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ARMY RESERVE CHIEF DISCUSSES PRIORITIES FOR TODAY'S RESERVISTS DURING HEIDELBERG TOWN HALL

By Spc. Joseph McAtee

U.S. Army, Europe Public Affairs Office

HEIDELBERG, Germany -- Lt. Gen. Jack Stultz, chief of the Army Reserve, offered an assessment of today's Reserve and its future during a town hall meeting at the Patrick Henry Village theater here Monday.

Stultz, who also commands the U.S. Army Reserve Command, spoke for more than an hour and then fielded questions from the crowd of about 100 military and civilian attendees, providing a unique perspective from the top.

"He seems to be abreast with what's going on. He seems to be current with what's going on and (what) he wants to do for (Army Reserve) Soldiers and even more importantly in many cases (Army Reserve) Families," 1st Sgt. William Jones, a reservist since 1998 following the general's remarks.

Much of Stultz's discussion focused on how the Army Reserve has dealt with ongoing missions in Iraq and Afghanistan and how that has affected the relationship between employers and a Reserve that has mobilized more than 180,000 Soldiers since Sept. 11, 2001.

Stultz noted that the Army Reserve has undergone a transformation from the "one weekend a month, two weeks a year" force to what he called "an operational force."

"It's really a different mind-set," said Stultz.

To lessen the operational burden on the Reserve, Stultz said he is working to institute a five-year cycle during which a reservist who deploys for a year can go home and work



SPC JOSEPH McATEE

Lt. Gen. Jack Stultz, chief of the Army Reserve, talks about today's Reserve and its future during a town hall meeting at the Patrick Henry Village theater in Heidelberg, Germany Oct. 22.

for four years without worrying about an upcoming deployment. Such a cycle, he pointed out, would deliver a fixed schedule to eliminate any unpredictability for reservists and their employers.

Stultz also discussed recruiting and stressed the need to recruit realistically. Given the current operational and deployment tempo, he said the Reserve must “be up front with a Soldier’s expectations.”

In addition, the Army Reserve has to contend with the expectations of a Reserve Soldier’s employer.

When reservists deploy, they don’t just leave behind families, he said. They frequently leave behind employers as well, sometimes for more than a year. That departure often strains the relationship between the Reserve and employers who worry that the needs of the Army will seriously disrupt their businesses.

Stultz said he constantly talks with corporations to develop ways to lessen that strain. As a case in point, he discussed one proposal he said he is considering to share the cost of benefits with employers. For example, he said, if an a reservist-employee is mobilized for Reserve duty 20 percent of the time, the Reserve might cover 20 percent of the costs of the benefits provided to that reservist by his employer. He stressed that such a cost-sharing plan is strictly an idea being considered, he believes employers would be very intrigued by the offer.

Even without complex plans to attract them, businesses often target reservists for employment, said Stultz.

“A lot of employers are coming to us,” he said. Quoting a Home Depot executive who spoke to him about why he wanted reservists as employees, Stultz said, “They understand what teamwork is. They understand what work ethic is. They understand what leadership’s all about.”

It’s that teamwork, work ethic and leadership that continue to make the Army Reserve a reliable and skilled force that has improved while transforming to an operational team.

“Today’s Army Reserve is the most professional, the best trained, the most dedicated force we’ve ever had,” said Stultz. “It makes me feel good about our future.”



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