

Secretary Brownlee bids Army farewell

To the Men and Women of the United States Army,

It has been a great honor and privilege for me to serve as the Under Secretary of the Army for the past three years and concurrently, for the past eighteen months, as the Acting Secretary of the Army.

Our Nation's greatness was achieved by the generations of Americans who have served their country with honor. From your grandparents who fought and won the Second World War and assured freedom for South Korea, to your parents who served our Nation in Vietnam and in the Cold War, in Panama and Desert Storm, to the conflicts of today, the courage and sacrifices demonstrated by American Soldiers remain the foundation of our United States Army.

Soldiering is an affair of the heart, and it is that spirit, that fundamental commitment to volunteer, to place the Nation's needs above one's own, that makes our Soldiers the best in the world today. Your professionalism, dedication, and valor are the hallmarks of the values our Army has upheld for over 229 years of service to our Nation.

I am immensely proud of what our Army has accomplished over the past three years. Our Army has carried the heaviest burden in fighting this Global War on Terror. Soldiers have set two nations - Iraq and Afghanistan - on the path to democracy and economic recovery. Less than twelve months since we first rotated our combat formations in Iraq, the Army, for the second time, is executing the most massive movement of troops and equipment seen since WWII. And, even as we continue to take the fight to our Nation's enemies and improve the quality of life for our Soldiers' families, our Army continues transforming its training, organization, and equipment.

Our Army is far more than people and equipment - it is made of men and women with hopes and dreams, a passionate commitment to the ideals of freedom, and the willingness to fight for those ideals. But freedom is not free! And in today's War on Terror, some of our Soldiers have lost their lives, and many have been wounded. I have had the honor of visiting many of these wounded Soldiers, and I am always moved by their unanimous expressions of dedication, their commitment



Photo by Staff Sgt. Daniel Reynolds

Acting Secretary of the Army Les Brownlee visits with 1st Armored Division Soldiers at their headquarters in Baghdad in June 2003 .

to service, and their desire to return to their units and comrades-in-arms. I'm equally touched by the tremendous commitment displayed by their families, and the support that they provide. When we talk of service and sacrifice, we must never forget the wives, husbands, sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, and other loved ones who stand behind our Soldiers. Their unconditional love and their steadfast loyalty to our Soldiers are invaluable in every aspect of what our Army does. The devotion and support of our Army families represent all that we fight for and all that we hold dear.

It has been my honor to represent the wonderful men and women who volunteer to be a part of the Army - and their families as well. The Nation will be eternally indebted to you for your service and sacrifice.

God bless each of you, God bless the United States Army, and God bless this wonderful Nation we all love and so proudly serve.

Les Brownlee