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

BEFORE
THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE

On

READINESS

17 JANUARY 2007

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Chairman Murtha, Representative Young, and distinguished members of the subcommittee; during my confirmation process and in our subsequent conversations, I pledged to provide you forthright and honest assessments, and I welcome this opportunity to report to you the state of your Marine Corps. We know these next few years will be challenging—not only in the immediate conflict in Iraq, but in subsequent campaigns of the Long War on Terror. This is a multi-faceted, generational struggle that will not be won in one battle, in one country, or by one method. Many of the underlying causes of the Long War will persist in the coming decades and may be exacerbated by states and transnational actors that are unwilling or unable to integrate into the global community. In this environment, the Marine Corps must be able to rapidly adapt to broad strategic conditions and wide-ranging threats. As a Corps, we do this by remaining faithful to our enduring mission—to be where our country needs us, when she needs us, and to prevail over whatever challenges we face.

The Marine Corps' commitment to the Long War is characterized by diverse and sustained employment around the globe, particularly the central campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. Your Marines are fully engaged in this fight, and it is through their tremendous sacrifices—serving shoulder-to-shoulder with their fellow service men and women—that we will ultimately prevail. It is our moral imperative to support them to the hilt—always mindful that our forward-deployed Marines and Sailors in combat must be our number one priority.

War is a costly business, and this one is no different. Your Marines are a tough breed and will always do what it takes, but there is a significant price—not only in their personal sacrifices—but also on the equipment that we provide them. The Long War is taking a considerable toll and we have tough choices ahead of us—we must support our Marines and their families, while deciding whether to replace our rapidly aging equipment with similar platforms or modernize with next generation equipment. I am confident that with your continued support, your Corps will remain the Nation's force in readiness and continue to fulfill its Congressionally mandated mission of being *the most ready when the Nation is least ready*.

I. Marine Corps Commitments in the Long War

Over the past year, your Marines deployed to all corners of the globe in support of our Nation. In addition to Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, the Marine Corps deployed forces to: support humanitarian and disaster relief efforts in Pakistan and the Republic

of the Philippines; participate in over fifty Theater Security Cooperation events ranging from small Mobile Training Teams in Central America to the first deployment of the Marine Forces Special Operations Command's Foreign Military Training Unit supporting our African partner nations; protect our Embassies by providing Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Teams to East Timor and Lebanon; and respond to a Non-Combatant Evacuation from Lebanon—the largest since Vietnam.

Achieve Victory in the Long War. I view the inherent power of the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) as an irreplaceable component of this Nation's plan for success in the Long War. This war demands flexible organizations that apply a mix of combat and non-lethal actions; interagency capabilities and joint warfare applications; innovative use of airpower; and synchronization of intelligence activities. For rapid integration of these capabilities—as well as providing the critical boots on the ground—the MAGTF is better prepared to execute the full range of irregular warfare tasks than any other military formation. This is the Corps' fundamental fighting organization, providing the joint force a unique, additive capability—one that is much greater than the sum of its parts.

To further expand the MAGTF's contribution to our Nation's security, I have directed my staff to develop a series of exercises that will further enhance the MAGTF's ability to integrate interagency and coalition operations throughout the spectrum of conflict. Our goal will be to provide a forum to develop diverse yet cohesive teams that can best overcome the challenges we are most likely to face in pre- and post-war phases of operations. These exercises will serve our Nation well, in the Long War, in future conflicts, and in our ongoing security cooperation efforts.

Looking ahead to the challenges of the Long War, the Defense Department's 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) directed that we enhance our counterinsurgency capabilities. Our Marine Corps component to Special Operations Command is a part of this commitment. Other types of forces, unique to counterinsurgency operations, may also need to be formed. However, we will maintain robust contingency response forces required by law to be "*the Nation's shock troops*"—always ready and always capable of forcible entry.

In February of 2006, we established Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC) within the Special Operations Command (SOCOM). MARSOC is already employing its five major subordinate elements: the Foreign Military Training Unit, two Marine Special Operations Battalions, the Marine Special Operations Support Group, and the Marine

Special Operations School, and is on track to achieve full-operational capability by the end of Fiscal Year 2008. Its personnel and equipment assignment plan is designed to best support our Combatant Commanders in their prosecution of the Long War. The Foreign Military Training Unit was activated in 2005 and has been incorporated into MARSOC, and the 2d Marine Special Operations Battalion was activated in May of 2006. We activated the 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion in October of 2006 and began pre-deployment training with a Special Operations Company scheduled to deploy in April of this year.

MARSOC deployed Foreign Military Training Unit teams to the European and Southern Command areas of responsibility last summer and fall. Through the end of Fiscal Year 2007, the Foreign Military Training Unit is scheduled to deploy twenty-seven times to twelve countries to conduct foreign internal defense and counter narcotics training to improve the indigenous military forces of those countries. Additionally, MARSOC will begin deploying Marine Special Operations Companies, associated with Marine Expeditionary Units and assigned to Expeditionary Strike Groups this month, and Marine Special Operations Battalions will deploy three Marine Special Operations Companies with Marine Expeditionary Units. The MARSOC provides a unique combination of land component and maritime expeditionary capabilities across a wide range of missions. As special operations forces continue to prosecute the Long War, MARSOC will become a significant partner in Special Operations Command.

To aid in both the current execution of the campaign in Iraq as well as the long-term irregular warfare capability of the Marine Corps, we established the Irregular Warfare Center of Excellence, an organization that will serve as the focal point for integration of concepts, doctrine, training, education, and equipment capability development. This Center also maintains close coordination with our sister Services and external agencies. Our goal is to increase our capabilities through the preparation and sustainment of Marine Air Ground Task Forces enabled by small-unit leaders who direct small, lethal, enhanced units that are unmatched in their ability to operate across the spectrum of conflict.

II. Right-size our Marine Corps

To meet the demands of the Long War as well as the inevitable crises that arise, our Corps must be sufficiently manned in addition to being well trained and properly equipped. Like the Cold War, the Long War is a continuing struggle that will not be measured by the number of

near-term deployments or rotations. It is a long-term fight against international adversaries based on sustained cooperation with our global allies and partners. To meet these challenges, we must ensure that our personnel policies, organizational construct, and training are able to operate at the “sustained rate of fire.” We seek to capitalize on advances in technology, but it is our magnificent Marines who invariably decide the outcome. Our most precious asset is the individual Marine, and our institution is ethically bound to look after his or her well-being.

Strain on the Individual. Despite an unparalleled Personnel Tempo, the morale of our Marines and their families remains high, but there are “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, the Secretary of Defense established a 1:2 deployment-to-dwell ratio goal for all active component forces. This ratio relates to how long our forces are deployed versus how long they are at home—the goal being for every six months a Marine is deployed, they will be back at their home station for one year. We are studying several proposals to better posture our forces for the Long War and relieve the strain on those superb Americans who have volunteered to fight the Nation’s battles.

Strain on the Institution. Current wartime deployments dictate a singular focus on preparing units for their next rotations conducting irregular warfare operations. This focus and the current 1:1 deployment-to-dwell ratio of many units, coupled with the deployment of a regiment's worth of experienced senior leadership serving as individual augments and members of training teams, threatens the individual/unit skill levels needed for the traditional Marine Corps missions such as combined-arms maneuver, mountain warfare, amphibious, and jungle operations. To fulfill our mandate to be “*most ready when the Nation is least ready,*” our deployment cycles must not only support training for irregular warfare, they must also provide sufficient time for recovery and maintenance as well as training for other contingency missions. By increasing the dwell time for our units and allowing them additional time at home stations, 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—our Operating Forces are routinely falling short of this target. We are developing several measures to mitigate our relentless operational tempo, but in the near term we expect the preponderance of our force to fall short of the 1:2 operational tempo threshold.

Active Component End Strength. To achieve a 1:2 deployment-to-dwell ratio there are but two choices: decrease the current requirements or increase the size of the Marine Corps. When analyzing the requirements on our force, we are acutely aware that we are in only the nascent stages of the Long War and current operations are the opening campaigns of a generational struggle. This assessment results in the undeniable requirement for additional forces. Implementing the 1:2 deployment-to-dwell ratio across the Marine Corps will entail a significant increase in personnel, units, equipment and the associated infrastructure, and will require a considerable increase in end strength/funding throughout the Future Years Defense Program. Currently, the Marine Corps has the necessary resources to support 175,000 Marines. Until the Marine Corps can fully execute the President's plan for an increase in the size of the Marine Corps, the following are expected to remain below a 1:1 operational tempo: 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. The President's proposal will alleviate the current situation of some Marines returning from combat and starting pre-deployment training for their next rotation—a mere five months away.

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 use 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 obtain a 1:5 deployment-to-dwell ratio within our Reserve Component. Our Marine Corps Reserve Component end strength of 39,600 is under review to ensure that the right capabilities reside within the Marine Forces Reserve units and the Individual Mobilization Augmentee program.

Manning the Force. An equally important factor in sustaining a viable force is continuing to recruit qualified young men and women with the right character, commitment, and drive to become Marines. Without compromising our 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—but we may have to ask our recruiters to do more. The Marine Corps Reserve also achieved 100 percent of its recruiting goals—but reserve officer

numbers remain challenging; 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 make a contribution 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 increasing the end strength of the Marine Corps. We welcome the continued support of Congress for strong enlistment bonuses and other recruiting programs, such as advertising, which will be essential to us continuing to meet these challenges.

III. Resetting the force and preparing for the next contingency

To meet the demands of the Long War, we must reset the force in order to simultaneously fight, train, and sustain our Corps. To support our Marines in combat, we have routinely drawn additional equipment from strategic stocks, which need to be replenished to remain responsive to emerging threats. Congress has responded rapidly and generously to our requests for equipment and increased protection for our Marines and Sailors. It is our responsibility to manage these resources prudently as we transition to the modernization of our force.

Equipment Readiness. Extended combat operations have severely tested our materiel. While the vast majority of our equipment has passed the test of sustained combat operations, it has been subjected to a lifetime's worth of wear stemming from vehicle mileage, operating hours, and harsh environmental conditions. This increased maintenance requirement is a consequence of not only operational tempo and operating environments, but also the sheer amount of equipment employed in operations. Approximately thirty percent of all Marine Corps ground equipment and nearly twenty-five percent of our active duty aviation squadrons are currently engaged overseas. Most of this equipment is not rotating out of theater at the conclusion of each force rotation; hence, it remains in combat, being used on a near-continuous basis at an operating tempo that far exceeds normal peacetime usage.

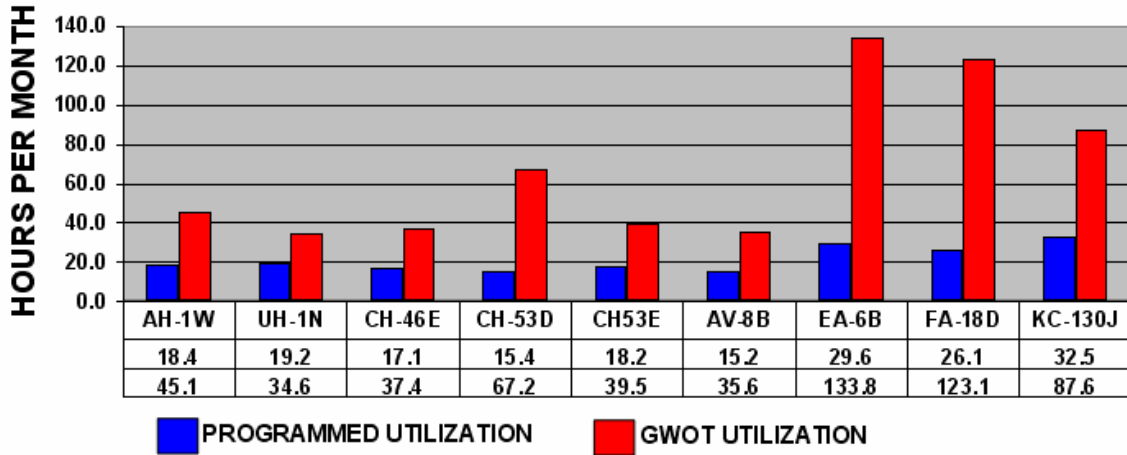
As our priority for equipment is to support Marines serving in harm's way, we have drawn additional equipment from the Maritime Prepositioning Ships and prepositioned stores from the caves in Norway; we have also retained equipment in theater from units that are rotating back to the United States. The results of these efforts have been outstanding—the average

mission capable rates of our deployed forces' ground equipment remain above ninety-five percent... but there is a price.

The cost of this success is a decrease in non-deployed unit readiness as well as an increase in the maintenance required per hour of operating time. Equipment across the Marine Corps is continuously cross-leveled and redistributed to ensure that units preparing to deploy have sufficient equipment to conduct our rigorous pre-deployment training programs. Because the stateside priority of equipment distribution and readiness is to units preparing to deploy, there has been a trade-off in unit training for other types of contingencies. The timely delivery of replacement equipment is crucial to sustaining the high readiness rates for the Marines in theater, as well as improving the rates for the forces here at home. While the Congress has funded this, much of this equipment is still many months from delivery.

Aviation Equipment. The operationally demanding and harsh environments of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Djibouti have highlighted the limitations of our aging fleet of aircraft. In order to support our Marines, sister Services, and coalition partners successfully, our aircraft have been flying at two to three times their designed utilization rates. Despite this unprecedented utilization, the yeoman efforts of our maintenance and support personnel have sustained an aviation mission capable rate for deployed forces at 83 percent over the past twelve months. The corresponding aviation mission capable rates for our units in garrison, who have either recently returned from deployment or are preparing to deploy again, have averaged 75 percent over the past 12 months. To maintain sufficient numbers of aircraft in deployed squadrons, our home squadrons have taken significant cuts in available aircraft and parts as they prepare for deployment. Reset funding has partially alleviated this strain, and continued funding will be needed as we are simply running short of aircraft on our flight lines due to age on our flight lines due to age, attrition, and wartime losses. Maintaining the readiness of our aviation assets while preparing our aircrew for their next deployment is and will continue to be a monumental effort and constant challenge for our Marines.

AIRCRAFT UTILIZATION RATES



We have mitigated aircraft degradation through specific aircraft modifications, proactive inspections, and additional maintenance actions through reset programs. Sustaining aircraft material condition drives aircraft readiness and is the determining factor in combat aviation support provided to our Marines in harm's way. While these efforts have successfully bolstered aircraft reliability, sustainability, and survivability, additional requirements for depot level maintenance on airframes, engines, weapons, and support equipment will continue well beyond the conclusion of hostilities.

Resetting Marine Aviation means not merely repairing and replacing damaged or destroyed aircraft, but getting more capable and reliable aircraft into the operational deployment cycle sooner. Your Marines are relying on these aircraft on a daily basis to provide a wide array of missions including casualty evacuation for our wounded and timely close air support for troops in contact with the enemy. Production lines to replace legacy aircraft lost in support of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) are no longer active; therefore, it is urgent and imperative for the Marine Aviation Plan to remain fully funded and on schedule. Additionally, to ensure Marine aviation is postured to support the current needs of our country, the Marine Corps is working to restore war reserve aircraft and accelerate the upgrades of pre-production aircraft to help maintain aircraft inventories at minimal acceptable operating levels. For example, the Marine Corps is modifying pre-production MV-22s to ensure the transition schedule meets operational demands and deployment timelines. Resetting our full aviation capability will require a significant increase in funding for repair, restoration, and upgrades of destroyed or damaged

airframes, recovery of Pioneer unmanned aerial vehicle components, refurbishment of air traffic control equipment, replacement of targeting pods, and numerous other efforts to restore capability degraded in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

Ground Equipment. Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are placing demands on ground force equipment far beyond what is typically experienced during training or home station operations. Some of these demands rise from higher usage rates, others from the rigors of extended operations in harsh environments. These higher demands increase the maintenance requirements for equipment employed in theater and continue when this equipment redeploys to home stations.

Absolute Increases in Utilization for Selected Marine Corps Systems Employed in OIF			
Category	Usage		Optempo Ratio
	Pre OIF	OIF	
HMMWV	183	550	3.0
MTVR	500	2000	4.0
LVS	375	1500	4.0
AAV	83	417	5.0
Rotary-Wing Aircraft	18	41	2.2
KC-130	43	83	1.9
NOTE: Usage rates for ground vehicles are in miles per month; aircraft in flight hours per month.			
Table 1			

Equipment is used at a much higher rate during combat operations than routine peacetime activities. For example, in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) crews are driving Light Armored Vehicles (LAVs) in excess of 14,000 kilometers per year—3.5 times more than programmed annual usage rates of 4,000 kilometers per year. Our tactical vehicle fleet is experiencing some of the most dramatic effects of excessive wear, operating at five to six times the programmed rates. Assessments of the impact of higher utilization rates on combat systems are ongoing.

Reset of Prepositioning Programs. Eleven Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) vessels from all three Maritime Prepositioning Force Squadrons (MPSRON) were downloaded and utilized in theater during initial OIF operations. As these operations concluded, the Marine Corps reconstituted two of three MPSRONs to meet potential contingencies in other areas of the world. This reconstitution was conducted both in theater and the USMC facilities in Jacksonville, Florida. In February 2004, MPSRON-2 was downloaded in support of OIF II.

The Marine Corps reset MPSRONs 1 and 3 and reached 98-100% attainment to both MPSRONs between 2003 and 2005. MPSRON 1 completed a full MPF Maintenance Cycle (MMC) July 2004 through July 2005. MPSRON 2 reached 100% attainment of all classes of supply, save certain major end items, during its MMC July 2005 to July 2006. Some of our major end item shortfalls were a result of OIF/OEF equipment requirements and availability from the manufacturer. All end item shortfalls will be reset during the squadron's next MMC February 2008 to February 2009.

Equipment from MCPP-Norway was used in support of Global War on Terrorism operations and to reset other Marine Corps shortfalls with a higher operational priority. MCPP-N will be reset as soon as practicable in line with USMC operational priorities.

Costs and Resourcing of Resetting the Force. Last year, our cumulative reset cost estimate was \$11.7 billion, of which the Congress appropriated \$5.1 billion in FY 2006. To date, Congress has appropriated a total of \$10.9 billion for GWOT reset costs, which includes all prior year Supplementals. Our current estimate of cumulative reset costs has changed. It has increased due to a variety of factors: (1) a change in the Department of Defense definition of reset to include equipment attrition replacement/repair costs previously addressed under our cost of war estimate, including additional depot maintenance repair costs extending a minimum of two years post-conflict; (2) additional force protection requirements, particularly for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles, which offer the best available protection against the IED threat available for our Marines; (3) the establishment of a depot maintenance float to permit a more robust principal end item rotation of equipment experiencing accelerated wear in theater; and (4) research and development funding to accelerate the development of combat capabilities such as the Joint Lightweight Combat Vehicle needed for current operations as well as future contingencies. While our reset cost estimate will vary due to factors such as operating tempo, continuing equipment attrition, and changing mission requirements, the majority of those costs have already been addressed in prior year Supplemental funding bills approved by the Congress.

While funding current GWOT operations is our highest priority, any reduction in the President's supplemental requests without an offsetting increase in our "top-line" would result in an unacceptable degradation of our investment and modernization accounts. Reduction in these accounts would significantly affect the combat readiness of our Marines and affect our ability to provide a naval expeditionary presence, capable of relentlessly pursuing terrorist organizations

and projecting sustainable forces ashore to conduct the full spectrum of operations—from humanitarian assistance to major combat operations.

IV. Modernize for tomorrow, to be "*the most ready when the Nation is least ready*"

As careful stewards of our Nation's resources, we must decide the most effective way to modernize the Total Force. We are actively working through the tough decisions of whether to replace aging equipment with similar platforms or to procure next generation capabilities—as we are with the STOVL Joint Strike Fighter, the MV-22 Osprey, and the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV). Foremost and throughout our modernization efforts, we will maintain our Congressionally mandated contingency response forces to be *always ready — and always capable of forcible entry*.

Joint Strike Fighter. F-35 development is on track, and will act as an integrated flying combat system in support of our ground forces and will be the centerpiece of Marine Aviation. The manufacture of the first test aircraft (Conventional Take-off and Landing [CTOL] variant) is well underway, assembly times are much better than planned, and exceptional quality has been demonstrated in fabrication and assembly. The first CTOL aircraft flew in December of 2006 and seven aircraft are currently in production. The JSF acquisition strategy, including software development, reflects a block approach. The F-35B Short Take-Off / Vertical Landing (STOVL) variant is a fifth generation aircraft that will provide a quantum leap in capability, basing flexibility, and mission execution across the full spectrum of warfare. The Marine Corps remains committed to its vision of an all STOVL tactical aircraft force. Fulfilling this vision will best posture the Marine Corps to support our Nation and the combatant commanders, by enabling the future MAGTF to accomplish its expeditionary warfighting responsibilities.

MV-22. The MV-22 is replacing the CH-46E and CH-53D aircraft. The CH-46E is over forty years old, with limited lift and mission capabilities to support the MAGTF and the GWOT. On 28 September 2005, the V-22 Defense Acquisition Board approved Full Rate Production. To date, twenty-nine Block A and ten Block B aircraft have been delivered and are based at Marine Corps Air Station, New River, North Carolina. Much like the F-35, the MV-22 program uses a three-block strategy in its procurement. Block A aircraft are training aircraft. Block B are operational aircraft. Block C aircraft are operational aircraft with mission enhancements. To date, the one V-22 Fleet Replacement Training Squadron (FRS) and two tactical VMM

squadrons have stood up with the third MV-22 squadron standing-up in March 2007. MV-22 Initial Operational Capability is scheduled for the summer of 2007 with a continued transition of two CH-46E squadrons per year thereafter. The MV-22's revolution in assault support capability allows the MAGTF to maximize our capstone concept of Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare. Our forces in harm's way deserve the best assault support aircraft in the world and without question, the MV-22 is that aircraft.

KC-130J. The KC-130J has continuously deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom since February 2005 and has provided the warfighter a state-of-the-art, multi-mission, tactical aerial refueling, and fixed wing assault support asset that exceeds expectations. The introduction of the aerial refuelable MV-22, combined with the forced retirement of the legacy KC-130F/R aircraft due to corrosion, fatigue life, and parts obsolescence significantly increases the requirement for accelerated procurement of the KC-130J. Twenty-three new aircraft have been delivered, and the Marine Corps is contracted with the Air Force and Lockheed Martin to procure a total of thirty-five aircraft by the end of Fiscal Year 2008. This is sixteen aircraft less than the inventory objective of the fifty-one needed to support the requirements of MAGTF, joint, and combined forces. As the aviation workhorse of the MAGTF, the KC-130J's theater logistical support reduces the requirement for resupply via ground, limiting the exposure of our convoys to IEDs and other attacks.

H-1 Upgrade. The H-1 Upgrade Program (UH-1Y/AH-1Z) is a comprehensive program to resolve existing operational power margin issues, while significantly enhancing the tactical capability, operational effectiveness, and sustainability of the attack and utility helicopter fleet. The Corps' fleet of UH-1N Hueys are reaching the end of their useful life. Due to airframe and engine fatigue, the Vietnam era Huey routinely takes off at maximum gross weight with no margin for error. This aircraft is long overdue for replacement to support our Marines in harm's way. Due to significant GWOT operational demands on the existing squadrons and aircraft attrition, the Marine Corps has adapted the "build new" strategy for the UH-1Y in Fiscal Year 2006. We are also examining a "build new" strategy for the AH-1Z to preclude significant inventory shortfalls. The H-1 Upgrade Program will restructure pending a Defense Acquisition Board in March 2007.

Persistent Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance. The Persistent Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance (ISR) strategy is a component of the Marine Corps ISR-enterprise

that supports Marines across the spectrum of military operations. Its focus is the capability to integrate the network of air, ground, and space sensors with sufficient fidelity to detect, locate, identify, track, and target threats; this includes reducing the effectiveness of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) through the identification of personnel, activities, and facilities associated with the manufacture and emplacement of IEDs. This network is enabled through unmanned aerial and ground systems, human intelligence exploitation teams, ground signals intelligence / electronic warfare, tactical fusion centers, and pre-deployment training programs. We are developing capabilities in coordination with the Joint IED Defeat Organization's point, route, and area targeting concepts. Some capabilities under development to support this concept include unmanned aerial systems, unmanned ground sensors, wide field of view persistent surveillance (ANGEL FIRE), and the Ground Based Operational Surveillance System (GBOSS). GBOSS is a force protection system that provides a twenty-four hour day/night persistent surveillance system of systems that integrates command and control, commercial off the shelf and government off the shelf sensors, a warning system, and a wireless local area network. The initial employment of this capability is performing admirably in theater.

Family of Ground Vehicles. The Army and Marine Corps are leading the Services in developing tactical wheeled vehicle requirements for the joint force. The current effort includes three focus areas to improve the survivability, mobility, and payload of the up-armored High-Mobility Multi-purpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV) replacements. The Army/Marine Corps Board has proven a valuable forum for coordination of tactical wheeled vehicle development and fielding, the production of Central Command armoring kits and up-armored HMMWVs, and rapid response to Combatant Commander's requests for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles. Additionally, the Army/Marine Corps Board has been the focal point for development of the joint requirements for a Joint Light Tactical Vehicle focused on providing protected, sustained, networked, and expeditionary mobility to the joint force in the light tactical vehicle weight class.

In November 2006, Marine Corps Systems Command released a Request for Proposal to produce up to 4,200 MRAP vehicles in response to a Joint Urgent Operational Need Statement to provide MRAPs in varying quantities for all four Services. In that same timeframe, the Army's Training and Doctrine Command and Marine Corps Combat Development Command, in collaboration with Navy, Air Force, and Special Operations Command representatives, received

Joint Staff approval of the Ground Combat Forces Light Tactical Mobility Initial Capability Document, documenting joint forces' capability needs for the light tactical wheeled vehicle fleet. During December 2006, Army and Marine Corps combat developers staffed the JLTV Capability Development Document, defining requirements for the long term HMMWV replacement. Current plans target a JLTV Milestone B decision in November 2007.

Counter-Sniper technology. The Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory is leading a four-pronged approach to countering the threat of snipers. Focused on increasing the ability to sense and warn, deny, protect, and respond, the Laboratory has leveraged the cooperative efforts of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, the Army, the Navy, the National Ground Intelligence Center, and numerous Marine Corps agencies. Future sense and warn capabilities include optical detection devices and the Boomerang II acoustic and infrared gunfire detection and location system. The potential to defeat the enemy sniper is being examined through different obscurant technologies, while protection is focused on individual armor and new tactics, techniques, and procedures. Response capability exploration includes counter-sniper vehicles and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency Sniper Rifle Program with improved day/night target acquisition and concealment capabilities.

V. Naval Operating Forces and Concepts

As the "Arc of Instability" is substantially a maritime domain, a naval force is uniquely suited to respond and provide forward-deployed expeditionary combat forces in response to crises. It is the Marine Corps' obligation to provide our Nation a naval force that is fully prepared for employment as a Marine Air Ground Task Force operating across the spectrum of conflict. The Nation invests tremendous resources knowing that the ability to project power from the sea is a prerequisite for defending our sovereignty. To maneuver from the freedom of the seas provides timely and reliable response solutions to our Nation. As demonstrated by the Navy-Marine Corps responses to hurricanes Katrina and Rita, tsunami relief in southern Asia, and noncombatant evacuation operations in Lebanon, maneuvering from the sea is a relevant capability possessing the flexibility to meet our country's needs both around the world and at home. Marines and Sailors embarked from amphibious platforms provide asymmetric, sustainable, and rapidly responsive solutions to our Combatant Commanders.

Working closely with our Navy and Coast Guard partners, we will advance the amphibious and expeditionary capabilities the Combatant Commanders rely on to meet their emerging challenges, strengthen concepts and training that enhance naval contributions to the Long War, and provide a naval force that is fully prepared for employment across the full spectrum of conflict.

Concepts to Capabilities. In September 2006, the Navy and Marine Corps published a new *Naval Operations Concept (NOC)*, which provides our unified vision for the future and broadly describes how naval power and influence can be applied at and from the sea, across the littorals, and ashore. In tandem, we revised our *Marine Corps Operating Concepts (MOC) for a Changing Security Environment*, incorporating our lessons learned and the unified vision provided in the NOC. Building on the conceptual foundation for littoral power projection provided in *Operational Maneuver from the Sea*, the NOC and the MOC call for more widely distributed forces providing increased forward presence, security cooperation with an expanding set of international partners, preemption of non-traditional threats, and a global response to crisis in spite of challenges to access. Collectively, these concepts provide the foundation for selectively conducting either distributed or aggregated operations.

Due to changes to the security environment and the effects of globalization, the Navy, Coast Guard, and Marine Corps have all concurred with the need to reexamine our maritime strategy. Early this summer, we intend to produce a new maritime strategy in order to articulate the ways and means by which maritime forces will support the Nation's strategic ends in the new security era.

Amphibious Warfare Ships. Amphibious warfare ships are the centerpiece of the Navy-Marine Corps' forcible entry and Seabasing capability, and have played an essential role in the Global War on Terrorism. These ships are equipped with aviation and surface assault capabilities, which coupled with their inherent survival and self-defense systems, makes them ideally suited to support a broad range of mission requirements. This survivability is critical to ensure the Nation has the widest range of response options. Not only must our naval forces maintain the ability to rapidly close, decisively employ, and effectively sustain Marines from the sea, they must also respond to emerging Global War on Terrorism requirements, crisis response, and humanitarian assistance missions on short notice around the world.

The Marine Corps' forcible entry requirement is based on Strategic Planning Guidance, directing us to "...consider capability alternatives...to support a single two Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) forcible entry operation." Therefore, the Marine Corps' operational requirement is two MEB assault echelons of forcible entry capability. This capability is realized by maintaining a Battle Force that provides 30 operationally available amphibious warfare ships.

Amphibious Transport Dock (LPD). The LPD 17 *San Antonio* class of amphibious warfare ships represents the Department of the Navy's commitment to a modern expeditionary power projection fleet that will enable our naval force to operate across the spectrum of warfare. The Navy took delivery of the first LPD 17 in the summer of 2005 and operational evaluation is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2007. The LPD 17 class replaces four classes of older ships—the LKA, LST, LSD 36, and the LPD 4—and will have a forty-year expected service life. LPD 17 class ships will play a key role in supporting the ongoing Global War on Terrorism by forward deploying Marines and their equipment to respond to crises abroad. Its unique design will facilitate expanded force coverage and decreased reaction times of forward deployed Marine Expeditionary Units. In forcible entry operations, the LPD 17 will help maintain a robust surface assault and rapid off-load capability for the Marine Air Ground Task Force far into the future.

Amphibious Assault Ship (Replacement) (LHA(R)). The *Tarawa* class amphibious assault ships reach the end of their service life during the next decade (2011-2015). An eighth *Wasp* class LHD (multi-purpose amphibious assault ship) is under construction and will replace one *Tarawa* class ship during Fiscal Year 2008. In order to meet future warfighting requirements and fully capitalize on our investment in the MV-22 and Joint Strike Fighter, ships with enhanced aviation capabilities will replace the remaining LHA ships. These ships will provide enhanced hangar and maintenance spaces to support aviation maintenance and increased jet fuel storage and aviation ordnance magazines. The lead ship, LHA 6, is on track for detailed design and construction contract award during Fiscal Year 2007, with advanced procurement funds already provided in the Fiscal Year 2005 and 2006 budgets.

The Maritime Prepositioning Force. Our proven Maritime Prepositioning Force—capable of supporting the rapid deployment of three Marine Expeditionary Brigades—is an important complement to our amphibious warfare capability. Combined, these capabilities provide the Marine Corps the ability to rapidly react to a crisis in a number of potential theaters and the flexibility to employ forces across the battlespace. The natural progression of this

capability set, the Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) (MPF(F)), is a key enabler of seabasing and will build on the success of the legacy MPF program. MPF(F) will provide support to a wide range of military operations with capabilities such as at-sea arrival and assembly, selective offload of specific mission sets, and long-term, sea-based sustainment. The squadron will be capable of prepositioning the Marine Expeditionary Brigade's critical equipment and sustainment; but this capability does not constitute a forcible entry capability. The MPF(F) squadron composition decision was made by the Acting Secretary of the Navy in May 2005; the program is currently in the technology development phase of acquisition, with a Milestone B decision planned in Fiscal Year 2008.

High Speed Connectors. High-speed connectors will facilitate the conduct of sustained sea-based operations by expediting force closure and allowing the persistence necessary for success in the littorals. Connectors are grouped into three categories: inter-theater, the Joint High Speed Sealift (JHSS), which provides strategic force closure for CONUS-based forces; intra-theater, the Joint High Speed Vessel (JHSV) that enables rapid closure of Marine forces and sustainment; and the Joint Maritime Assault Connector, to move troops and resources from the sea base to shore. These platforms will link bases and stations around the world to the sea base and other advanced bases, as well as provide linkages between the sea base and forces operating ashore.

Ship-to-Shore Mobility. The Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV) is our largest ground acquisition program, replacing the aging Assault Amphibious Vehicle that has been in service since 1972. The EFV's high-speed land and water maneuverability, lethal day/night fighting ability, and robust communications capability will meet security challenges across the entire spectrum of conflict. Capable of employment in virtually any environment due to the advanced armor and nuclear, biological, and chemical collective protection, the EFV will significantly enhance the lethality and survivability of Marine maneuver units from small, 2 vehicle sections to large, multi-unit joint operations, including Over the Horizon Forcible Entry.

The CH-53K received full funding in 2005 and has reached "Milestone B" status-initiation of system development and demonstration. Our current fleet of CH-53E Super Stallion aircraft enters its fatigue life during this decade. The CH-53K will deliver increased range and payload, reduced operations and support costs, increased commonality with other assault support platforms, and digital interoperability for the next twenty-five years. Both the CH-53K and the

EFV will enable the Marine Air Ground Task Force and joint force to project and sustain forces ashore from the sea.

Marine Aviation Plan. The Marine Aviation Plan is designed to posture Marine Aviation for future warfighting requirements in the near term (2007-2009), the mid-term (2010-2012) and the long term (2013-2015). The Marine Aviation Plan addresses these challenges by restructuring the force and managing current aircraft procurement Programs of Record.

We will rebalance our existing Assault Support and Tactical Aircraft (TACAIR) structure in the reserve and active components in order to boost future HMM (heavy lift CH-53E), HMLA (light attack UH-1 and AH-1), and VMU (unmanned aerial vehicle) capacity. Increases to aviation manpower structure at the squadron, group, and wing levels will enhance operational readiness and better posture these units for combat operations and their transitions to the new H-1s, MV-22, F-35, and CH-53K. We will incorporate a fully functional and resourced Aircrew Training System that will align a new Training Transformation Plan to each Assault Support and TACAIR community as they transition to new aircraft in the coming years. Marine aviation command and control modernization will leverage our new aircraft capabilities by streamlining command and control functions and radar inventory to ensure aviation command and control remains agile, efficient, and responsive to the needs of the MAGTF across the spectrum of conflict. Marine aviation logistics process modernization applies an enterprise approach to understanding readiness, associated costs, and the removal of performance barriers with the central aim of enhancing our warfighting capabilities while husbanding resources.

The Marine Aviation Plan shapes the future of Marine Aviation to meet the diverse missions of today's and tomorrow's battlefields, and provides the Marine Air Ground Task Force with improved capabilities, unit manning, and a thorough safety training system to better overcome known and foreseeable challenges. This plan sets in place tomorrow's Marine Aviation as a viable and efficient force in support of the MAGTF on the battlefield.

Supporting Capabilities. Logistics Modernization is the largest coordinated and cross-organizational effort ever undertaken to transform Marine Corps logistics. A three-pronged improvement and integration initiative focusing on Marine Corps people, processes, and technology, Logistics Modernization is integrating and streamlining supply, maintenance, and distribution. As our roadmap for more effective and efficient expeditionary logistics, Logistics

Modernization is multiplying our ability to support the Marine Air Ground Task Force across the spectrum of conflict, in all environments and across all levels of theater maturity.

VI. Beyond the Horizon—Posturing the Marine Corps for the Future

History has proven that we cannot narrowly define the conditions for which our military must be ready. With little warning, our Nation has repeatedly called its Corps front and center—in the southern Pacific after Pearl Harbor, in Korea after the communist invasion in 1950, in the mountains of Afghanistan after 9/11, and in southern Asia in the wake of the catastrophic tsunami of 2004. Each of these strategic surprises demonstrates the broad range of possibilities for which the Marine Corps must be prepared.

The Long War requires a multi-dimensional force that is well trained and educated for employment in all forms of warfare. Historically, our Corps has produced respected leaders who have demonstrated intellectual agility in warfighting. Our current deployment tempo increasingly places our Professional Military Education (PME) programs at risk. No level of risk is acceptable if it threatens the steady flow of thinkers, planners, and aggressive commanders who can execute effectively across the entire spectrum of operations.

The Future of Training and Education. Looking ahead to the challenges of the Long War, we have enhanced our counterinsurgency capabilities while remaining vigilant that our Marine Air Ground Task Forces must remain ready to launch robust forcible entry operations and succeed across the spectrum of conflict with our naval partner. With Marine forces so closely engaged in an irregular fight, we will have to take extraordinary steps to retain this ability to serve as the Nation’s shock troops during major conventional combat operations. Your support of our training and education needs will allow us to remain faithful to our enduring mission: to be where the country needs us, when she needs us, and to prevail over whatever challenges we face.

The Training Continuum. Some things remain constant—we continue to ensure that all Marines, regardless of occupational specialty, gain the self-confidence and skills derived from our warrior ethos “Every Marine a Rifleman.” The experience at boot camp remains legendary; this transformation of young Americans is a national treasure—one that we must preserve and guard carefully. The core values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment—imprinted on their souls during recruit training and strengthened thereafter—mark a Marine’s character for a lifetime. To

reinforce this transformation, we have focused the emphasis of our officer and enlisted professional military education on combat leadership.

Marine training is built along a continuum that is well defined, well structured, and of which we are extremely proud. Marines are forged in the furnace of recruit training and tempered by shared hardship and tough training. This transformation process begins the day they meet their recruiter, who introduces them to the concept of total fitness: body, mind, and spirit. It continues through their common experiences at Recruit Training and its Crucible, and Marine Combat Training. It moves on to skill training at one of our schools or at a sister Service school. It culminates with assignment to an operational unit with its own demanding training, where a powerful bond of trust develops between fellow warriors and they prevail, shoulder to shoulder, through the rigors of combat against a diverse and adaptive foe.

This adaptive enemy requires us to have a responsive continuum. Our rapid and effective lessons management system promptly captures the lessons being learned by our Marines and Sailors in complex combat actions around the globe. Our web-based lesson input support tool—selected by the Joint Staff last year to serve as the Department standard—guides this learning process. Capitalizing on the institutional agility that has been a hallmark of our success, last year we implemented changes in such areas as crew-served weapons use, tactical questioning, evidence gathering procedures, command and control equipment training and procedures, civil-military operations, and detainee handling.

An example of adaptation for the Long War includes our Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning, which we established during May 2005 and recently reached its full operational capability. Both officer and enlisted Marines now receive education in the operational aspects of culture at nearly every phase of their career development. This year, the Center is establishing Language Learning Resource Centers at our eight largest bases and stations. These centers provide language instruction using mobile language training shelters and contracted professional language trainers. These efforts support the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap increasing our interoperability with partner nations around the globe. We are also expanding our Foreign Area Officer program, creating language and culture experts from all occupational specialties who can be integrated into Marine units operationally deployed worldwide. We thank the Committee for its support in this venture, as recent supplemental funding proved instrumental to this effort.

During 2006, we institutionalized the structure, resources, and equipment to advance the individual skills and education of Marines selected to serve as advisors to partner military units. Our Security Cooperation and Education Training Center had already trained over fifty deploying advisor teams during 2004 and 2005. This formal establishment allowed us to increase our efforts, as we trained seventy-seven advisor teams during 2006. Additionally, we expanded advisor skills with upgrades to training in such areas as foreign weapon handling, medical procedures and survival, evasion, resistance, and evasion. This year we are establishing a Civil Military Operations Center of Excellence within this Center, as the Marine Corps' focal agency for civil-military operations training and education.

During this past year, we also reviewed our efforts to instill in Marines those core values necessary to guide them correctly through the complex ethical demands of this conflict. We have ensured that every Marine, at every phase of the training continuum, studies ethical leadership, the Law of War, Escalation of Force, and Rules of Engagement. Our entry-level training first presents these concepts in the classroom, and then tests for proper application of these principles under stressful field exercises. We reinforce this confident, ethical decision-making through the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program, which imbues our Marines with the theme "Wherever we go, everyone is safer because a US Marine is there" and applies the sophisticated character building techniques found in the martial arts.

Training Marine Air Ground Task Forces. Our continuing adaptations and investments in Core Values are checked once more prior to deployment with a series of unit mission rehearsals. These exercises occur during the culminating block of our formal Pre-deployment Training Program, which we expanded during 2004 to serve all deploying Marine Air Ground Task Forces. These mission rehearsals present all deploying personnel with increasingly complex situations designed to replicate the confusing swirl of combat on a complex battlefield. Role players, many of whom are Iraqi-Americans, portray battlefield civilians and insurgents alike, presenting exercise-worn Marines with sudden "shoot-don't shoot" decisions and forging within our Marines a sense of common cause with the civilians they will soon protect. The culmination of our pre-deployment training consists of three distinct exercises: Mojave Viper, Desert Talon, and Mountain Warrior—each specifically tailored to the deploying unit's destination combat environment.

During 2006, we continued to modify this program with expanded training in force escalation and with increased integration of logistics combat units. To better prepare Marines to counter the threat of improvised explosive devices, we added more training devices, built new ranges, and employed electronic warfare specialists at our rehearsal sites. This year we are focusing our enhancements on the training of advisor teams and of Marine Air Ground Task Force staffs by increasing the use of simulation. Our planned improvements promise to deliver Marine forces ready to more effectively meet the emerging challenges faced by the Combatant Commanders as a naval force in readiness in joint, combined, and interagency operations.

Modernization of Training Ranges. With the support of the Congress, we also recently began the most ambitious modernization of our training ranges since World War II. From larger and more realistic urban training facilities to increased opportunities to evaluate advanced air-ground coordination, we have significantly improved the realism, safety, and capacity of our ranges and training areas. While our immediate focus has been to acquire infrastructure and modern technology, our long-term investment is in people, largely civilian, to both operate and maintain these facilities and to form the critical training cadres capable of maintaining the realism our Marine Air Ground Task Forces require. Your continued support of our range modernization efforts, as well as the support for the Department's programs to ensure future access to adequate sea, air, and land space for our training ranges, remains vital to our ability to prepare for the challenges of the future with our joint, coalition, and interagency partners.

VII. Improve the Quality of Life for our Marines and our Families

Just as every Marine makes a commitment to the Corps and the Nation when they earn the title Marine, we make an enduring commitment to every Marine and Marine family. Marines are renowned for “taking care of our own.” Part of taking care of our own means we will provide for Marines and their families through appropriate pay and compensation, housing, health care, infrastructure, and community services. Strong Congressional support of many Administration initiatives have made possible the significant investments that have been made to improve each of the components of quality of life. This support requires continuous assessment to ensure that it is both sufficient and relevant, particularly during war. These programs must be on a wartime footing to seamlessly sustain our Marines and their families for the duration—long past the redeployment of our Marines and Sailors.

We are scrutinizing the support for our Marines and our families to ensure our family support programs remain on a wartime footing—particularly those that assist in integrating civilian, military, charitable, and Veterans Affairs programs. This support targets both Marines who suffer from the physical costs of this war, and those who carry unseen scars—those suffering from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). As I testified in my confirmation hearing, I feel strongly that these wounds of war should be characterized as any other wound—and our commitment to those Marines who suffer from these ailments will not falter.

We continue to aggressively monitor post-deployment mental health screenings, suicides, domestic violence, and divorce rates. Marine commanders and noncommissioned officers at every level are charged to monitor these indications closely and to stay engaged on these issues. Our Casualty Assistance, Marine For Life, and Combat / Operational Stress Control Program (COSC) continue to be our frontline of support to our wartime efforts.

Casualty Assistance. Each fallen Marine is a tragic loss to the survivors, the Corps, and our Nation. In all cases, we endeavor to honor their sacrifices with integrity and commitment. Our Casualty Assistance Calls Officers are trained to treat next of kin and other family members as they would their own family. Rendering casualty assistance begins with the basic tenet that there is no standard casualty call; each case is distinct, as families grieve in different ways. Assistance to surviving families is individually tailored to facilitate their transition through the stages of grief and the completion of the casualty process.

Wounded Warrior Regiment. While the support to our Marine Corps and families has been exceptional, I have directed the creation of a Wounded Warrior Regiment. This Regimental headquarters will provide centralized oversight of the care for our wounded Marines and assist in the integration of their support with military, Department of Veterans Affairs, charitable, and civilian systems. The Regiment will have a battalion headquarters on each coast and these units will be commanded by officers personally selected by me—my criteria for this leadership will be rigorous. I will seek to select only those officers with previous command experience. My staff is reviewing the fiscal requirements for this unit now—to include facilities, manning, and support requirements, which I will report to this committee when our findings are complete. I view this initiative as a personal priority to fulfill our commitment to these valiant Americans.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). As the quality of individual combat armor has increased, so have the number of blast survivors and Marines with Traumatic Brain Injury. Mild to moderate traumatic brain injuries can be difficult to diagnose and yet can cause changes in personality, cognition, and memory that significantly impair a service member's ability to make the life and death decisions required of them while in a combat environment. Recent measures to mitigate the impact of traumatic brain injuries to individual Marines and their units include the release of a medical guidance letter from the Medical Officer of the Marine Corps outlining proper diagnosis and treatment strategies. The Marine Corps has also implemented an improved helmet suspension system to decrease impact of injury from a blast.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The science of diagnosing and treating Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder continues to evolve. The Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Training and Education Command, Naval Health Research Center, and others are studying ways to identify risk and protective factors for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and increase our resilience to stress. By improving the awareness of both individuals and our leaders, we can provide early identification and psychological first aid for those who are stress-injured. Better screening and referral of at-risk Marines is underway via pre- and post-deployment standard health assessments that specifically screen for mental health problems. Navy Medicine has established new Deployment Health Centers with additional mental health providers standing by to treat Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other combat stress injuries. The Department of Veterans Affairs has established comprehensive guidelines for managing Post-Traumatic Stress, which are available to all services. The Marine Corps, Navy Medicine, and Veterans Affairs have coordinated a Seamless Transition program to help our Marine veterans move smoothly into the Veterans Affairs treatment system to get the help they need and deserve. In addition, Veterans Affairs Readjustment Centers at 207 communities around the country now provide mental health services for both active and discharged veterans and their families.

Combat/Operational Stress Control (COSC). Battlefields are a familiar territory for Marines—we train Marines to thrive in chaotic and unpredictable surroundings. Yet all Marines will experience combat/operational stress to some extent, as transient symptoms for most, but as persistent stress injuries for others. Managing combat stress is vital to the operation of the Marine Corps as a fighting force and the long-term health and well-being of Marines and their families. All deploying Marines receive warrior preparation and transition briefs and health

assessments. In addition, mental health professionals or specially trained medical officers brief Marine leaders on the prevention and management of adverse stress reactions. We have also implemented the innovative Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) program, which embeds mental health providers with ground forces. Operational Stress Control and Readiness provides early identification and treatment of combat/operational stress problems, defeats the stigma of combat stress, and overcomes the barriers to care.

The Combat/Operational Stress Control deployment cycle resources for families include the Family Deployment Support Program. The Program's components consist of Family Readiness Days, family crisis support services, Return and Reunion Briefs for spouses, and building a sense of community among our military families.

Marine For Life. The Marine For Life Injured Support program assists seriously and very seriously injured Marines, Sailors who served with Marines, and their families. This program bridges the gap between military medical care and the Department of Veterans Affairs by providing individualized support through the transition period.

Individual case tracking and enduring support for our injured Marines and Sailors complements the Office of the Secretary of Defense's Military Severely Injured Center, which enables the program to provide around-the-clock injured support service. Marine For Life provides support tailored to an individual's needs, including pre- and post-service separation case tracking, assistance with the physical evaluation boards' process, and an interactive website that acts as a clearinghouse for all disability and benefit information. The program also provides employment assistance through a preexisting Marine For Life network, which establishes local coordination with veterans, public, private, and charitable organizations that provide support to our injured warriors.

Marine For Life integrated Marine Corps and Department of Veterans Affairs' handling of Marine cases in April 2005 by assigning a Marine field grade officer to the Department of Veterans Affairs Headquarters' Seamless Transition Office. This integrates Marines into the Department of Veterans Affairs system and provides service oversight of Veterans Health Administration care and Veterans Benefits Administration benefits delivery. The Marine For Life program provides the direct point of contact for problem resolution for Marines within the Veterans Administration system.

Military Construction—Bachelor Enlisted Quarters Initiative. Our military construction plan focuses on housing for our single Marines. Barracks are a linchpin in the quality of life for our single Marines. We have tripled the funding for bachelor housing from Fiscal Year 2006 to 2007, and will double the 2007 funding in Fiscal Year 2008. We are funding barracks' furnishings on a seven-year replacement cycle and prioritizing barracks repair projects to preempt a backlog of repairs. We remain committed to providing adequate billeting for our unmarried junior enlisted and non-commissioned officer Marines by 2012.

Public Private Venture Family Housing. Our efforts to improve housing for Marines and their families continue. Thanks to continuing Congressional support, the Marine Corps will have contracts in place by the end of Fiscal Year 2007 to eliminate all inadequate family housing.

VIII. Conclusion

This Nation has high expectations of her Corps—as she should. Your Marines are answering the call around the globe, performing with distinction in the face of great hardships. As they continue to serve in harm's way, our moral imperative is to fully support them—we owe them the full resources required to complete the tasks we have given them. Now more than ever they need the sustained support of the American people and the Congress to simultaneously maintain our readiness, reset the force during an extended war, modernize to face the challenges of the future, and fulfill our commitment to Marine families. Again, I thank you for the opportunity to report to you on their behalf.