of business on the education and training side. That is where I think that DAU can continue to help us in the future: going out and pulsing the field to really understand what is going on.

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You're shaping the state of the art in terms of how acquisition is done and the training that's needed. You're creating it for the first time. You have to pick up on it as it happens and quickly turn it around.

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That's the fun part! We get to make our own rules. It's a great time in our history. We just moved a quarter of a million folks. We haven't moved that many people since World War II. We've got nearly 300,000 people in 120 countries today. We're fighting a war. We're transitioning and transforming the Army. Modularity is alive and well. We're trying to do things that make sense to the soldier who is on the point: that's the whole focus.

At the same time, there are a large number of processes that haven't changed. They're still stuck in the Cold War. Some are in acquisition, certainly some in sustainment. If we don't change that, we will continue to be frustrated. [*"Transformational Recapitalization: Rethinking USAF Aircraft procurement Philosophies" on page 16 further examines this subject*.]

The uniform and the people wearing the uniform represents the number one Army on the face of the globe. No other Army can do what we're doing today—to be in 120 countries, to move 250,000-plus people the way we have, to be fighting and transforming at the same time.

Someone once asked me why I'm here. I said, "All you have to do is look into the eyes of a solider."

When I look into a soldier's eyes, I see a son, a daughter. I see a husband, a wife. I see a brother, sister, aunt, uncle doing the very best they can as soldiers on point to defend our way of life in this country. My job is to make sure they have everything possible to allow them to accomplish their mission and come home safely. That's what it's all about. If it's not about doing that, I don't have time for it. I really don't.