

INTERVIEW

Creating the Force of the Future

Brad R. Carson, Acting Principal Deputy Undersecretary of Defense
(Personnel and Readiness)

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The U.S. defense establishment's approach to its people must adapt to meet the challenges of 21st-century national security. Dissatisfied with today's military personnel processes and concepts originally designed for the Cold War, and civil service systems with roots over a hundred years old, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter has called for a concerted effort to define and move toward a more modern approach to human capital—toward a "Force of the Future." As DoD's senior appointed official in the Personnel and Readiness sphere, Brad Carson recently shared some thoughts with JCLI on the challenges and benefits of this new approach. The Force of the Future is one in which military leaders could develop greater agility and leadership effectiveness through better use of civilian graduate education and corporate exchange programs, combined with an approach to advancement that is inherently inclusive and values formative experiences over seniority. At the same time, a less restrictive "career pyramid" would allow DoD to bring specialized skills into the force when needed, moving away from today's reliance on long, closed personnel pipelines that rarely match the size or character of changing demands. Achieving these sorts of changes is difficult and will require willingness inside and outside DoD to re-look elements of existing law and policy; but even more, will require a widespread shift in thinking to be fully successful. The words flexibility and innovation, while often over-used, are indispensable attributes for DoD's new approach to people if we hope to retain the finest examples of military and civilian professionals and enable them to effectively provide for the common defense.

The Honorable Brad R. Carson is the senior policy advisor to the Secretary of Defense on recruitment, career development, pay and benefits for 1.4 million active duty military personnel, 1.1 million Guard and Reserve personnel, 748,000 Department of Defense civilians, and is responsible for overseeing the overall state of military readiness. He previously served as Under Secretary, Chief Management Officer, and General Counsel for the U.S. Army, a Member of the U.S. Congress from Oklahoma's 2nd District, a White House Fellow, CEO of Cherokee Nation Businesses, and in a variety of other academic and advisory positions. His military service as a Naval Reserve Intelligence officer includes deployment in 2008-09 with U.S. Army explosive ordnance disposal teams in Iraq. He holds Bachelors' and Master's degrees from Baylor and Oxford universities and a J.D. from the University of Oklahoma.

JCLI: *What are the key characteristics that you are looking to develop in future DoD civilian or military leaders?*

Carson: Creativity. Commitment. A sense of purpose. A sense that you can realize all of your professional ambitions working for the Department of Defense, even if that means leaving us for a while and coming back in. That's what I want for us. I want us to be a culture of innovation, of thinking, of having a critical distance on our own activities, one that is embedded in a love for what we do and the institutions and the history that we bring to it, but recognizing that it has to change. So that's what my ambition is. To be able to attract people in. And this is a place that is often hard to find elsewhere, a real sense that you are doing something important, and I think that's what people want.

JCLI: *Given that "Force of the Future" is the strategy for the Department's effort to achieve those kinds of aspirations, can you share a synopsis of its most salient parts?*

Carson: It has a military and civilian side to it. There are about eighty different reforms. I think fundamentally what we want to do is move what is currently a pyramid with pretty steep sides to it, to more of a matrix or a network, or [as Secretary Carter said], a "jungle gym" approach to things. Because we find lots of people, especially the people who want to rise to strategic leadership within the department, want to do things over the course of their career that are more divergent than the current system would permit. I've seen this in the Army closely, where we have key development positions,



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we have command positions, we have professional military education you have to meet. And if you spend any time between these positions cooling your heels, waiting for these positions to open up, the time between promotion points is quickly eaten up. And if you want to go, for example, and get a master's degree or Ph.D. from a civilian school, you are likely to be punished by the system, because you will miss something that you should have otherwise done. We see this in a new study from a very distinguished Ranger who is now teaching at West

perspective. You are just not tactically proficient, which is what we privilege now in promotion to the highest levels. In the Army, you may have been a terrific battalion commander or brigade commander. But those are not necessarily the same skills which you need to lead the Army and to give advice to the President on how to deal with Syria or China. The skills are amazing, in your ability to synchronize combined arms, this requires an organizational genius of sorts. But it is a different skillset from understanding how the Army or Air Force needs to be in the world.

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While we need to have these different experiences, we don't make it very easy for people. And this is especially punishing those folks that we need to recruit

Point, in the summer issue of *Parameters*. If you are one standard deviation above the IQ norm, as a West Point cadet, your chances of promotion to major, lieutenant colonel, being picked up for command, are less, eighteen to thirty percent less than the average. And that's not because of an anti-intellectual bias, it's that these top performers want to do something a little bit different, they don't want to do the ruthless track of company command, battalion XO, go to [Fort] Leavenworth, and come back--they want to do something a bit different from that. And as a result, they do that, and they find themselves on the short end of the promotion stick.

and retain more of, especially women. Only about twenty percent of the military services are women, and they leave at a higher rate than men. At the same time, they are dominant in higher education, especially with master's degrees. So if you need a more cognitively skilled workforce, you need one that is more open to women's participation. And right now we really don't have that. And I think we can do those sorts of things without really sacrificing readiness. To me, keeping really able people in the services, and making this a hospitable environment for them, enhances our readiness and doesn't detract from it. But being in the military, I think there is some suffering that is required, and [if] you go to Ranger School, it is about suffering. But we should not gratuitously impose it on people during the course of their careers, because they will leave.

So my hope is that we can make it a slightly more flexible system, where we can be grooming strategic leaders earlier in their careers, giving them broadening experiences that don't come at the expense of depth. Because now we've traded those things off. So we could see a world where the Chief of Staff of the Air Force might have a Ph.D. in English Literature from a top American civilian school. That to me is a better world, because it gives you a broader

As I look forward into the future, we have lots of reasons to be concerned about the all volunteer force. We've kind of papered over it in the past fifteen years

because we had a strong sense of mission. A strong sense of patriotism and that people wanted to fight, especially after 9/11. But we've also greased it with a lot of money. Year upon year increases in basic pay and BAH, huge bonuses. The Army at the height of the war was spending almost a billion dollars a year in bonuses. We had moral waivers and lowered academic standards. So, we have been enabled to try and jury-rig it together. We're at a point where the Chiefs say, the compensation bill has grown so large, we can no longer even afford to do this, we have to find ways to cut it. The Army is not even meeting their recruiting mission at this point, and the Army is a bellwether on this and on retention. So we can look to the future and see that more money is not going to be available to us, so we have to change the value proposition for service. It may not be as lucrative, but it might be better. That's what we are trying to do now.

JCLI: *There are a great number of embedded challenges in those goals. Are notable changes needed in any of our current national defense or service-specific cultures, and if so, what might those changes look like?*

Carson: We have to have a culture that accepts the notions of more flexibility in personnel. Because many of the cultures can swallow up any reforms that I choose to offer by not promoting people who take advantage of them. The services get to decide who rises up to become the general officers, to become the Chiefs, and if we don't reward the people who do these kind of activities, they won't do them. We see this already in the sabbatical programs, because they are under-subscribed. People think, I guess, "it's available, but I will get punished on the back end?" The promotion board will come up and people will wonder where I have been. And until the services reward that and change the culture, you won't have the kind of differences that I am hoping to see.

At the same time, I am inspired at what Daniel Patrick Moynihan once said about politics and culture, where he said that culture is more important than politics, but sometimes politics can save a culture from itself. So what I can do here is use the bully pulpit of this office. I can change some regulations and rules and duties, and ask Congress for some statutory change, and in some ways, these new rules can push the culture to make the changes that I see are needed, and many people in the services see are needed. The inertia is intense, but that's my hope.

JCLI: *As you've talked about leadership characteristics and managing them in an enterprise the size of the Department of Defense, what do you envision with regard to metrics and incentives applied across DoD?*

Carson: They look like a world in which half of the general officers that are promoted across the services have been to civilian institutions for their master's degree or have a higher degree than that. Where half of the general officers have had training with industry, like a year or two with one of the big high-tech firms, for example. The Air Force is great about that already. Here's an anecdote that illustrates the cultural differences. We have a Secretary of Defense Corporate Fellows Program, where we send people out to some of the best businesses in the country. It has produced, over its career, twenty general officers. Fifteen have come from the Air Force. The Army has produced none that went through that program. So I

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want to see a world kind of like what the Air Force has now. Where we have a lot of general officers, senior leaders, who have been out to Google, to UPS, to Proctor and Gamble, and see how other large organizations operate

and can bring those lessons back to us. At the same time, these officers serve as ambassadors to a civilian world that is increasingly distant from us. So those are some of the metrics. I would like to see more women, more African Americans, more Latinos, especially at the highest ranks, I would like to see their promotion percentages, which we closely monitor here, tick up. I would like to see better “branching decisions” . . . sometimes, the challenges that we face in diversity appear at the very earliest parts of a military career, when people choose to be in a particular branch that doesn’t lead to the apex of the pyramid. So I want to see, in all of these kinds of things, incremental improvement on them, year after year.

JCLI: *A former defense secretary recently wrote that as he was addressing personnel and readiness issues, he was often angered by various factors preventing real change. Regardless to the degree that you share that view, what are the obstacles you see within your own organization? Moving beyond P&R, what challenges are you are trying to overcome?*

Carson: I think there are problems in general with what I would call functional organizations [of human relations and legal personnel], who often come to be seen as compliance officers. And many of these folks, because they have spent so many years in it, have an almost Pharisical devotion to the book, and the rules, and an interpretation of what those rules might mean. And therefore, saying “no” is what the HR community does, what lawyers do, and both often are about checking to make sure that you did it all correctly, as opposed to helping make it what it should be. It seems that especially in the private sector, [human resources people] are more often strategic enablers who are about saying yes and getting to yes. That is much of the frustration that people have had with P&R in the past. The perception

is, “You are the custodians of all those rules, from equal opportunity and diversity, to who gets money and how people are promoted, and you always say no to us.” Well, we do have to say no on occasion. But a good lawyer or a good HR person goes in and will say, “Tell me what you want to do, and I will help make this happen.”

Many of the things that come to me do not have clear yes or no answers, because if they did, they would have been decided two or three echelons below me. There are complicated and controversial issues and people can disagree how to interpret this regulation, this policy, this statute. But instead of saying yes or no, we can offer people risk management alternatives, which I think is really important. So that is what we are trying to do.

JCLI: *In that light, with regard to the statutes that you have to deal with and resulting personnel policies, do you see an absolute need for a revision of landmark legislation like the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act [DOPMA], or the Civil Service Statutes? If so, are there things that are particularly important to change?*

Carson: I do think that we need wholesale revision to those major pieces of legislation, like DOPMA, which was passed in 1980, and the Civil Service Act of 1883, the Pendleton Act, and its progeny that defined the civilian public sector today.

Looking at the military side, careers are too short. We force people out as a colonel at thirty years, at the age of fifty, close to the peak of their powers in terms of doing a cognitively important position. [The impact of age is] more complicated if you are in the infantry, but most of the jobs are not in the infantry. You are doing mental calculations and transformations in your head, and you’re at the peak of your powers when we force you out. And that doesn’t make sense to me. We have a

world today where, because of that statute, the [William F.] Halseys, the [Douglas] MacArthurs, the [George C.] Marshalls, wouldn't have seen the end of World War II. They would have been forced out, even with a Presidential dispensation. That makes no sense to me. We have to have longer careers where people can get these broadening experiences. I am told by Air Force officers, when you are a high potential officer, you are going through jobs every ten or eleven months in the later part of your career to be prepared to be a general officer. That gives you a certain perspective on the different parts of the Air Force, and that is important. If you have longer careers you can stay in those jobs for more time, because that [rapid turnover] hurts the organization. I saw this on the Army Staff. We are rotating through, if you are a three star, maybe every two or three years, if you are a principal on the staff. And so in three years, [your staff has] completely turned over. You don't have time to see long-term reforms through, because you are trying to make reforms in the short term, you don't have the subject matter expertise that the SES [Senior Executive Service] person next to you does who has been there for twenty years, and he outwaits you.

We have to have longer careers because that will allow us to facilitate other reforms. We need to remove the fixed promotion points, so when you are at sixteen years, [in the current system] you are up for lieutenant colonel plus or minus one, whereas [a new system would look to see whether] you have certain competencies instead. So you could perhaps be screened for lieutenant colonel at twenty years, or it could be at twelve years, depending upon when you have got certain things, milestones achieved. I think it's important to do on the military side. Longer careers, longer jobs,

I think that's really important. [So is] making that pyramid a little less steep and giving people places to get on, perhaps halfway up.

On the civilian side, the system is both over structured and under structured. We don't spend as much time with civilians as we do the military with career development. A great thing about the services is that we tell you all about what you need to do to succeed at the next level. But many times the services have published plans, do this, do that, to move on up. And it can be claustrophobic, almost, in how intense they are, but they do give people a sense of "I need to be the "3," the XO," or whatever you need to do. Civilians don't have that. What do you need to do to move up to the next step? You really don't know. We don't really devote nearly the money that we spend on the military side to training. The military has this great tradition, it's about education. We send them off to school all the time. It's continuing education. You don't have that on the civilian side. We need more there. And we need more flexibility. It's frustrating to me that if—for example—a Mark Zuckerberg-type person came in today and said, "I would like to join the U.S. military," we would have to say, "you don't have a college degree, so we can perhaps make you an E-4, but without a college degree, that's all we can do—I'm sorry." If he went and got some fly-by-night college degree, the statute would allow [a Service] in theory to bring him in as an O-3, but we don't do that, we bring everyone in as an O-1 in the line branches. It doesn't

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make any sense to me. But the same is true on the civilian side. You probably couldn't break in at all. Maybe he could

come in as a GS-5 or GS-7, with minimal responsibilities, and it would be a minimum of a year in grade before he could move up, but he probably couldn't break in to begin with. And this doesn't make sense to me. And so, moving to a more flexible system works. What we've seen that in the past thirty years, enabled by IT, the private sector has had a revolution in HR, in that they use data, they collect data, to make sure you are suitable for the job, they do non-cognitive testing, they use cognitive testing, they do whole person evaluations, they have spent a lot of effort on each person. And we need to go to that on both the military and civilian side, as opposed to this industrial age wholesale approach in which you are all interchangeable. We move you through the job, maybe you work, maybe you do not . . . But we can do better.

JCLI: *An incredible amount of detail goes into constructing a civilian position description, but particularly in the higher civil service grades, hiring authorities really want someone who is flexible, adaptable, capable, creative--and yet the system draws a black and white box around candidates. How do you reconcile this disconnect?*

Carson: When I was in the private sector, I always hired as they say in the NFL, "the best available athlete." For example, you may not actually be trained up in the latest Microsoft Excel skills, you might need to be good at "X",

We may not understand Snapchat, or YikYak, but this is the world we live in...

but you are terrific. A divergent thinker, a great leader, you might have some interesting experiences, I want you, and I will train you on something that is pretty trivial, like how to use Excel better. But we can't do that on the civilian side. It's like we must specify six skills for a financial

analyst: "you have proficiency with Excel, you've done the job for one year at the next lowest grade, etc." But I want a holistic evaluation of you, to know whether or not you have the right temperament for the job, things that are outside the narrow four corners of the job description. We don't currently have the ability to do that.

JCLI: *You've talked about changing the context for DoD personnel management, but can DoD incentivize managers at all levels to be willing to take reasoned risks? Is there a "system fix," a character development approach or some combination of the two that would allow people to make well-intentioned mistakes, or have less than perfect judgment, and still perceive they have a career or a path for potential advancement?*

Carson: I think it's up to senior leaders to try and create a culture where failing is permitted and even encouraged so that it's a "fast failure," as Silicon Valley would say. That is very hard, on the military side. It's hierarchical, and if you don't have a culture where disagreeing is encouraged, you might have a situation that is very dangerous [to your career]. And so people stay in their lane, to use the cliché, and don't want to challenge senior leaders. To me, the only fix is to have senior leaders who reward, encourage, and promote people who dissent. And I can say "Thank you G-1 for giving me your views on this, I see that you believe passionately, it makes a lot of sense, but I am going

this direction. And I am not going to hold that against you, in fact, I am going to reward you and your profound professional advice." You have to, as a leader, encourage people to disagree with you.

That's the only solution. I don't think there is anything we can do to provide instructions, or put them into a pamphlet or regulation, aside from developing a culture of "this is how we do things around here." And it becomes a culture that is so powerful, it wants to bind senior leaders,

who might want to break from it in some way and punish it. No. The culture around here is that the lowest guy can raise his hand and say that that's bunk. And it's hard to do, both in the civilian and the military side, because of the nature of the rewards system that is there. So its up to your leaders to say that I like the guy who is thinking differently, so make him a general in spite the fact that we disagree on many, many things.

JCLI: *You seem to be advocating a hybrid culture that will span older, hierarchical generations of leaders and younger, more fluid-thinking leaders; that will allow dissension and discussion yet still maintain the ability that hierarchy brings with it. How do we do that?*

Carson: Yes, that's the balance that we have to strike. And it is not an easy one to craft ahead of time. You just have to worry about the execution. But we do recruit, not conscript, and you do have to depend upon the market, and when we look at what millennial preferences are, for example, we can't be blind to them. We may not understand Snapchat, or YikYak, but this is the world we live in, and so long as we are recruiting that cohort into our world, you have to understand where they are coming from, and try to find the best of their practices that don't take away from what we need for mission success. If we don't account for that, we won't be able to fill in the ranks. These are the expectations for many people now, is to have a different sort of approach. If we want to say that it is incompatible with military service, we can do that, but we will find it harder to recruit, and we will find ourselves a greater distance from the broader population. I'm not going to say a priori that you can't do that, but whether it's wise to do it, even if you could is another question.

We saw, in the 1990s, some incredible recruiting and retention issues. There's no

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reason to think that that was a one-off period, and we are now coming back to a time of austerity. The surveys of the troops in the Military Times and others talk about widespread disgruntlement; they feel everything is being balanced on their back. The mission sense of being at war is going away, and we are coming back to garrison. There are going to be some real challenges.

JCLI: *Do you see anything in the force of the future that would require us to change traditional military core values or the traditional sense of what a military professional is?*

Carson: I hope not. Because I think those values are really important. They are important for the country, they are important for the success of the military, and they are, on their own terms, beautiful things. That's why I enjoy working for the Department of Defense, because you meet people who have devoted themselves to the country, to the fellow men and women that they have served with. In a way that sometimes almost seems quaint, given the way the broader culture has moved to a more narcissistic, more "me" generation, but these are folks who believe in taking care of their people, and in serving something, and about whom we can say "he or she is a patriot" and it does not seem ironic, like it would if you were out in the broader culture using that word. Some people think that it is an odd word to use, but here, it is very heartfelt, no-one thinks twice about it, and it's a beautiful thing.

You don't want to change that in any way, and I don't think people want to change that, because while I can see a world where you can bring lateral talent into key missions, it's not for every job. In combat aviation, or submarines,

or infantry, it's something you come into and you stay, you grow into, you accrete skills over time. But much of the military work we do today isn't like that. Even in 2015, people think of the infantry when they think of the U.S. Army. That's 56,000 people of the active component out of 500,000 people. They are critically important, they are the people at the tip of the spear, but the average person in the Army is not infantry. They may be enabling them, they might be close to them, but many times they are doing other things, high tech skills, for which there is a lot of training being done on the outside too. So for me, you may look and say that there are jobs that are a long way from the tip of the spear, and for which there are a lot of civilian analogues, and we should buy the training that they are doing and bring them into the force, rather than think we have to train all these folks ourselves. There is a way to mix those people and skills, but I don't in any way to want to diminish the martial values that make the military an amazing thing. If Mark Zuckerberg says "I want to be a Marine, I believe in that warrior ethos, and I want to be a part of it," we should find room for him in the Marine Corps. I think there are many people who want to join us and find our values attractive, but they don't want to be an E-4, or an E-1, [if they come] in without a

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college degree. We need to allow more people who share [our values] to find their way in, especially when they bring in needed attributes.

JCLI: *With every change in administrations there is new energy but there is also turbulence. When we reach that point in the electoral cycle, what are the markers that you'd like to see for DoD's personnel world that reflect the progress you're trying to lead?*

Carson: The most important thing for me is to change the way we think. Keynes, I think, said we are all slaves to a long-dead economist. [That just illustrates that] it's ideas that matter, for they frame how you think about things. I have told many people, including some in the building who have been critical of the ideas that I have put forth, that I'm really after a gestalt switch. I want us to switch the way we think about people. We have to move to a talent management system, where we value the individual, where we enable them with [information technology], and we recognize that people have unique talents. All of us do, not just the top one or five percent. Everyone in the force has a talent, and there are offices that are suitable for them. We need to match those two kinds of things up. If I could convince the whole building to have this gestalt switch, that's victory. How that manifests itself for years to come will be different in each of the Services, and circumstances will demand different responses to it. But that to me is victory. Changing the way we talk—the vocabulary of people is really important.

I do hope that we can push some specific reforms through. More advanced civil schooling, more flexibility, changes to DOPMA, and there is an appetite for that. But those are almost secondary to me in convincing everyone that

there is a better way to think about this problem. Let's all put our minds together and accept that there is a better way to think about it. That has been a big challenge. People have been surprised that there may be a better way to think about it--and that's what I am trying to do.

JCLI: *You see that as leadership in action, in helping people make that [mental] switch.*

Carson: Yes. Exactly, and it will last long after I am gone. If we can inculcate a new kind of viewpoint, the people that run the services and those who succeed me will execute upon that and make it better still.

JCLI: *Ten to fifteen years from now, if you were to paint a broad picture of the force that you would see, are there any really significant differences or similarities that you would want to highlight?*

Carson: I think I would like to see the intense bonds that have been brought about by these wars to continue. It will be hard in a garrison posture, but that is the most amazing thing I see among our leaders today. In my time in the Army, I saw colonels at the beginning of the conflict who are now three or four star [generals]. They worked at various echelons. This guy was battalion commander or brigade commander, another was a division commander. That sense of trust, of knowledge, [they share] is something that I would hate to see lost as we move more to a CONUS-based posture. Maintaining that is really important to me. I would like to see more women at the top, I would like to see more diversity at the top. I would like to see a world where our senior leaders have an education, a deep education in fields that may be orthogonal to what we do here. And not necessarily even in technical skills, but a Ph.D. in military history, for example, would do wonders for a senior leader in any of the services. English literature, to understand how people really work, and are, and think . . . These are things that are really important to me. So I would like to see that. We have examples of these, like H.R. McMaster, Jim Stavridis, David Petraeus. But they are almost the exception that proves the rule. They were very rare, they were hand managed, they were sometimes controversial, they rose up the ranks. But careers like theirs should be “Hey, that’s what we expect.” Our Chiefs should have a master’s degree from the Kennedy School or the University of Chicago, or a philosophy degree from somewhere like that. That’s a good way to be, I think.

We have to move away from the centralized management we have today.

And we are going to see, I fear, a deficit for the next few years. The Army has spent a lot of time thinking about advanced schooling, but even they had moved away from it over the last twenty years. And so people like the Chairman [Gen Dempsey] got degrees in English from Duke. But it will be a long time, if we are not careful, before you see a Service Chief or a four star general with that kind of background because we’ve gotten away from it. And you see it in all the services. The marines have almost no tradition of that. The Air Force not as much as the Army does. The Navy somewhat. I hope to see more diversity and more grooming across all the services of potential strategic leaders. Some services do better jobs than others on this front. But we need people in the highest ranks who have a strategic vision about how our military forces can be used.

JCLI: *We haven’t talked much about management infrastructure--actual nuts and bolts, the way that the Department keeps track of, assesses, and mechanizes its personnel processes. How do you see the next generation of personnel management systems evolving?*

Carson: We have to move away from the centralized management we have today. When you go to the various personnel centers, HRC, BUPERS, and you see one person, two persons managing hundreds if not thousands of people. And as a result, you really can’t know your people well enough. The only solution to that is not to radically increase the number of detailers in these installations, but to move to a market based mechanism, which is one of the things that we advocated in the Force of the Future. We should have a world where you are populating information yourself, because you think people care about it, so you are willing to put information out there about your avocational interests, what you studied in your spare time, maybe where you grew up, languages that you picked up along the way from

your wife or your own cultural experiences, maybe you are an immigrant. Then, when you have commanders who are searching for certain qualities, like people who have expertise in Africa, they don't just search officer record briefs or call someone at HRC or BUPERS or the Air Force Personnel Center who happens to know something beyond what's in the brief. Commanders should have a way to find out that when someone studied Swahili as a student, but he never got a certification so it wasn't on the officer record brief, and he's a member of the Royal Africa Society just because he is interested in the subject, and he has spent TDYs and mission trips in his time off to Kenya. That's a person some commanders would love to come join their AFRICOM team, because he is not some random guy assigned by rule, but a person with a passion for the AOR who could really bring and develop some expertise. There will be bounds to that, there will always be jobs that are hard to fill, and those that we will have to compel to fill, but we do use bonuses now to go to some hard to fill positions. But that's what we have to do-- give commanders more discretion in hiring people.

One of my staff members just came from Army Human Resources Command, and despite Herculean work and spreadsheets and tracking systems, she couldn't really know that much about the hundreds of names and lives and family considerations she was supposed to manage. IT should solve that problem for us, and it can. And this is a great example of a win-win. The service members are happier, the service is better, because the system as a whole is better at finding suitability. That's what has to happen I think. That's what the future is going to be. The centralized management is archaic, and we have to move away from that.

JCLI: *What advice would you give to a young person these days who wants to contribute either as a military or civilian professional to our national security?*

Carson: Study. Read a lot. Develop your intellectual capital. Henry Kissinger once said, you have to develop your intellectual capital before you commit to government, because then you are just drawing on it. You don't have the chance to build it back up much because you are so busy. And there's a certain truth to that. I find the people who are really valuable are those who seek excellence in the work they do, and have spent a lot of time to master things that are tedious. The PPBE [Planning, Programming, Budgeting & Execution] process here. The acquisition process. If you want to know how to affect the Pentagon, you need to know how that system works.

Study. Read a lot. Develop your intellectual capital. The really important work is not very glamorous, but you need to master it, or else you will find yourself being carried along by the world around you.

They are very narrow disciplines, but they are critical. For me, it's understanding how the bureaucracy works, where the people are, who makes the decisions, where the money is, how DOPMA really works. It's easy to get caught up in Sunday talk show banter about how the world should look. The Secretary of Defense needs to care about that, but one can make a lasting impact too by knowing how the bureaucracy works. To master the bureaucracy is to effect change around here. Otherwise, there is going to be some wizard in the A-8 or the G-8 or N-8 who will be telling you how the world works, and they will be defining your "box." You need to be able to interrogate them and say "No man, I know how this works too, and it doesn't work like that. I want you to do it like this!"

That's my advice to people: the really important work is not very glamorous, but you need to master it, or else you will find yourself being carried along by the world around you. And unable to grip it in any event.

JCLI: *Thank you, Secretary Carson.*

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