General Milley

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-Welcome to Pritzker Military Presents, featuring a discussion with Chief of Staff of the Army, General Mark A. Milley. I'm your host Ken Clarke, and this program is coming to you from the Pritzker Military Museum and Library in downtown Chicago and is supported by the United States Army. This program and more than five hundred others covering a full range of military topics is available on demand at pritzkermilitary.org. The chief of staff of the United States army is the principle military advisor and a deputy to the secretary of the army who is a civilian. The position is held by an active duty four-star general and is typically the highest-ranking officer in the US army, exercising supervision of over a third of the United States active duty military force. In General Milley's thirty-five years of service he has served in a number of command positions from the platoon level through the corps and army command level. He has held leadership and staff positions in eight divisions and the Army Special Forces. He is the commanding general for the 10th Mountain Division, III Corps, and Fort Hood, and the International Security Assistance Force joint command in Afghanistan. In addition he has served with the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, the 1st Cavalry Division, and the 5th Special Forces Group, to name a few. His service has seen him deployed across the globe from Somalia to Haiti including one tour in Iraq and three in Afghanistan. A highly decorated officer, Milley has been awarded the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, the Army Distinguished Service Medal, the Defense Superior Service Medal, and the Legion of Merit, all three with two bronze oak leaf clusters, in addition to a Bronze Star with three bronze oak leaf clusters. Milley was serving as the twenty-first commander of the US Army Force Command out of Fort Bragg when he was appointed the thirty-ninth chief of staff of the US Army on August 14, 2015. He received his bachelor's degree in Political Science from Princeton University, a master's degree in International Relations from Colombia University, and a second master's degree in National Security and Strategic Studies from the US Naval War College. He is only the second chief of staff of the army to graduate from an Ivy League school. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome General Mark A. Milley, Chief of Staff of the Army.

-Thanks, Ken, I appreciate being here.

-Thank you for being here. I'm looking forward to this conversation today. There's a lot of things in today's society that are paid attention to by everyday people. We know who our NCAA coaches are. We know who our baseball managers are. We don't really know who the people are who are running our military, and you're one of those people. So I'm wondering if you can tell me a little bit of what you do as chief of staff.

-Well, the chief of staff--any service chief whether it's army, navy, air force, marines--we're duel-hatted. We have two roles. One is to be an advisor as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. So in that role, we provide operational advice, strategic advice--we provide what is called best military advice to the president, secretary of defense, and Congress. The second role is as chief of staff proper where you're the senior military officer in the United States Army, and that role is primarily to maintain the readiness of the forces, and to plan for and program the future force. So what does that mean? That means my job is to ensure the US Army is properly manned and trained and equipped and well led; those sorts of things. So, two roles; one is to run the army, the other is to be a principle military advisor as one of the six members of the joint chiefs of staff and provide best military advice to the president, secretary of defense, and congress.
How many lieutenant generals do you have reporting up to you?

There's about--it depends on which part of the army you're talking about. The army has three components; the regular army, or what is commonly referred to as the active component; those are the guys on duty 24/7. Then you've got the National Guard, which is a very important part of our army. And then you've got the US army reserve. And the US army is the only one of the four services with fifty three percent, or over fifty percent. We've got about fifty three percent of our force that's in the reserves. All the other services have the vast majority of their force as active duty or regular. So in the regular army there's roughly--round figure, call it fifty, about fifty lieutenant generals. And there's ten or eleven, it depends on the year, four-star generals in the army.

Okay. General Allan reports directly to you. So army leadership says, "Tell somebody the why, not the how." So what are you telling him when you're telling him the "why"?

Well, I think that basically built into our doctrine from a long time ago, and still true today, is a concept that we call mission command, and with mission command we think that the most important thing you can tell a subordinate is the purpose of what you're doing. In other words, answer the question, "Why?". And for Americans that's particularly important. American soldiers traditionally have always performed much, much better when they understood the purpose of the why of what they're doing. So the why for us, the why for an army is to have a land force as part of a joint force that is capable of conducting campaigns on the ground against adversaries or enemies of the United States in order to secure US vital national security interests anywhere in the world. And that's our fundamental raison d'être; it's the fundamental reason we exist.

So you grew up in Boston. You went to Princeton.

I did.

And you've done three tours of Afghanistan. And you've--

Three in Afghanistan, one in Iraq, yeah.

One in Iraq. You were also deployed in Colombia and Somalia, and you've done all these things. And I'm kind of wondering if, kind of looking back, did you expect your career would go this way? Did you have any expectations? And-- I guess, a follow-up question to that would be-- did you expect to be chief of staff of the army?

No. Definitely not the latter. Not even up until, like, ten days before becoming the chief of staff of the army. No, you know, both of my parents served in WWII. My mother was in the navy, my father was with the 4th Marine Division in the Central Pacific, and I grew up in a very patriotic working-class neighborhood in the Boston area. All of the parents in the neighborhood of course were survivors of the Great Depression and veterans of WWII in one form or another. And so I felt an obligation, sort of a duty, to serve my country. I was very lucky. Went to some great schools. You rattled off Princeton, and I went to a great high school. And I felt very fortunate, and I felt that I wanted to and needed to pay back somehow for a country that's given me really a lot of opportunity. Had no intention of making a career out of the military. I joined ROTC. Didn't know what ROTC was in high school, but I joined ROTC when I was at Princeton and got a scholarship. I was playing hockey at the time, and so I was able to do ROTC plus varsity hockey plus my academics. And I thought I'd come in for the four-year obligation that I had to do, and then I'd get out and go to business school or law school like most other kids from Princeton do. But I kind of fell in love with the army, I fell in love with the idea of serving a cause greater than myself, and I loved the camaraderie, I loved the purpose—the sense of purpose that we mentioned earlier. And so I took it in increments, in small chunks three or four years at a time. I never had a long-range plan. I never thought I'd make it a career and certainly didn't think I'd be here thirty-six years later. But I never regretted it, and I've never looked back.

When you think of your tours of duty in combat situations, how do you reflect on that?
Well combat is a searing experience as you might imagine. Part of it—I grew up with a father who made four assault landings in WWII—at Kwajalein Atoll, Saipan, Tinian, and Iwo Jima. And those were brutal, vicious, incredibly casualty-producing battles. Iwo Jima was 7,000 marines killed in nineteen days, 34,000 wounded. And he and all of his friends that would come over to the house and watch Red Sox games and stuff like that—many had served in Battle of the Bulge or landed at Normandy or whatever battle it was in WWII. And you sort of became socialized to the idea that—of sacrifice. And one of the things my father always said—he coached a lot of the teams for my brother and I—and he said, "No matter what the cost, no matter how hard it is, you've got to cross the river, climb the hill, and plant the flag on Suribachi," which was the mountain on Iwo Jima that they—the iconic photograph that was taken of WWII. And I grew up understanding that the freedoms that we have, the privilege that we have as Americans, those aren't free. They weren't given to us by magic dust; they were given to us by soldiers, sailors, airmen, marine, coastguardsmen, CIA agents, FBI agents, policemen who protect the citizenry on a day-to-day basis, and some of those people die in the process or get grievously wounded. I understood that for whatever reason, and I'm not a hundred percent sure why I understood it, but I understood that from an early age. And then the military does a tremendous job of training you. It's not normal to fight in combat. It's not a normal human thing to face death or grievous wounds. Your normal human reaction is to flee; it's the flight or fight sort of instinct. But we train soldiers to be able to deal with the stresses and be resilient in the very intense, what I call, cuchubal of ground combat. And I, you know, was in some of the most rigorous training programs the army has to offer and I think that clearly helped me come to grips with it. I think all of us are affected. There's no one who goes to combat who's not affected. Some are more intensely affected than others. But I had the benefit of some tremendous training, and I was able to, you know, come through okay.

I've heard it said that men don't rise to the occasion; they rise to the level of their training, so—

-It's true. I mean, your performance in combat is directly correlated to the training that you do prior to combat in my mind.

-How is serving as the chief of staff to the army different from other things you've done and leadership roles and otherwise?

-Well, in some ways it's similar. I mean, leadership at different levels requires different techniques, but there's also some very consistent things through it. So in terms of differences I think the major fundamental difference is the size and scope of the organization. I've commanded at various levels, so incrementally the size of the organizations have increased. So I commanded a company: 130/140 guys, battalions: 5/6/700, brigades: couple thousand up to several thousand, commanded division level. So you became conditioned over time in the military through your experience and your various commands to continually increase your scope of responsibilities 'til I finally commanded forces command, which is the largest subordinate command in the army. But even forces command, which is huge, didn't compare to the entire army. The majority of the army of course is based on the continental US, but it's coast to coast and from the Canadian border to the Mexican border. It's spread out throughout the entire country. In fact one of the reasons I came to Chicago is because we have some training programs going on here in Chicago that I wanted to check out, and I wanted to check out the recruiting scene in Chicago. So it's a very, very broad, wide organization that has multiple layers—very complex organization. And it's that scope—the size, scale, and scope of the organization—that took some work to adjust to that. And no job that I've had previously—all of the jobs prepared me for it in one sense, but no job was exactly like that. I think only the chief of staff of the army and the vice chief are the two duty
positions in the army that get a sense of the entire army. And so that would be the biggest difference I think from any previous jobs.

-You don't really have the luxury of being a mile wide, an inch deep. You've got to be a mile wide and a mile deep on all of it basically, as far as your knowledge level.

- The word 'general' is—that you have general knowledge about a lot of things, right? So in the army the highest rank you go in any specific branch—I was an infantry officer. The highest rank you go in any specific branch is the rank of colonel. And after colonel you become a general, so you have responsibilities over multiple branches. And one of the very principles of the way the army fights is combined arms, so you start as an infantry officer or an armor officer or a cavalry officer, you begin at the captain level learning about all the other branches. So you start learning about combined arms—combining infantry with armor, with cavalry, with aviation, with engineers, with artillery. So your infantry, armor, and cavalry officers are trained at an early age to do that. And when you become a general you are responsible for a very broad range of things for which you don’t have any personal expertise. So as a commander at Fort Hood, for example, I was in charge of a hospital. I was in charge of the III Corps, which is the largest corps in the army. It's an armored corps, so it has armor and MEC and artillery and aviation, which you would expect in a combined arms organization. But it's also got all sorts of other components. We're spread out on half a dozen army bases throughout the Midwest and southwest. I had responsible for everything from schools, housing, moral welfare organizations, hospitals—so a lot of areas where you don’t have any personal expertise in but you're expected to be an executive and have supervisor responsibility over areas that you may not be personally expert in, but you rely on subordinates and their advice. And what you are expected to be is an expert in decision-making—how to gather facts bearing on the problem and do course of action analysis and then make sound decisions based on your judgment, experience, and education.

-How much does history play into, kind of the, either the training you got or the self-training you had to provide yourself to be chief of staff?

- I find that history is a very powerful teaching tool. If you think about what history is, it is really just the story of organizations, people, governments, generals, presidents, kings, queens, cultures, societies of the past. So as a human being you learn from your own past experiences. You learn to go left or right or how to cross the street, or whatever things you do you learn from your own personal past. And then you learn from teachers and coaches and mentors. But as you get into things like what I do in the national security business or in the military, it is a lot cheaper and easier to learn from others, and that's found in history books. So if you do a lot of reading of history you can season your decision-making judgment. History never repeats itself. History is not deterministic. It is always human continuancy that plays a role in history. But you can, as Mark Twain said, learn from history 'cause it sure rhymes. It's not exact, but it rhymes. So you can learn if you do a deep and critical study of history in general. I find that to be tremendously helpful.

-That's excellent. Let's talk a little bit about strategic command. From Britain to Turkey, from Moscow to Manila, we have a world that seems to be going in a direction that is challenging, kind of, of the post-WWII order that your father and my grandparents put into place for this country, and I'm kind of—I'm curious to know how the army maintains its preparedness in that kind of environment.

-Well, you know, when WWII was coming to an end in 1944, a year before it was over, about four hundred or so diplomats met up in New Hampshire at a hotel in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, and they met for quite a long time—I think it was four or five, six weeks, something like that—and they essentially wrote the rule set that the international rule set that the world goes by even today. And then post-war the world kind of broke
into two camps: the communist world led by the Soviet Union and the Free World, as it was called, led by the United States. But that rule set that was written in 1944 towards the end of the war—that governed quote/unquote the Free World. It governed economic exchange. It governed the way in which trade was done. It governed international politics and so on. Those rules by and large are the rules by which the world runs even today, with slight modification. They’ve been slightly abridged over the years in different ways but not much. They’re still the fundamental rules. So we’ve had, what I would call, the long peace without a global conflagration, without a continental war in Europe for going on seven decades now. The last time that I’m aware of that occurred was following the Napoleonic wars, in which you had a long peace from 1815 to 1914. So those rules don’t sit well with some people. There are people out there who want to overturn the rules. There are people out there who want to revise the rules or change them in some way. And so there’s individuals out there who want to do that. There are non-state actors who want to do that, and then there are nation states who want to do that. Each one in its own way represents challenges to what we commonly refer to as the, quote, "international order". And there’s resentment towards the United States leading the international order, to the rule set itself, so there’s a variety of challenges out there that are in fact challenging the current international order.

-That rule set seems to me at least when I ponder this was basically established after, oh, the hundred million dead from WWI and WWII, and lessons learned in, you know, blood and destruction and chaos of all kinds really spreading the globe.

-Right

- And I think that it's ironic that, you know, you mention the seven year peace. I guess before that, was it the Pax Romana?
- No, it was the long peace at the end of the Napoleonic Wars up until the--
- But the Romans had one too for a while.
- They did. They had a very long peace would be an interesting word to apply to the Roman Empire or the Roman frontier. But the Roman interior was largely at peace for a period of time, yeah, under Augustus.
- So people forget that, I think, because we've had the Vietnam War, we've had the Korean War. The Vietnam War was--did a lot to change our country as far as how we look at war and how society engages with its military.

- Right.
- But the reality is is that we haven't had that large war and so, how does that impact you and your decision making knowing that there seems to be this disconnect between the reality of this long peace, the seven year peace you mentioned, and how people are perceiving the world? How--I mean, it seems that people are quite afraid right now with terrorism and things like that.

- Sure. Well, when I refer to long peace, you have to be careful. You said it; there's been a lot of wars. There's been a lot of violence since 1945. SO, in many parts of the world it's not peaceful. Korean war, 38,000 Americans killed in action and tens of thousands more, Koreans both south and north. Vietnam, you know, 50,000 or almost 60,000 Americans killed in action. And then there's all kinds of other actions that have occurred, not the least of which is the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the first Gulf War. So there's been a whole series of wars, and then there was a series of wars of, what we call, the Wars of Liberation: anti-colonial wars, 1950s and 60s. So the world hasn't been quote/unquote at peace per say. When I use the word long peace what I'm referring to is the absence of a global or continental wide conflict. That's what I'm referring to. So between the Napoleonic Wars and WWI there were also wars. You had the wars of German unification. You had the 1871 Franco-Prussian War. You had the American Civil War. You had the Russian-Japanese war. You had the Boar War. There were a lot of
wars between 1815 and 1914 as well, but they were limited wars for limited objectives. They weren't continental or global in scale, scope, or cost. So when I refer to long peace I'm referring specifically to the absence of a major war between major states that is global in scale, scope, and cost.

And that's really what the people who wrote those rules we were talking about earlier were--

- They were trying to prevent.
- Yeah, they don't want that--
- That's exactly right.
- That global war.

They were all veterans and had lived through WWI, WWII, they were keenly aware that there were 100 million people, as you mentioned, a hundred million people killed between 1914 and 1945. There's a book called Blood Lands that I read a while ago, which was fascinating. It's about war in the eastern front between Nazi Germany and the Russians, and it's searing. It's unbelievable the level of destruction that occurred in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Poland. It's just beyond--we Americans can't fully comprehend the level of death and destruction that occurred in some of these countries. That's what those authors of the Bretton Woods Agreement and the subsequent things like the United Nations--that's what they wanted to avoid. They wanted to avoid a global conflagration that was so destructive of millions upon millions of citizens throughout the world. And so when I refer to the long peace I'm referring to the absence of that kind of war.

-Absolutely.
- Yeah.

-Would you say that the army's readiness is geared towards that?
- Well, how do you prevent--the 64,000 dollar question is--prevent those types of wars. How do you prevent those? History is illustrative and offers hints. Certainly doesn't give you a roadmap, and it certainly doesn't give you formulas to apply, but it does--it is suggestive. So one of the lessons of history is if you want--and George Washington said it; many, many other people have said it. If you want to maintain peace in an inherently anarchic world, then you need to do that by maintaining strength. And if you look at the international system, there is no world government. There is--and one of the reasons, for example, the United States or France or Britain or--pick your country, one of the reasons that most countries have relative peace inside the borders of their country is because of the concept of sovereignty and the government typically is the sole legitimate user of force inside the boundaries of their country. No such rule set exists internationally. There is no supernatural government. There is no--The United Nations is a pseudo one but even that is not applicable in that regard. So in that environment, which international political theorists call anarchy, in that environment then it's incumbent upon the United States to maintain very, very strong military in order to protect itself and its interests in that type of environment. So yes, we have a big role to play as the US Army, and our readiness is key to doing that.

-Readiness just isn't now; readiness is looking into the future. I was on a plane back from Washington, sat next to an active duty army colonel who--we were actually talking about your AUSA speech, and we were also talking about the book called Ghost Fleet. And it's a very interesting book. In it our enemies, who are the Chinese in this novel, take out our capability basically. They just wipe out our capability to know where we are and at what point in time, and it's a very interesting scenario that follows this path. I'm wondering how, you know, books like Ghost Fleet help you think about future readiness.

-Well, you're right. Readiness is readiness now and readiness in the future. Our readiness now needs work. We need to continue to improve it. We have good
capabilities but we need to improve our capability to fight a--to be able to fight, to be prepared to fight against a high-end, near peer competitor nation state if required by the national leadership of the United States. And we've been focused on counter insurgency, counter terrorism fight for now fifteen years. So we've got some improvement to do in our current near term readiness. And in the future--the future believe it or not is getting here faster than we may think, so there's a lot of drivers that are at work here, one of which is technology that Singer brings out in his book, I think, very, very well. So there's a lot of technical changes out there in terms of your ability to see for example--intelligence surveillance recognizance. If you look at your iPhones or any sort of electronic device that anyone carries around with them as a phone, in one way those are--those can be surveillance devices. We see it on the nightly news when an accident occurs or a crime occurs and someone has a video camera on their phone. You also see ubiquitous nature of surveillance throughout most urban areas of the United States with video cameras at gas stations, 7/11s, at intersections and red lights. So the ability to see is becoming very prolific. And then you've got added to that, you're in the-- really the beginnings of Internet of everything. So you're connecting all of these Interneted devices. There's about six billion people in the world today. There's gonna be about eight billion or so by the demographics in 2050. And they estimate that there will be about sixty billion Interneted-connected devices with eight billion people. So what that means is that you’re gonna have this proliferation of rapidly transferable information on an exponential scale. We have it today; it's gonna be exponential by 2050-ish. And then you've got an increase--so if you can see something, then the question become, can you hit it, and--With some sort of munition, some sort of lethal effect. And the short answer is yes, and that's proliferating as well with precision munitions and delivery methods such as unmanned aerial vehicles, so you’re getting an introduction of robotics. We're seeing an introduction of that today with predators, with PGMs, and smart bombs, smart munitions. That is likely to proliferate over the next ten, twenty, thirty years, and Singer brings all that to bear. He extrapolates; he brings it into the future. He's also a very informed writer so he does have good technical knowledge of some of these things. His storyline that he has is skeptical and hypothetical and makes for an interesting story, but what I find useful is how he combines the various technologies that are out there into an operational and tactical construct, and it makes for an exciting read. And it may or may not be true in detail in the future, but it will approximate something that could happen, and it's something that we pay close attention to. 'Cause I thought he did a great job. It's a very great book, and it's worth the read.

-I think it's very interesting how he creates this array of cyber and manufacturing where our adversary is manufacturing all the chips that we’re using in our military, and then that adversary basically takes over all those chips and then renders us sightless basically.

-That's right.

-And then we have into go a more conventional style of--I don't want to ruin it for everybody who hasn't read it, but--

-You know, his discussions of cyber, for example--cyber is a new domain of warfare, and in the world of cyber--as an example, think of the Wright Brothers and the world of flight. We are only a few years, maybe a decade or two, past the Wright Brothers for an analogy relative to cyber. So you go from the Wright Brothers flying, whatever it was, a hundred yards or something like that at twenty feet on the coast of North Carolina--you go from that to fleets of airplanes flying off aircraft carriers or fleets of bombers over Germany in WWII to today when we have fourth and fifth generation aircraft. That's in the span of, roughly speaking, a little bit over a hundred years. So where cyber will be in the future, I don’t know, but we're seeing the beginnings of it, and I suspect it will be a very powerful domain in warfare. And in modern societies--the United States, all of
Western Europe, Russia, China, etcetera—modern societies are very, very reliant on the electromagnetic spectrum. You just look around this room; you see all the electricity. You get fresh water; that's all pumped from electricity. You go to the gas station; all those gas station pumps are pumped by electricity. So almost everything in modern society is very dependent upon the electrical grid, the electromagnetic spectrum. There are capabilities with cyber—and he brings it out in the book—that are capable of disrupting or denying usage of the electromagnetic spectrum, or in some cases you can destroy it. And that can be devastating. We have to do a lot of work, I think, at hardening our systems because when people first designed these systems they weren’t thinking of it in those terms. So a lot of hardening has to get done—defensive measures. And then adversaries need to know if you make major attacks in cyber space that are that sort of destructive levels those are acts of war in many ways. Rule sets haven’t been written for cyber. They are in development, and international regimes are trying to figure it out and try to— you know, like we have an international regime, for example, for international flight. So when you fly in and out of airports, an airport in Europe and an airport in Africa and an airport in Asia—they are running by the, basically, the same set of internationally agreed-upon flight rules. Those sorts of rules are not fully established and worked out yet in the world of cyber, and they are gonna have to be. It’s another area of challenge as we move into the future for countries to come to grips with is cyber.

-There’s an assumption, it seems like, out there, when you read newspaper articles, that the US just is not prepared to deal with any of this, and I think that might not be entirely the truth.
-Yeah, I don’t think that—I don’t think that’s accurate or true. I think the United States has exceptional cyber capabilities, but we don’t talk about them publicly very much, and I’m not gonna talk about them here very much, but we have exceptional cyber capabilities. How and when and where we use them are decisions to be made by the national political leadership, but we have very, very good capabilities.

-One thing that’s very interesting about cyber from a civilian perspective is is that the framers of the constitution and the founders of our country— you know, they said, “We the people,” and you mentioned, you know, your cell phone or your this or your that. This internet of things and all these things that we carry around is really a civilian thing, and there’s gonna probably be, in my opinion, something that we are all going to have to do to harden our equipment against attack from, you know, our enemies.
-Of course. I mean, banks do it today, Google does it, Microsoft does it. Any major corporation takes a variety of defensive measures because all of these companies, these corporations—the finance industry, the IT industry, the auto industry, any of the defense industries—they’re all subject to hacking either by individuals or by groups of non-state actors or by states. And they’re hacked or attacked frequently, everyday, with millions of attacks or probes, and all of these commercial entities are doing that. And your own phone has various protection built into it by the companies and manufacturers that you may not even be fully aware from a technical standpoint. Lots of people are turning to encryption and things like that to protect their personal bank accounts, and they have passwords and code words and so on and so forth. So, yes, the entire system will need to increase in its defensive measures and its hardening if you will. Within the military and the national security structure obviously we take that very seriously and we put an awful lot of effort into hardening our systems, and you know, just so there’s some sense of context here, there’s a lot of redundancy in the internet so it is not easy—Not just the internet but the electromagnetic spectrum and electricity. It is not quite so simple to shut down, say, an entire country or major portions of the country. It’s not quite that easy. That takes significant levels of effort. Can it be done? Sure, I suppose in a theoretical sense it could be done, but it takes significant levels of effort. And an act like
that would be a serious provocation; it would be an act of war essentially. And in fact some writers have said the first shot of the next war is likely to be a cyber shot in order to do that sort of thing. But there is a lot of redundancy built into the system, and it's not quite as easy as some writers may suggest.

- Have you read the book *One Second After*?
- I have not.
- It's an interesting book that talks about the American electrical grid being—and everything being taken out by a couple of the NP pulses up above our atmosphere, but if we're hardening stuff that's not as big of a deal.
- Well, I think it's a big deal, and it's something that has to factor into all of our planning, but again it's not quite as easy as people may think. One thing I hear civilians talking an awful lot about is the confusion over China, because one thing that's absolutely true about China is a lot of stuff that we consume every day comes directly from China. We have a very close economic relationship with China. It seems like based on that kind of mutual dependence on our economies and who we are there's regular Chinese delegations coming over to America to--I mean, they go to West Point to do leadership training, they come in to our cities and look at our infrastructure. They're very curious about how we run our country. We’re very curious about how they run their country. The confusion is is that--how big of a threat is China to us, because they are kind of in that top four plus one, or--I think you said--
- Four plus one. Correct.
- What are your thoughts on that as far as--
- Well, I think all four of those nation states present various challenges. So, Iran for example in my view essentially had ambitions to be the lead country and dominate the Middle East region, as an example, and it's a revolutionary state. So we talked about those rule sets, those orders. What they want to do is overturn the existing order in the Middle East. If you look at Russia I would argue that they are revanchist, and they want to restore a past Russian glory, power, strength, and secure themselves, and they want to do that by dominating at least what was formerly the Russian near-abroad and they want to be the hegemonic power in Eastern Europe. At least that's what we can gather from their public declaratory policy and their actions to date. And then if you look at North Korea, I would argue that they're--you could say that they're a rogue state in that they're very unpredictable and they're on the third generation of the Kim family regime, and they're clearly developing nuclear weapons, some of which if they can get it married to proper missiles, you know, certain missiles--any kind of known ballistic missiles--will be a direct threat to the United States. China has its own set of geo-strategic drivers. The Chinese have published publicly--President Xi has talked about something he calls the China Dream. And what that comes down to is essentially their vision of a future China where poverty is essentially eliminated, very large middle class. They want a better quality of life, etcetera. But internationally what they want to do according to their own writings is they essentially want the United States out of the Western Pacific. They want us to not be the dominant military economic power, diplomatic power in the western pacific, and they want to be the dominant power in the western pacific, or East Asia if you will, which is in many ways the traditional role China has played for millennia in their past, in their own history. And to that end, what the Chinese have done is since the Deng Xiaoping reforms beginning in '79 is launched on a very incredibly impressive--really historically unprecedented--level of economic reform and growth, and as history tells us that with that level of economic growth typically speaking military capability follows, and so we’re seeing that. So China launched on a very rapid, significant military modernization and reform program. And in my view that is designed to challenge the United states in the Western Pacific and East Asia if needed. They would prefer the
United States pull out of Western Europe--or western Pacific in order to become the dominant power in Asia. They would prefer to do that peacefully but it's obvious that they are preparing to do that militarily if they have to. We're talking some time in the future, quite distant perhaps--not something tomorrow or next week, but this is something that bears watching. But as you said we have very close economic relations, so--and history is suggestive of the future, but it's not deterministic, so a lot of work is gonna have to be done diplomatically, militarily, between us and China in order to preserve the peace in Asia. So there's nothing preordained about conflict with China at all, but the possibility is there. They are starting--they are doing things in the South China Sea which most of the neighboring countries don't care for, and there's some other disturbing signs going on in East Asia, so it bears watching. China is not an enemy right now, and there's nothing that preordains or makes inevitable that they will become an enemy. But they are certainly modernizing their military rapidly, and they are doing certain actions internationally that are cause for concern both in the region amongst our allies and partners and for our own national interest, so it's something to pay close attention to in the future.

-The army has something called Meet Your Army, and it's an interesting program where the army is working on the local level to bring people like yourself into a situation like this where you might be able to reach out to a more civilian population or people who maybe aren't the ones who are going to the Memorial Day parades or they're not going to the Veteran's Day parades, but the ones that are, you know, in their homes in the places where they work and live. How important is that to I would say, the future of the army?

-It's important to the future of the army, but it's also important to the future of the republic. We have a people's army. We're America's army. And a considerable amount of money is spent by the taxpayer on the Department of Defense and the US Army, so I think it's very, very important. It's a comment upon us, those of us in uniform, to maintain that connective tissue between us and the people we serve. If we ever lose sight of that, that's not a good thing. And we went to an all-volunteer force in the early 70s, and we tend to be located in and around military bases obviously. And so you have military towns that are very military friendly in and around these large military bases: Fort Braggs, Fort Hoods, Joint Base Lewis out in Washington state. But the rest of the country doesn't necessarily have personal familiarity with the American military at large and the American army in particular. So it's incumbent upon us to reach out, and that's part of what that program is about. We need to reach out to the American people to make sure they see us, that we explain ourselves to the American people. We obviously do that through the people's representatives, Congress. We are controlled by civilians, the president, and secretary of defense. But we need to go beyond that. We need to reach out to the citizenry of this country and ensure that they see us, they know us, they talk to us, they hear us, they see what their military is all about. So I've encouraged commanders at all levels--don't need to ask for permission--get out there, be seen, talk to the folks in and around your communities, but not just the communities that are right around your military base; go well beyond that and talk to schools and high schools and the media and police and fire and teachers and universities so the American people have an appreciation and understand what it is what we do and what they're paying for. And we are the servants of the people, and it's important to maintain the connection between the people and the people's army.

-The US Army is the only service branch to maintain a PAO office in Chicago. We have Great Lakes, Naval Station Great Lakes. Obviously it's a very important part of our community, but I do wish that the other service branches would maintain those PAO offices because the work we're able to do with your army here in Chicago at the Pritzker
Military Museum and Library is really helping to facilitate conversations that are widely available in this ten million-person city, which is a pretty big city, so that's--
-That's a big city.
-a lot of people who have access to free and open access to this kind of information, so thank you for helping us do that through your leadership. I want to ask you a couple questions about--
-Well, Chicago's important, not just because of the Cubs, by the way. It's important to us in the army and all of the major urban areas are, but also throughout the entire country. We make a concerted effort in the army to invest and put a lot of effort into getting out amongst the, quote, people. And obviously ten million people here, fifteen million people in New York City, millions more in Los Angeles or Houston or Dallas or Boston--pick your city. So we do make a concerted effort to make sure that we have outreach programs in all of the major urban areas.
-Well, thank you for doing that. That's very important. And here in Chicago we are eleven years out from the Sox winning the World Series, and zero years from the Cubs, so we're in good shape in baseball for, what, the next century.
-And the same guy did it--Theo.
-That's right. Boston took care of its problem and we took care of ours, so we're in good shape. Maybe we can get some more--
-Well, I was thrilled for the Cubs. 108 years is a long time. And I know what it was like in Boston after eighty-six years, so I was thrilled for Chicago, thrilled for the Cubs, and I was really happy that the city has a World Series champion.
-Yeah, well, the White Sox--don't forget about them. 2005.
-Okay, but they--but now they got the Cubs.
-Yes, exactly. Now we've got them both.
-And the Blackhawks. Stanley Cup, so there you go.
-Just the Bears need to step up here, right? It's been since the 80s. You talked a little bit about why you decided to join the army, and I've asked you to kind of reflect back on a couple of things as you were talking about earlier, but I'm kind of curious to know if you would mind sharing who you think your greatest mentor was. You probably had a lot of them so you can name more than one if you want.
-Well, I think like most normal human beings I'd have to point to my mother and father to start. I think all of us are a product of others. We obviously have some innate God-given abilities, but we're molded, we're shaped, all along the way by other people. So no matter what station of life you end up, you ended up there because of your own actions and behaviors, but your actions and behaviors shaped and formed by many, many people along the way. So these four stars on my shoulder, I wear them, but they belong to others; they're not mine so to speak. And I would have to say that that really starts, in my case, with my mother and father who were great patriots and hard-working people, never had a college degree, and were determined that their children would have a good education, play sports, and be good citizens and so on. And they essentially established the very essence of, you know, your personalities, are your parents. And then I had some great high school coaches, one of whom I'm very close to even today--high school hockey coach. Had some great professors at Princeton, and then in the army I would have to--there's several. I mean, there's never one; it's always all along the way. But I had a couple of battalion commanders when I was a young captain, and it was really because of them that I stayed in, in many ways because I was at my fifth and sixth year of service under their leadership. They were both Vietnam veterans. Both--one has passed away; one is still alive today. But I stayed in contact with them over the years. And they really established standards for me. It was a light infantry unit in the 7th infantry division, 5th Battalion, 21st Infantry. And they established tactical standards, operational
standards, ethical standards, conduct standards. And they had a tremendous influence on how I view the world even today. I would argue that ranger school--you know, the instructors, all of them, all the RIs--all the ranger instructors were mentors in their own way, not that I could name any of them per say, but as a group that was an experience that clearly molded the way that I look at the world today. When you get into the next sort of level I had a brigade commander that was a tremendous influence on me in the 10th Mountain Division. Still is today. I still stay in contact with him. He's a brilliant guy. He writes a lot. He retired as a three-star general. And he taught me so much about warfare, the nature of warfare. He's the guy who really helped me understand things like Clausewitz and Sun Tzu and all that. And he is an operational and strategic thinker that has very few peers today. He's retired today, but he's still very, very active. And then there's others that are recently retired that clearly had a big impact on me. Several four-stars that recently retired--they all reached out, molded me, and shaped me in a variety of ways. And then I would argue that Secretary Gates had--I was his executive officer for a period of time. He had a tremendous influence on me as well. So there's been a lot of people. There's not--I think for any human being there's never a single one. It's a journey where lots of different people influence you in different ways, and they mold and shape you in different ways that results in who you are at a certain point in time. And in my case there were many along the way, and I needed all the help I could get, I can tell you that, so--

- Don't we all?
- Yeah, that's right. We all do.
- I'm sure you get, when you're out in public with civilians around, you probably get people saying, "Thank you for your service."
- Sure.

- And Major General Hutmacher was here, and he said that what he really wished somebody would ask him, rather than saying maybe just, "Thank you for your service," he really wanted people to ask him about the people that he served with who maybe didn't get to come home so he could tell their stories and carry their memory forward. What's something you wish, if you-- you know, obviously you don't always have the time to do this, but what's something you kind of wish people would ask you about your service?

- Well, first I would say that the American people--my personal experience, and I try to get out a lot--the American people are incredibly supportive of their military. I don't know if I'd use the word love affair, but it comes close to it. The American people love their military in a very genuine, deep, respectful way. It is not superficial whatsoever. And they support us. It is not just "thank you" at the airport. They really deeply believe and support their military. They may not understand all the details of what we do, and our job is to explain it to them. They may not have personal experience. But there's a deep respect and there's a deep love for the military, and there's no question in my mind. Combat--what you're referring to is asking, for example, about combat. Combat is a unique experience. Not even everybody in uniform, you know, participates in it or experiences it. It's a unique experience that is very, very difficult to explain, and it's very difficult to understand unless you personally experienced it. Reading books can help. There are some good movies that are-- provide insights. But it's such an emotional, searing experience that it's extraordinarily difficult to even describe to anyone who hasn't actually experienced it. A lot of times--there's an old saying that nothing will ever bridge the gap between those who went and those who didn't. To some extent that's true. We, though, in uniform have to be careful about that. We have to be careful--we have to take a dose of humility, all of us in uniform. And those of us who have seen a lot of combat also have to realize that that's a huge sacrifice, but it's not one that allows us to have a chip
on our shoulder against those who didn’t. My mother never saw a day in combat, but she served in the military, and my father saw intense combat, and they both equally served their country in a time of need. So, you know, most Americans don’t see visceral combat up close, and thankfully they don’t. And there are some of us who have and still do, and some suffered greatly for it. Some paid the ultimate sacrifice, and we need to honor them all the days of our lives. Some were grievously wounded. You just elected a senator from Illinois here, Tammy Duckworth, who lost both her legs in service of her nation. So there are things, I think, that civilians want to ask that they’re probably reluctant to ask, and most of that focuses around the real experiences of combat. If a civilian feels close enough to a veteran to talk about that, that's fine, but many veterans are very reluctant to talk about that with someone who hasn’t been there. It's a psychological thing. It’s not a--it's not trying to be standoffish. It's just a difficult thing to talk about and explain.
- I want to thank you for your time here today. Is there any final words you’d like to say? We've--
- Well, I'm thankful, Ken, for having me here. And this, like you said upfront, this is a medium, a means, by which the American people can see their chief of staff of the army and see some of the things that we talk about. And I deeply appreciate the support not only of Chicago but the American people nationwide for their army. We are the people army, and we are here for one reason and one reason only, and that is to protect the American people no matter what the cost is to ourselves. And we’re proud to do it, we’re honored to do it, and thanks so much for having me on.
- Thank you for coming. Appreciate it and everything you do.
- Thank you.
- Thank you to General Milley for visiting the Pritzker Military Museum and Library and the United States Army for supporting this program. To learn more about the US Army, visit army.mil. To learn more about the Museum and Library visit in person or online at pritzkermilitary.org. Thank you, and please join us next time on Pritzker Military Presents.
- Visit the Pritzker Military Museum ad Library in downtown Chicago. Explore original exhibits on military history, or be a part of a live studio audience. Watch other episodes of Pritzker Military Presents, find out What's On, at pritzkermilitary.org.
 (Theme music)
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 (Theme music)
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