

By Robert S. Dudley

## Amateurs Welcome, Apparently

"A number of questions were asked of me today about specific programs: submarine programs, different areas of technology and acquisitions, and our superior technology. And I've said, I don't know enough about it. I don't. There are a lot of things I don't know about. If confirmed, I intend to know a lot more than I do. I will have to."—**Former Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.), remarks at a Senate hearing on his nomination to become Secretary of Defense, Wall Street Journal, Feb. 1.**

## Voluntary and Involuntary

"As we execute this year's voluntary force management strategy, the Air Force will continue to assess the need for additional voluntary and involuntary force management measures in order to meet authorized end-strength levels in current and future fiscal years."—**Lt. Col. Letitia Marsh, chief of Air Force separation and retirement policy branch, Feb. 4.**

## Sleight of Mouth

"We're not winding down the damn war. We're winding down our participation in the war. That's extraordinarily different."—**Former US ambassador Ronald E. Neumann, commenting on US plans to leave Afghanistan in 2014, Los Angeles Times, Feb. 3.**

## Tail Lights Around the Bend

"I really believe we can win this thing [but] winning won't occur between now and 2014. We will set the conditions to win during [an additional] decade of transformation."—**Gen. John R. Allen, then commander of coalition forces in Afghanistan, Washington Post, Jan. 30.**

## Obligations, We Have None

"What are the duties inherent in citizenship? For Americans, the answer to that question has changed dramatically over time. With regard to military service, the answer prevailing today is this one: No such duty exists. Service in the armed forces, whether pursuant to defending the homeland, advancing the cause of freedom abroad, or expanding the American imperium, has become en-

tirely a matter of individual choice. ... Relieving citizens of any obligation to contribute to the country's defense has allowed an immense gap to open up between the US military and American society. Here lies one explanation for Washington's disturbing propensity to instigate unnecessary wars (like Iraq) and to persist in unwinnable ones (like Afghanistan). Some might hope that equipping women soldiers with assault rifles and allowing them to engage in close combat will reverse this trend. Don't bet on it."—**Retired Army Col. Andrew J. Bacevich, Boston University history professor, op-ed in the Boston Globe, Feb. 2.**

## Of Elephants and Russians

"This question of missile defense remains ... the big elephant in the room. ... We have made clear from the outset that NATO has made the decision to establish a NATO missile defense system because it's our obligation to ensure effective defense of our populations. Having said that, we have invited Russia to cooperate and ... now it's up to Russia to engage in that."—**NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, remarks to reporters at a conference in Munich, Associated Press, Feb. 2.**

## Suggestive of Cowardice

"For the past several decades, the media and popular culture have relentlessly advanced the fantasy narrative of women as groin-kicking, martial-arts divas of doom. Where are all the brave men and women who know better? ... Would that lawmakers could stop preening for cameras long enough to examine the issue more closely. ... It's more than clear ... that physical standards would be lowered to allow women where they don't belong. We know this because Gen. Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recently said as much: 'If we do decide that a particular standard is so high that a woman couldn't make it, the burden is now on the service to come back and explain to the Secretary, why is it that high? Does it really have to be that high?' ... That our Congress is accepting this change without any debate isn't progress. It is

a dereliction of duty and, one is tempted to say, suggestive of cowardice."—**Syndicated columnist Kathleen Parker, op-ed in the Washington Post, Feb. 3.**

## Something Has To Give

"Tricare—the suite of insurance programs that cover service members, their families, and military retirees—now covers nearly 10 million Americans. But DOD is bearing a disproportionate share of this burden. For example, 52 percent of the working-age military retirees who are eligible for private health insurance instead choose Tricare as their primary payer, shifting the costs from private companies to DOD. Out-of-pocket expenses for Tricare beneficiaries haven't changed since the program's inception in 1996 but as costs have skyrocketed, the government's share has grown to 88 percent from 73 percent. ... Something has to give. The Pentagon needs to manage these health care programs more aggressively, and Congress needs to provide the authorities and permission to do so. Otherwise, this critical benefit for service members and their families will become unsustainable and will undermine investment in the capabilities the military needs to accomplish its mission."—**Michele A. Flournoy, former undersecretary of defense for policy, op-ed, Wall Street Journal, Feb. 5.**

## Caught in the Tide

"There is a perception that we have a veterans' suicide epidemic on our hands. I don't think that is true. The [suicide] rate is going up in the country, and veterans are a part of it."—**Robert Bossarte, VA epidemiologist and author of new study on veterans' suicide, Washington Post, Feb. 1.**

## Shameful Stuff

"We are the world's most powerful military, and we use that to promote peace and stability in the world. It would be a shameful act of irresponsibility if Congress just stood to the side and let sequester take place. It would turn America from a first-rate power into a second-rate power."—**Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta, interview with USA Today, Feb. 1.**