

NATIONAL SECURITY FORUM

# Trump: U.S. generals 'reduced to rubble' Clinton: No ground forces to fight ISIS

By JULIE PACE  
and STEVE PEOPLES  
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Leveling unusually harsh criticism against the military, Republican Donald Trump said Wednesday night that America's generals have been "reduced to rubble" under President Barack Obama and suggested he would fire some of them if he wins the presidency in November.

Trump's comments came during a televised national security forum where he and Democratic rival Hillary Clinton each fielded 30 minutes of questions about their experience and judgment to be commander in chief. While the candidates never appeared on stage together, their back-to-back sessions served as a preview of sorts for their upcoming debates.

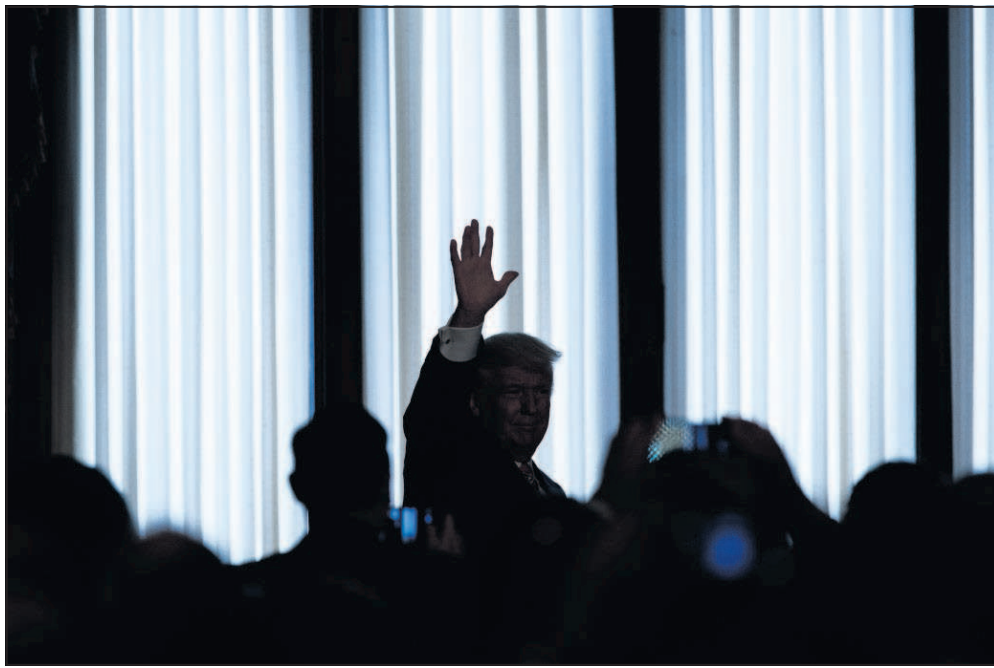
By virtue of a coin flip, Clinton took the stage first and quickly found herself responding at length to questions about her years in government. She reiterated that she had made mistakes in relying on a personal email account and private server as secretary of state and in voting for the 2003 invasion of Iraq as a senator. But she defended her support for U.S. military intervention to help oust a dictator in Libya, despite the chaotic aftermath.

"I'm asking to be judged on the totality of my record," said Clinton, who grew visibly irritated at times with the repeated focus on her past actions.

Clinton, who has cast Trump as dangerously ill-prepared to be commander in chief, tried to center the discussion on her foreign policy proposals should she win in November. She vowed to not send American ground troops into Iraq or Syria to fight the Islamic State group. And she pledged to hold weekly Oval Office meetings with representatives from the Pentagon and Department of Veterans Affairs to stay abreast of health care for veterans.

Trump did little to counter the criticism that he lacks detailed policy proposals, particularly regarding the Islamic State. He both insisted he has a private blueprint for defeating the extremist group and that he would demand a plan from military leaders within 30 days of taking office.

Asked to square his request



Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump waves as he walks offstage after giving a speech on national security, Wednesday at the Union League in Philadelphia.



Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, with 'Today' show co-anchor Matt Lauer, left, speaks at the NBC Commander-In-Chief Forum held Wednesday at the Intrepid Sea, Air and Space museum aboard the decommissioned aircraft carrier Intrepid, New York.

for military options with his harsh criticism of the current crop of generals, Trump said simply: "They'll probably be different generals."

Trump renewed his praise of Russian President Vladimir Putin for having "great control over his country." He stood by a previous comment that appeared to blame military sexual assaults on men and women serving together, but added he would not seek to remove women from the military. And for the first time, he opened the door to granting legal status to people living in the U.S. illegally who join the military.

"I think that when you serve in the armed forces, that's a very special situation," Trump said. "And I could see myself working that out."

As a businessman with no substantial national security experience, Trump was vague about how he is preparing for the enormous

array of complex issues that would land on his desk as commander in chief. He cited his team of military advisers, but also said he has "a common sense" that will help him make decisions on foreign policy.

With just two months until Election Day, national security has emerged as a centerpiece issue in the White House race. Both candidates believe they have the upper hand, with Clinton contrasting her experience with Trump's unpredictability and the Republican arguing that Americans worried about their safety will be left with more of the same if they elect Obama's former secretary of state.

While GOP candidates are often seen by voters as having an advantage on military and national security issues, Trump is far from a traditional Republican. He has no military experience and has repeatedly criticized

the skill of the armed forces.

A flood of Republican national security experts have instead chosen to back Clinton, helping bolster her case that Trump is broadly unacceptable.

Earlier Wednesday, former Defense Secretary William Cohen joined the list of GOP officials supporting Clinton.

Ahead of the forum, Trump rolled out a new plan to boost military spending by tens of billions of dollars, including major increases in the number of active troops, fighter planes, ships and submarines.

His address earlier in the day also included plans to eliminate deep spending cuts known as the "sequester" that were enacted when Congress failed to reach a budget compromise in 2011. Republicans and Democrats voted for the automatic, across-the-board cuts that affected both military and domestic programs, though the White House has long pressed Congress to lift the spending limits.

Trump expressed support for the sequester in interviews in 2013 — even describing them as too small — but seemed to suggest at the time that military spending should be exempt.

A senior adviser said ahead of the speech that Trump would make sure the additional spending was fully paid for but did not explain how.

The United States currently spends more than \$600 billion a year on the military, more than the next seven countries combined.

BRIEFLY

## Obama, Duterte meet despite crude language

VIENTIANE, Laos (AP) — President Barack Obama and Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte met informally on Wednesday in a holding room before attending a gala dinner at a regional summit, Philippine officials said.

The brief meeting took a little sting out of the soured relations caused by Duterte's intemperate language in referring to Obama earlier this week. That had caused Obama to cancel a formal meeting scheduled for Tuesday.

Philippine Foreign Secretary Perfecto Yasay told The Associated Press that the leaders had met.

"They met at the holding room and they were the last persons to leave the holding room. I can't say how long they met. It all springs from the fact the relationship between the Philippines and the United States is firm, very strong. The basis for this relationship is historical and both leaders realize this. And I'm very happy that it happened."

Obama and Duterte are in the Laotian capital along with other regional leaders for the summit. All of them made their way through the holding room before heading to the banquet hall.

## Referendum a big obstacle to peace in Colombia

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — It's been heralded as a historic peace deal to end Latin America's longest-running conflict. But there is a major hurdle the deal still needs to clear: a national referendum on Oct. 2 in which Colombians will get the chance to make their voices heard.

It's bound to be a bitter fight.

Supporters and opponents of the peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia are even haggling over what is on the ballot. Opponents say the question being posed to Colombians is purposefully misleading since it doesn't even mention the FARC and asks voters whether they support a "lasting and stable peace." They've appealed to the constitutional court to block the vote.

Polls taken before the accord was reached last

month in Cuba showed anywhere between an 11- and 35-point advantage in support of the agreement. But the government isn't taking victory for granted. In an unusual move criticized as unfair and undemocratic by the opposition, President Juan Manuel Santos has asked his entire Cabinet to fan out across the country to carry out what he calls a "pedagogy for peace," explaining the 297-page accord to Colombians.

It's a tough sell. Most Colombians loathe the FARC and have deep reservations about the accord. Particularly irksome are a provision sparing rebel leaders accused of major human rights abuses jail time and one guaranteeing them 10 seats in congress.

## Aleppo bombed as U.S. and Russia plan Syria talks

BEIRUT (AP) — An airstrike near the site of a suspected gas attack in Syria killed at least 10 civilians Wednesday, as U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov agreed to meet this week for extended discussions on ending the 5-year-old civil war.

Russia, a key ally of Syrian President Bashar Assad, has been conducting airstrikes to bolster his forces for nearly a year. The United States supports rebels fighting to overthrow Assad and has called on him to step down.

U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Vladimir Putin failed to negotiate a settlement on the sidelines of the G-20 conference in China on Monday. Obama acknowledged "gaps of trust" between the rival powers following months of negotiations between their top diplomats.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said Lavrov and Kerry would meet Thursday and Friday in Geneva to work out the remaining details of a possible deal, following a phone call between the two. But U.S. officials indicated the earliest the talks could happen is Friday.

U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter said in London that Kerry would not be making another attempt with Lavrov if there were no prospects for success, but he added: "We're a long way from getting there."

# Handymen help seniors trying to age in place

By LAURAN NEERGAARD  
AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON — Where you live plays a big role in staying independent as you age. Now researchers say an innovative program that combined home fix-ups and visits from occupational therapists and nurses improved low-income seniors' ability to care for themselves in their own homes.

Still to be answered is whether that better daily functioning also saves taxpayer dollars — by helping enough older adults with chronic health problems avoid costly hospital or nursing home stays.

"We're improving people's lives, improving their abilities," said Sarah Szanton, a Johns Hopkins University associate nursing professor who leads the experimental program reported Wednesday in the journal Health Affairs.

Surveys show most older adults want to live at home for as long as possible. Yet chronic diseases and their resulting disabilities — problems walking, bathing, dressing, cooking — can make that difficult in homes with steep stairs, doorways too narrow for walkers, and other obstacles.

And seniors who have trouble with those so-called activities of daily living are costly for Medicare and Medicaid, too often ending up in hospitals or nursing homes because they couldn't care for themselves at home, or had a bad fall while trying.



In this June 2013 file photo, a construction worker takes a measurement while installing a banister in a staircase in a home in Baltimore.

Szanton's team aims to help those seniors maintain their independence through CAPABLE — it stands for Community Aging in Place, Advancing Better Living for Elders — a program testing modest home modifications and strategies for daily living.

The fixes sound simple. A double banister let people rest their weight on both sides to get up and down stairs safely. Handymen fixed trip hazards, installed grab bars and lowered shelves so seniors could reach without climbing. Occupational therapists bought assistive devices to help people with tremors feed themselves, and taught the frail how to get in and out of high-sided tubs.

Even simple fixes can be life-changing, like the reaching gadget therapists gave Bertha Brickhouse to help tug on her socks and shoes.

"You just don't want

to ask someone, 'Can you come to my house and help me put my boots on?'" said Brickhouse, 69, of Baltimore, who has diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol, and uses a cane for damaged knees. "It was like I was born all over again from their help, the things they did to make my life much easier."

In a demonstration project funded by the federal Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation, the Hopkins researchers provided 234 Baltimore residents with 10 home visits by handymen, occupational therapists and nurses. Interventions were tailored to each senior's priorities: Did they want to bathe without help? Cook? Be able to climb the stairs, or make it out of the house to go to church or visit friends?

After completing the five-month program, three-quarters of participants improved their ability to take care of

themselves — on average, able to perform two more tasks of daily living on their own compared to before receiving the care, Szanton reported Wednesday.

Two-thirds of participants also were better able to perform related tasks such as grocery shopping, and half experienced fewer symptoms of depression.

The aid cost about \$2,825 per participant, including the home repair, home visits from health professionals, and assistive devices.

Szanton's team still is calculating if that translates into cost savings for Medicare or Medicaid. Separately, a more rigorous study funded by the National Institutes of Health is under way with an additional 300 Baltimore residents, to prove if the interventions really work.

Federal Medicare officials declined comment on Wednesday's findings. But state Medicaid and aging officials are closely watching the research.

Michigan has opened its own pilot project, testing a version of CAPABLE with more seriously disabled seniors who are eligible for a nursing home but don't want to move, said Sandra Spoelstra, an associate nursing dean at Grand Valley State University who is leading the study with state Medicaid officials.

"It's a different way of talking to people and listening to what they desire to make their life better," Spoelstra said.

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