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STATEMENT OF
GENERAL JAMES T. CONWAY
COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

BEFORE

THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

On

IMPLICATIONS OF IRAQ POLICY ON TOTAL FORCE READINESS

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Chairman Skelton, Representative Hunter, and distinguished members of the committee; during my confirmation process and in our subsequent conversations, I have pledged to provide you forthright and honest assessments of your Corps, and I welcome this opportunity to report to you today.

Your Marine Corps has been fully engaged in the Long War—in campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as throughout the world. The challenges we face are of global scale and scope; this war is a multi-faceted, generational struggle that will not be won in one battle, in one country, or by one method. Throughout this war, your Marine Corps has been able to rapidly adapt to challenging strategic conditions and wide-ranging threats. This past year, you have seen evidence of this not only in Iraq and Afghanistan, but in Lebanon—where we were partners in the largest noncombatant evacuation since Vietnam; in the southern Pacific—as part of humanitarian assistance and relief efforts in the wake of multiple natural disasters; and throughout the world in our theater security cooperation engagements.

Your Marines are a tough breed and will always do what it takes, but there is a tangible price we pay for this excellence—both in terms of personal sacrifice and in the cumulative effect on our equipment. It is our moral imperative to support our Marines in combat to the hilt—we are always mindful that our forward-deployed Marines and Sailors in combat must be our number one priority. As a Corps, we remain true to our congressionally-mandated mission “*to be most ready when the Nation is least ready*,” thus, we provide the Nation a two-fisted capability—adept at counterinsurgency as well as major contingency force operations.

I. Right-size our Corps

To meet the demands of the Long War and the inevitable contingencies that will arise, our Corps must be sufficiently manned as well as trained and properly equipped. The Corps’ personnel policies, organizational construct, and training must be resourced so that Marines are able to operate at the sustained rate and yet meet the occasional “surge.”

Strain on our Individual Marines. Despite an unparalleled Personnel Tempo, the morale of our Marines and their families remains high. There are, however, leading indicators showing signs of strain that concern us. To avoid an adverse toll on our Marines and their families, and to prevent a decrease in readiness, a 1:2 deployment-to-dwell ratio goal was established for all Active Component forces. The goal is for every seven months a Marine is

deployed, he or she will be back at home station for fourteen months—providing needed rest, family time, and the opportunity to train for an assortment of missions.

Strain on the Institution. Current wartime deployments dictate a singular focus to prepare units for their next rotations and the conduct of counterinsurgency operations. This focus and the current 1:1 deployment-to-dwell ratio of many units threatens the individual / unit skills needed for Marine Corps missions such as combined-arms maneuver, mountain warfare, amphibious, and jungle operations. To fulfill our mandate as the Nation's Force in Readiness, our deployment cycles must not only support training for irregular warfare, but also provide sufficient time for recovery and maintenance as well as training for other contingency missions. By increasing the dwell time for our units, we can accomplish the more comprehensive training needed for the sophisticated skill sets that have enabled Marine Air Ground Task Forces to consistently achieve success in all types of battle. Our goal is to increase dwell time and achieve a 1:2 deployment-to-dwell ratio for our active forces.

II. Supporting the Plus-Up for Iraq

The recently proposed increase of Marine Corps Active Component end strength from approximately 180,000 to 202,000 Marines will go a long way towards reducing the strain on the individual Marines and the institution. Our first task will be to build three new infantry battalions and elements of their supporting structure—approximately 4,000 Marines. We will then systematically increase the number of Marines on a schedule of approximately 5,000 per year. This plan will gradually decrease the deployment-to-dwell ratio of some of our habitually high-operational tempo units such as light armored reconnaissance companies, amphibious assault companies, reconnaissance companies, combat engineers, military police, signals intelligence units, unmanned aerial vehicle units, helicopter squadrons, air command and control units, combat service support units, and explosive ordnance disposal units. Currently many of these units are deployed for seven months and only home for five. Detailed estimates for the cost of this growth will be available when the President's budget is released in early February.

Reserve Component End Strength. Our efforts in the Long War have been a Total Force effort, with our Reserves once again performing with grit and determination. Recent policy changes within the Department of Defense will allow us to access the Reserve forces as they were structured to be employed—to augment and reinforce our Active Component forces. To

this end, my goal is to sustain a 1:5 deployment-to-dwell ratio within our Reserve Component. As our active force increases in size, the reduced reliance on our reserve forces should allow us even more “buffer” as we work to maintain the proper deployment-to-dwell ratio for our Reserves.

Plus-Up Operations. Currently, the Marine Corps has approximately 4,000 Marines affected by plus-up operations in Iraq. The affected units will be extended by 45-60 days. This extension will impact our Marines and their families, but we have been emphatic about keeping our families informed of the details. We believe that unit programs and family support systems back home will help Marines and families meet the challenges associated with this extension. Furthermore, between their return and next deployment, the addition of new infantry battalions will allow these units to lengthen time at their home. Battalions moved forward in their rotational cycle will nevertheless have the opportunity to complete all required predeployment training and, after a modicum of cross-leveling of special equipment in theater, will be fully qualified for employment. There are no Marine Corps Reserve units involved in the plus-up operations.

III. Manning the Force

An important factor in sustaining a viable force is continuing to recruit and retain qualified young men and women with the right character, commitment, and drive to become Marines. With over 70 percent of the proposed Marine Corps end strength increase comprised of first-term Marines, both recruiting and retention efforts will be challenged. A major part of this effort will involve increased funding for both the Enlistment Bonus and Selective Reenlistment Bonus Programs which we intend to include in the President’s budget request in February. We will need the strong support of Congress to achieve continued success.

Purposefully exceeding Department of Defense quality standards, we continue to recruit the best of America into our ranks—in Fiscal Year 2006, the Marine Corps achieved over 100 percent of our Active Component accession goal. The Marine Corps Reserve also achieved 100 percent of its recruiting goals, but reserve officer numbers remain challenging because our primary accession source is from officers that leave active duty. We appreciate the continued authorization for a Selected Reserve Officer Affiliation Bonus in the Fiscal Year 2007 National Defense Authorization Act—it continues to contribute in this critical area.

We forecast that both active and reserve recruiting will remain challenging in Fiscal Year 2007, particularly when viewed through the lens of new accession missions to meet the increased end strength of the Marine Corps. We will need the continued support of Congress for strong enlistment bonuses and other recruiting programs, such as advertising, which will be essential for us to continue meeting these growth challenges.

Retention is the other important part of manning the force. In Fiscal Year 2006, the Marine Corps exceeded its retention goals for both First Term and Career Forces. For Fiscal Year 2007, we expect to exceed our goals again. This success can be attributed to the Marine Corps' judicious use of the Selective Reenlistment Bonus. To keep the very best of our Marines, the President's budget will increase the size of our bonus program in order to ensure that we have the right grade and MOS mix to support the growing force. Not only will we have to retain more first-term Marines, but also we will have to increase the number of Marines reenlisting at the eight and twelve-year mark. This will require us to shift more funding toward targeting key areas in the career force.

IV. Improving the Quality of Life for our Marines and their families

Our family support mechanisms remain robust and flexible and are continuously assessed to ensure sufficiency and relevancy to our wartime mission—particularly during crucial “rapid fire” operations. Though some Marine Corps families will be impacted by extended deployments, family support systems to meet this requirement are within Marine Corps capacity. We continue to provide emphasis on Combat / Operational Stress Control (COSC), Casualty Assistance, and support to our injured Marines.

Combat/Operational Stress Control (COSC). Managing stress is vital to the Marine Corps as a fighting force and the long-term health and well-being of Marines and their families. The culture and climate of the Marine Corps must facilitate Marines and families seeking necessary help when their lives are not returning to normal. Unit leaders have the greatest potential to influence Marines and their families and ensure they feel comfortable asking for help. COSC, therefore, is the responsibility of Marine leadership and includes support from medical personnel and chaplains.

Casualty Assistance. Each Marine fatality is a tragic loss to his or her family and the Corps. We endeavor to honor their sacrifices with sincerity and commitment. Our Casualty

Assistance Calls Officers are trained to treat next of kin and other family members as they would their own family. Each case is distinct, and assistance to surviving families must be carefully segmented and specifically adjusted to facilitate their transition through grief stages and completion of the casualty-notification process.

Wounded Marines and Sailors. The Marine For Life Injured Support program was developed to assist seriously and very seriously injured Marines, Sailors who have served or are serving with Marines, and their families. Among other components, the program seeks to bridge the gap between military and the Department of Veterans Affairs medical care by providing individual support through the transition period. Additionally, I have directed creation of a Wounded Warrior Regiment to provide centralized oversight of care for our wounded Marines and assist in the integration of their support with military, government, charitable, and civilian systems.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Recent measures to mitigate the impact of traumatic brain injuries to individual Marines and their units include release of a medical guidance letter from the Medical Officer of the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps has also implemented an improved helmet suspension system to decrease impact of injury from a blast or blow to the head.

The science of diagnosing and treating PTSD continues to evolve. Screening is taking place in theater and at home stations. Research and training are underway to identify risk and protective factors for PTSD, increase resilience to stress, and improve individual / leadership awareness, early identification, and psychological first aid for those who are stress-injured.

V. Equipment Requirements for Iraq Plus-Up and for Increased 202K Marine Corps

The conflict in Iraq and the greater Long War on Terror have increased our equipment maintenance and replacement costs far beyond what is available in our baseline budget. The challenge of restoring and maintaining traditional capabilities while fielding new capabilities to ensure success in the Global War on Terror has come to be known as “resetting the force.” With your help over the last two years, we have begun to make progress in restoring our equipment readiness, but there is much work to be done if we are to win the current fight and still be able to respond to other challenges that face our country.

Slow deliveries of needed equipment have forced us to cross-level and redistribute equipment to ensure that our OIF-bound units have their full complement of equipment. This has resulted in home station shortfalls and hindered some stateside units' ability to train for other missions and contingencies. Personnel and equipment needed for mobile training teams and other non-traditional employment in theater has had a similar impact. While the readiness of deployed and deploying units has remained high, we have experienced a decrease in non-deployed units' readiness.

To remedy the near term decline in readiness, we have requested and received \$10.6 billion in funding to reset the force. Deliveries of equipment procured with reset funding are proceeding. However, increases in deployment and operating tempo will slow our efforts to reset the force. Equipment originally planned to replace home station shortfalls and repositioning programs will now be used to address unit equipment requirements associated with the Iraq plus-up.

Personal Protective Equipment. The Marine Corps currently has sufficient Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) on-hand, as required by the Combatant Commander, to outfit two additional infantry battalions. For plus-up operations in Iraq, the two additional battalions will receive protective equipment from home station Consolidated Issue Facilities (CIFs), prior to deploying to Iraq. This emerging requirement may require some cross-leveling between CIFs, but sufficient quantities are available for prescribed PPE. We also continue to field additional quantities of PPE and can redirect vendor shipments to meet additional requirements if needed. The Side Small Arms Protective Insert (Side SAPI) is currently an in-theater issued asset and one that Marines are not provided prior to deployment. Sufficient Side SAPIs are available in-theater to provide for issue to the two additional infantry battalions for the Iraq plus-up.

Equipment in Support of Additional Troops in Iraq. Equipment in support of additional troops in Iraq is acquired through a variety of sources. These include cross-leveling of equipment from within the Marine Force Component Command (MARFORs), cross-leveling within theater, pending procurement deliveries, Maritime Prepositioning Stores, Depot Maintenance Master Work Schedule, Forward In Stores stocks, and a variety of other smaller sources.

Impact on Home Station. Once equipment shortfalls are identified, Marine Forces Command (MARFORCOM) and Marine Forces Pacific (MARFORPAC) will identify those

items that have an adverse impact on pre-deployment training of units in subsequent rotations. Supporting establishments in concert with Marine Corps Logistics Command (MCLC) and Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC) will mitigate these shortages to the Marine Forces Component Commands (MARFORs) through redirecting pending contract deliveries and depot maintenance cycles.

High Demand Equipment. Equipment in high demand continues to be monitored closely and critical shortfalls are filled through the process outlined above. In addition, new advances in technology have allowed for improved survivability. An example of this has been our progression in the armored vehicle from the basic HMMWV to the Marine Armor Kit (MAK), to the fully fielded M1114, to the new Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) family of vehicles. Within the next 3-5 years, we expect the fielding of the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV), which will have the latest protection that science and technology can provide. This one example shows how modern advances in technology along with the military partnering with industry have enhanced survivability on the battlefield.

To extend the life of high demand equipment, we have numerous programs in place. One is using Army Materiel Command's forward maintenance capabilities. Another is the aggressive use of contracted logistics support capabilities. Additionally, we have a Principle End Item (PEI) rotation plan that allows critical assets to be systematically removed from the battlefield, sent back to the States, and inducted into depot level maintenance cycles. Currently, 56 separate equipment categories have been identified for induction into the PEI rotation plan. Our Fiscal Year 2008 PEI induction plan is an enhanced plan that identifies 128 separate equipment categories. This process allows for essential rebuild of those assets and an extension of their service life. While this depot level maintenance is being done, the latest technology available is being applied to ensure the best equipment available is returned to theater.

Equipping a 202K Marine Corps. In order to best equip proposed end strength increases, the Marine Corps has a phased approach across Fiscal Year 2008-11 that is synchronized with increases in personnel. We will conduct the necessary analysis in order to procure high demand and long lead time items early in the process. While the vast majority of required equipment will be the procurement of additional existing weapon systems, when it makes sense, we will procure next generation equipment to keep pace with technological improvements.

Impact on Marine Corps Aviation Equipment. The Long War on Terror has resulted in aircraft use rates far greater than designed or programmed on Marine Corps aircraft. All USMC aircraft are operating at two to four times their programmed rates; our unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) squadrons are flying at ten times their programmed rate. In order to meet demands of the current fight and posture ourselves for success in the Long War, we must husband these low density, high demand assets. The Marine Aviation Plan (MAvPlan) mitigation strategy sustains our legacy inventory while we simultaneously transition to new platforms to source the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) and joint force in the future.

The timely support and execution of the MAvPlan will determine USMC aviation force readiness today and tomorrow. KC-130J, H-1, and MV-22 production lines are now active but funded below maximum capacity. Additionally, F/A-18D and CH-53E aircraft will reach the end of their service lives before replacement aircraft become available. These shortfalls underscore the urgency for the F-35B and CH-53K programs to remain on schedule. Turn Around Ratio (TAR) for all USMC helicopter and UAV squadrons as well as our air traffic control detachments falls short of directed 1:2 deployment-to-dwell ratios. Over the past year, many of these units have a dwell time less than 1:1 with most for seven months and only home for five. The combination of this deployment-to-dwell ration and increased usage rates creates a cumulative effect that exacerbates the stress on some components of Marine aviation.

VI. **Conclusion**

Thank you for the opportunity to report to you on behalf of the valiant men and women of your Corps. They remain committed to their mission and know that the American people and its government support them in their endeavor. Your Corps stands ready to serve in any clime and place, but your continued support remains a vital and appreciated foundation to this Service.