

**THE COMMISSION ON
THE NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVES**

**PUBLIC HEARINGS
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA**

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2006

9:00-10:30 AM TRAINING BASE COMMANDERS

WITNESSES:

**BRIGADIER GENERAL DOUGLAS M. STONE, USMCR,
COMMANDING GENERAL, MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND
COMBAT CENTER, MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND TASK FORCE
TRAINING COMMAND AT 29 PALMS**

**COLONEL DAVID L. BLAIN, USA, DEPUTY COMMANDER AND
CHIEF OF STAFF, U.S. ARMY NATIONAL TRAINING CENTER AT
FORT IRWIN**

*Transcript by:
Federal News Service
Washington, D.C.*

ARNOLD L. PUNARO: We're ready to go. The commission will come to order. Welcome to the 5th set of public hearings of the independent Commission on the National Guard and Reserves and the second of our outside-the-beltway field hearings. It's a pleasure to be here in San Diego this morning, and I want to express special thanks to our two San Diego-area commissioners, Dan McKinnon and Wade Rowley for all they've done to arrange what is already a highly productive visit, and particular thanks to Dan McKinnon because he chairs our subcommittee on Readiness, Training and Equipping, and this is the subject matter area that he is focusing on for the commission and organizing for us. So, Dan and Wade, we really appreciate – we've had a great, productive visit so far and know it's going to even be better.

I also want to thank the command here, the fleet, Anti-Submarine Warfare here at Point Loma, and then particularly are experts here in the Sims Auditorium that have been so helpful all week in getting this set up.

Our commission is chartered by Congress to identify and recommend changes in law and policy to ensure that the National Guard and Reserves are tasked, organized, trained, equipped and compensated, as well as supported, to best meet the national security requirements of our nation now and in the future. To fulfill its mandate, the commission is seeking information in a broad range of venues, including formal hearings such as this one, field visits, focus groups, roundtable discussions, formal data requests, and numerous interviews.

We are conducting a very ambitious schedule in San Diego this week. While the primary focus of the commission's formal hearing panels, "Readiness, Training and Equipping," we are taking full advantage of the multi-service, multi-agency presence here in Southern California to expand our firsthand knowledge in other areas within our purview.

In addition to the four panels of witnesses we will hear from today and tomorrow, the commission has visited the Naval Medical Center San Diego, the U.S. Coast Guard Sector San Diego. We will be visiting the Marine Corps base, Camp Pendleton, the Naval Coastal Warfare Group I, Imperial Beach, Ikari (ph) and several other naval activities. We've also been talking to the terrific VA hospital complex here because there's a lot of coordination that can occur between our military medical establishment and our veterans' medical establishment.

In addition, we went last night to see firsthand the National Guard's expanded role in support of the border patrol. At a number of these locations, we have and will be conducting roundtable discussions in addition to briefings and tours. San Diego, this area is really unique and enabled the commission to look at a microcosm of all the issues that we're dealing with: training, readiness, mobilization, demobilization, active units, reserve units, veterans units, Coast Guard, homeland security missions such as dealing with

natural disasters like the wildfires a little north of here, dealing with the borders and many things like that. So it's a perfect location to look at all the issues the commission is charged with dealing with.

Our initial hearings back in Washington address the big picture: the roles and missions of the reserve component, the appropriate and optimal role of the National Guard and Reserves and Homeland Security and homeland defense, and the profound shift from a strategic to more operational reserve force and the far-reaching implications of that change. And our two witnesses from the two major Army and Marine Corps training establishments know better than most what the implications of an operational reserve are on the training establishment.

In San Antonio we heard from the reserve component chiefs. The three-star leaders of all of the seven components gave us their perspective on a wide range of issues. We also called in some junior enlisted personnel to make sure we got the bird's eye or deck-plate view from the troops of what's really going on out there.

We're now shifting more from the broader areas to a more detailed focus in terms of our topic, so this week we'll be exploring readiness training and equipping in considerable depth with the commanders from the Army's National Training Center and the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, and with veteran battalion commanders and their key staffs. We'll be hearing from a representative of the Government Accountability Office on what the GAO has found in these areas.

And finally, in addition to seeing the National Guard's expanded mission at the border, we'll also get the perspective of Representatives of the directors of emergency management from the states of California and Arizona and the California adjutant general on the guard's vital role as the go-to force in responding to a wide range of natural disasters.

In our hearings to date, it's become very clear, particularly when we heard from the senior witnesses in the homeland defense area, Paul McHale, the assistant secretary of Homeland Defense in the Department of Defense; Admiral Keating, the commander of Northern Command; the undersecretary for Preparedness and Readiness at the Department of Homeland Security, that state and local is going to be the immediate response force in these natural or manmade disasters, and that has far-reaching implications for our guard and reserve and also the issue – we're going to hear from the state emergency managers to look at this issue of the balance between federal control versus state control and who ought to really be in charge of these type of activities.

Today we're focused mostly, though, however, on training. Our lead-off witnesses are Brigadier General Douglas M. Stone, commanding general Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, 29 Palms, California; and Colonel David L. Blain, deputy commander and chief of staff, Army National Training Center at Fort Irwin. Colonel Blain is representing Brigadier General Cone (sp), the NTC installation commander, who

is at Fort Stewart, Georgia today with a group of soldiers that have recently completed their NTC rotation and are now en route to Iraq.

So we thank you both for taking time from your busy schedule to testify. We've asked you to focus on a general overview of what reservists go through during their rotation through these bases. Your candid evaluation of any deficiencies that may be common to reserve component units arriving at NTC or 29 Palms, that can or should have been addressed in preactivation training and the reasons for these deficiencies, and your assessment of how reserve component units and the training they require compare with similar active component units and your recommendation on how to fix any deficiencies.

The de fact shift from a strategic to an operational reserves, as I mentioned, has significant implications for training, equipping, and general readiness of the reserve components. We focus our first two witnesses today on training readiness. As we explore ways to enhance training readiness, whether through longer preactivation training cycles, through additional post-mobilization training or increased training time as part of the normal cycle. We must also remain cognizant of the impact on the service member, the member's family, and their employers.

General Stone, Colonel Blain, we thank you for being here today and for your service to the nation. We count on your experience and candor on the complex issues before us today. Without objection, your prepared statements will be placed in the record and I'll call first on General Stone for his delivered testimony.

BRIGADIER GENERAL DOUGLAS M. STONE: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the committee. Thank you for the invitation to provide testimony before you regarding the guard and reserves.

The history of America has been built from its claim of independence on the dedicated and courageous service of the forbearers of today's citizen soldiers, our guard and reserve. Today these twice-citizens shoulder more than their fair share of the war effort. No uniform services, most notably my own, could conduct this war effort without the dedicated or professional men and women of the Reserve.

In the Marine Corps, our reserves serve in staff and line positions, as units and as individual augmentees at all levels within the Marine Corps, and throughout the joint services in all the areas of operation within CENTCOM, and as well within all of the unified commands. I suspect that a Marine reservist is present wherever active-duty Marines are stationed.

I am proud to be a Marine reservist. As commanding general of both the geographically largest Marine base, the Marine Air Ground Combat Center at 29 Palms, California, and as the commanding general of the Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command located within the Combat Center, I also command the Marine Air Wing Training Squadron in Yuma, Arizona, and the Mountain Warfare Training Center

in Bridgeport, California. I am responsible for unit **pre-deployment** training of Marine Corps units en route Iraq.

We also train some elements of the Marine Expeditionary Units who are **deployed** worldwide and have conducted training for the final Marine battalions who have **deployed** in support of OEF in Afghanistan. Although my focus is exclusively on training units, I do work jointly with our sister services, in particular the Army and General Cone, in an effort to assure that the training techniques and procedures we use, most notably against improvised explosive devices, are the most current and applicable possible.

My command will train, in a year, more than 30,000 Marines and sailors headed to combat. Perhaps as many as 5,000 or more will be reservists who will receive the exact training program and experience the same assessment as do active-duty units. Throughout the 30-day multi-phase exercise named Mojave Viper, a unit is exposed to the full spectrum of military operations under all lines of operation currently being used today in Iraq. There's only one unit **pre-deployment** standard that we train units by, and that is the Marine Corps standard. It's self-defined in the Marine Corps **pre-deployment** program, written by training and evaluation command, my parent command in Quantico, Virginia.

Training standards are, however, kept current with AO feedback and gaining command directives on a daily basis by our Lessons Learned Team, by our theater-experienced instructors and the current and past leadership of Marine units inside the area of operation, with whom we consult daily. Our command does not certify units as combat-ready. Certification of a unit as combat-ready is the responsibility of the gaining force commander, who is responsible for providing these units to the combatant commander.

Our training cadre does, however, provide an assessment based on the training standards associated with the unit's mission-essential training list. We make no distinction between active and reserve components in our unit-training regime or in the standards upon which unit assessments are made at the completion of their 30-day training exercise. There is some subjectivity in training based on the area of operation within theater where the unit will be assigned. Basically, the training events don't change, but the assessment criteria and mission-essential tasks do, based on the unit's mission within the assigned AO.

Equipment used at Mojave Viper is as current with that used within the Marine Corps-Iraqi area of operations as possible, and is often used and trained upon by units who are exposed to it for the first time when at Mojave Viper. This is true for active and reserve component units alike.

Since assuming command, I have seen 19 battalions flow through the Mojave Viper exercise. Four of these have been reserve, and today, supporting our training, we have the vast majority of our fixed-wing, rotary-wing, and assault aircraft support

provided by the Fourth Marine Wing. That's the Marine reserve air wing. I have, therefore, had a unique perspective from which to see all major supported commands of the Marine Forces reserve in training, along with hundreds of individual reserve augmentees who have mobilized in support of Operation Enduring or Iraqi Freedom.

There is no significant trend difference in unit performance between reserve and active units. Whether being called upon to defeat terrorists networks, establish stability operations, counter the threat of weapons of mass destruction, defend the homeland, and assist by their actions to shape the options our civilian leadership have in this long war, it is my view that the guard and reserves, both as units and individual augmentees, are uniquely qualified and unquestionably essential in our national efforts to deter and defeat violent Islamists who threaten our nation today, as no other enemy has before. Our nation owes these great Americans the best that we can provide.

Thank you for the honor to address you today and the opportunity to assist you in the important task at hand to shape the future of this vital segment of our total and all-volunteer force.

MR. PUNARO: Thank you.

Colonel Blain?

COLONEL DAVID L. BLAIN: Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of this very important committee, it is my distinct pleasure to be with you today representing our Army's premier combat-training center, the National Training Center, located in Fort Irwin, California. As a 21-year infantryman, I cannot think of a more important topic than that of training our soldiers of all components for the challenges we face in combat. In the past three years alone at the National Training Center, we have trained over 51,000 officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers from across the National Guard and Reserves. We recognize the huge contributions of our National Guard and Reserve soldiers and the sacrifices that their families make.

I'd just like to take a few quick moments upfront about what we have historically done in order to set the backdrop at the National Training Center and how we've evolved as we fight the war on terror.

Since 1982, the National Training Center, or the NTC, has been our Army's centerpiece for training collective war fighting competencies at the brigade-combat team level. Prior to the initiation of the global war on terror, rotation at the NTC was the closest thing to combat the BCT leadership and its soldiers would experience. The focus was on heavy-mounted maneuver warfare against a Warsaw Pact-based conventional enemy operating off of fixed doctrine. The battle space was sterile, open desert with no urban-populated areas and no potential for collateral damage with its accompanying civil-military and non-lethal engagements within the civilian populace.

This training was appropriate for the times and the potential threats that we faced, and many believe this training is owed much of the credit for our success in Desert Storm, as well as the success in the opening stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom. However, in early 2004, as the war in Iraq transitioned into stability and reconstruction operations and the insurgency began to take stronger shape, the National Training Center began to transform. We no longer trained to face conventional threats with a fixed doctrine in the open desert. We face an adaptive, elusive threat that blends with the populace in some very large urban areas. A threat that operates in cells that constantly observes and adapts to our every move. A threat that understands propaganda and the media, and leverages it to his own advantage every chance he takes in order to gain the upper hand and sway the decisive terrain, which is the people.

But our task is more complex than just eliminating the threat and providing security. We must also build. We must build relationships, infrastructure, local security forces, and create conditions favorable for the establishment of the economic success and governance. This requires our soldiers to be lethal when necessary, but also must be ambassadors and understand cultural norms, religious issues, and sectarian tensions and how they impact day-to-day on operations.

At the NTC, we evolve with the fight. Our responsibility is to replicate the complex environment we now face in Iraq and Afghanistan. Our focus is now on teaching the best practices coming out of theater, to augment current tactics, techniques, and procedures, TTPs, and doctrine. We create a full-spectrum environment with the rigor, complexity, and fidelity appropriate to all levels of conflict. The NTC training area has taken on a new face.

When a BCT rolls into the box, they roll into the Air-One (ph) district of Iraq, where they spend 14 days with non-stop responsibility for over 1,100 square miles of terrain, with 12 towns populated by 1,600 role players across the district. Of those 1,600 role players, 250 are Iraqi Americans, with the others being made up of soldiers from our own 11th ACR, which recently returned from its own deployment to Iraq. The Iraqi role-players play all of the key spheres of influence, such as sheiks, imams, mayors, police chiefs, mullahs, doctors, and teachers that our leaders and soldier encounter every day on the streets of Iraq. The insurgency also operates in the box, just as it does in Iraq, with role players filling all of these roles, from high-level financiers to bomb-makers and triggermen.

With each rotation, there is a complex scenario with a backdrop of human relationships that exist amongst the role players across the towns. Familial, tribal, sectarian, and ethnic relationships exist, just as they do in Iraq, enabling units to develop their non-lethal engagement skills and grow in their understanding and approaches to these issues. We've increased our emphasis on counterinsurgency doctrine, intelligence-driven operations, complex IED-defeat operations, non-kinetic operations, and the training of Iraqi security forces, just to name a few.

With the current environment, including urban terrain, a civilian populace – with a correct environment including urban terrain, a civilian populace complete with a doctrinal and correct cultural, sectarian, and ethnic demographics, a functioning tough insurgency that executes the very latest tactics and techniques and procedures we see executed in theater, all linked to a theater-driven scenario, we are able to apply the necessary stress and rigor across the entire spectrum of the conflict and provide BCTs with a mission-rehearsal exercise prior to **deployment** into theater.

Since June of 2004, all units, regardless of component that have trained at the National Training Center, have executed a mission-rehearsal exercise specifically focused on **deployment** to and operations in Iraq. In that span of time, we've conducted 22 Operation Iraqi Freedom-focused MREs, of which five have been National Guard brigade rotations with the sixth being a separate National Guard infantry battalion rotation out of Kansas. The last National Guard brigade MRE was conducted with second of the 28 BCT from the Pennsylvania Army National Guard in May of 2005.

All units trained to achieve a single standard, and that is the Army standard, reinforced by the latest from theater. Each unit comes at a different level of individual- and collective-skill proficiency, and it is our job to get them as far as we can as fast as we can in a short period of time we have with them.

It is important to note that we do not certify any of the National Guard or Reserve units we train. That responsibility lies with First Army. What the NTC does best is provide a venue of commanders and senior trainers to build collective competencies up and down the formation, and across battle staffs. In order to get to a higher collective-level skill sets, it's imperative that units come to the NTC having reached a baseline skill proficiency in the individual and lower-squad and platoon level battle drills. If individual and lower-level unit skills and drills are lacking, it's extremely difficult to achieve the highest achievable level of collective proficiency in just 14 days we spend in the NTC box.

As these National Guard units that I referred to prepare for their MREs, we consulted closely with First Army, and based on their assessment of these units, we developed a series of situational training exercise lanes that enabled the units to work specific areas of the squad, platoon, and company levels to form the foundation upon which we could build to higher collective proficiency in the battalion and brigade level. As a consequence, these lanes lasted five days and then we transitioned to a nine-day full-up MRE against the Iraq problem set that I described previously. At the end of each rotation, each BCT had made significant progress from individual all the way through BCT-level competencies, and had formed a baseline from which to work as they completed their preparations for **deployment**.

I'd also like to point out that these six rotations were very early on, as the insurgency continued to develop and formulate in Iraq. And we have evolved a great deal since then, as we incorporate new TTPs from theater into each rotation. I will also tell you that the active component faces the same challenge now, as we turn units around

through the reset process following a return from a **deployment**. In some cases, the reset of people, including a lot of key leaders and equipment, precludes units from conducting sufficient home-station training, focused on individual and lower skill sets prior to returning to the NTC for its MRE. And as our senior trainers have recognized this, we've run six lanes on the front end of several Active Component Unit rotations as well. This sharpens our baseline competencies at the lower level, enabling us a more rapid climb to the higher end of collective competencies.

Again, I appreciate being here on the behalf of General Cone. With that backdrop, I will turn it back over to you for any questions you may have.

MR. PUNARO: Thank you. Appreciate it. Let me ask both of you a question. Let me start with General Stone.

General Stone, when you've been a company commander, you've been an XO, you've been an OpsO; in 3rd Battalion, 23rd Marines, when you went to CACs (ph) in the summers many years ago, tell me what is different now for 3rd Battalion, 23rd Marines that's going to Iraq or Afghanistan from when you went through the training at 29 Palms years ago? Second, how do you incorporate living lessons learned from what's happening to those forces over in theater into your current training? And then three, is there anything different you do for 3/23 that you don't do for 1/6, from 2nd Marine Division, because they're training 365 days of the year; they're coming to 29 Palms; 2/23 is training 60 days a year. Coming to 29 Palms to you is something different.

Colonel Blain, I'm going to ask you to hark back to your experience from the 5 or the 502, and also when you were the battalion commander of the 2nd Battalion, 9th Regiment, and kind of answer those three same questions.

So first, General Stone.

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Well sir, the difference between a CACs and a Mojave Viper is as different as day and night. The responsibility for those who were their trainers, the coyotes of our TTE-CGR (ph) training and evaluation group, had the responsibility to ensure combined arms and a highly mechanized movement across great plains against a Soviet enemy that was entrenched.

Today, the Mojave Viper exercise and the battalion that I would be leading would have a profoundly different experience. They would spend not only about a third of their time ensuring that they were up to speed on all elements of the cultural awareness, language skills, IED awareness, whether or not they could or could not move logistics, driving new up-armored vehicles, engaging with the new jammers (ph) and IED protections that have been provided; they would then engage in a reasonably short combined-arms exercise where platoons and companies, as opposed to maneuvering battalions, would actually practice in live-fire activities. Now, this would include convoys, armored convoys as they drove down and were subjected to various IED threats, and in fact, simulated very similar to what it is they would experience in Al-

Anbar province, and indeed do experience in Al-Anbar province within the weeks of their departure from my training.

Following that, they would reset and they would go into an Iraqi village. And in the Iraqi village would be up to 400 Iraqi American and/or role players who would never speak anything but their native tongue, who would challenge every Marine and Marine battalion to engage first in the traditional awareness component. They would then be asked to, by their battalion commander or told by their battalion commander, to carry out their mission, whatever that might be. It might be that they're looking for caches of weapons, et cetera. But, of course to do that, they would have to engage in a military training team using an interpreter and doing it in a manner that is both culturally sensitive, but also achieves their mission.

All Marines would be speaking the Arabic language. All Marines would be engaged in the cultural awareness – cultural components that would mandate, for example, that when speaking to Iraqis they take their sunglasses off; when they enter into rooms where there are females, that there are certain standards of conduct that are different than perhaps if they're all males; that when they enter into some of these buildings and there are various families or groups inside, that there's a delicate weeding process that gets done to find out whether or not the individual they're searching for or the information they want to gain, can be gotten in that manner.

Increasingly, all that they would do today is being done through Iraqis, and that is a very different manner than I would have experienced as a battalion commander, moving down an armored vehicle off great distances in big clouds of dust. Indeed, this is an irregular war and that was a conventional war, and the difference is as great as that.

MR. PUNARO: Okay, thanks. That's what was done?

BRIG. GEN. STONE: That is correct, sir. And I would argue that we have more room to go. The counterinsurgency warfare mandates essentially six lines of operations. Combat ops is only one of those six lines.

MR. PUNARO: (Off mike.)

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Sir, the lessons learned is a very, very proactive part of our process. I came from, and I'd like to contrast this, frankly, to when I was a battalion commander in those old days because, frankly, lessons learned would have been something like a corporate report that would stick on the shelf and be full of dust and you wouldn't look at it, if you ever did look at it.

But today lessons learned are dynamic. They have permanent resources, both assigned in my command as well as in country, my instructors migrate in – commute in and out of country all year long to garner the latest lessons learned. There's not a day go by when we don't have a meeting with NMFII (ph) West, our counterparts – the active-duty counter – Commander, General Zomer, General Miller, and others in country to

understand specifically, that day, what took place. Our lessons learned came out of Quantico, has a very robust system that under – led by Colonel Monte Dunard, ensures that we have the exact latest information, then we make change.

MR. PUNARO: What about – (off mike).

BRIG. GEN. STONE: We do, sir. Indeed, I have folks that work in General Cone's area, and General Cone has traded instructors down with me. This is, perhaps – I often say that we don't focus much on joint, because we just simply are. General Cone and I – I view him as a brother. He has been – and sometimes as a dad and sometimes as a patron – he is perhaps the best friend that I have in this activity and he's been nothing but remarkable in terms of support for us.

The last comment I would make, sir, is that it is a very sound and legitimate point of inquiry to ask the question about whether or not a reserve battalion in the days that they have in preparation, could equal that of a reserve battalion – of an active-duty battalion. And the answer actually stems from the **deployment** cycle these days. If you're an active-duty battalion and you come back, you know you're going to be going back in seven months. That means you'll stand down, take some leave, turn around, your new assignments have come in, and, indeed, by the time show you up at Mojave Viper, you may well still be joining staff. You may still be joining brand-new lieutenants out of the basic school. So today, the advantages are about the same. Should this continue over time, one would have to argue with the level of sophistication required to fight this battle, the level of learning on the new systems, the jammers and such that we have, and I could go on at length about that. That that task alone would become increasingly difficult for reservists.

COL. BLAIN: Sir, I had the opportunity to **deploy** to the National Training Center four times from the time I was a second lieutenant up to the time I was a major as a brigade S-3 Operations Officer.

I would say, to go on with what General Stone said, some additional things that have significantly changed in relation to how what I would have expected as a company commander, at that time – first of all, beginning with the levels of war. If we look back then at the tactical of the operations, strategic levels of war, at the tactical level that's pretty much where you operated and that is where you expected your sphere of influence to be. With the counterinsurgents we face – insurgency we face now in the irregular warfare we're in, in the global war on terror, those levels of war are compressed now than they have ever been, in my assessment. And by that I mean, the individual private who's been in the Army nine months to do something on the street that has a strategic impact. And that is something that we never about, or really had to deal with.

So, when you take that and you combine it with the intelligence paradigm that we find right now, where previously everything was a top-driven intel feed. Now, it is a bottom-up targeting process that we work. And everything that comes into the cycle, into the targeting process, for our non-kinetic engagements and our targeting, is significantly

different than it was previously, or what I expected to see as I came up through the ranks. The things that our soldiers face these days, with regard to the media, propaganda, and how that impacts the operations that we conduct, across the levels of war, is a significant difference in what you would see just even five years ago.

As far as the lessons learned go, I would say, along with Gen. Stone, just to close that up, is we have also completely, like I said in my opening remarks, everything is focused on what is happening in theater and the irregular basis of warfare. And what we find ourselves in, in the global war in the areas that we're engaged.

Lessons learned, we have several methods that we use to incorporate. We data mine within and hold weekly VTCs with CFIT, NMFI, commanders in-theater with the National Training Center. We also data mine off of the SIPRANET (ph). We're staying in close contact with Task Force Palladin and Troy, who are the IED defeat task forces that are in country and data mine with them regularly. And monthly, we have a blue team-red team, where the ACR takes the red team – red side, and we update the TTPs that we see going on in theater from the insurgency, and incorporate those out into the box, whether it's the use of different sorts of IED-initiation devices to the way that they're running their propaganda campaign. And then on the blue side, we keep our TTPs relevant with operations group, our OC teams, maintaining contact constantly, not only through the SIPRA (ph) side and data mining, but we send quarterly OC teams into theatre, into Iraq and Afghanistan to spend a month or so because if you're six months removed from the fight, then you're dated, that's what we have found, as quickly as the stuff is evolving. So that is a key component to that.

MR. PUNARO: Great, thanks.

General Stone, I'm going to ask you because of your unique experience – 18 months in Pakistan, kind of on the frontier of dealing with the new threats we face and your experience and knowledge of – in that area.

In our initial findings, the commission observed that we're facing probably the most complex and diverse national-security environment we've seen in our lifetime. That includes the peak of the Cold War. And we face a threat from radical Islam, far different than that we faced in the peak of the Cold War, and I think it would be useful for you to share, having spent 18 months dealing directly with that. Give us some insights; give us your personal insights into the nature of the threat that this nation is confronted with, both overseas and at home, and the implications for the Guard and Reserve.

So really, kind of just – a little bit off the topic, but I think actually dead on to the topic of readiness training and equipping, because if you don't understand your enemy and you don't understand the threats you face, it's very difficult to come up with the mission, the essential-task list, that our soldiers, sailor, airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen need to be to prepare to defend, and that's both overseas and at home. So

share with us a little bit of your insights from your 18-month tour on the frontiers there in Pakistan, dealing with radical Islam.

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Well, sir, thank you for that opportunity. I wasn't prepared to give this dissertation, and I will preface this by saying it's not clear to me that anything I have to say will be consistent with what it is that my service, or perhaps the armed forces, may believe. That being said, my responsibilities there have led me to believe as a trainer, that there is no more sophisticated problem than what it is that we have to do today.

I wanted to hark back for one second before I go into any depth on this and just mention, as I said before, that we have to stay current with the changing situation. It is because there are multiple wars, if you will, going on at once. There is the al-Qaeda and associated-like movement, which is a global movement, a mission-order movement. A movement that has incited an Islamic majority to begin to ask the tough questions of themselves, but more precisely, to find blame and fault in others. And because of that, and because of the radical Islamists, and by that I mean the violent Islamists – this comes off of the Wahhabi and Sufi side – that they are incredibly dangerous. I cannot tell you in any more underlined fashion, how difficult the challenge might be to try to sort that one singular movement out.

But coupled with that will be the problem that we find ourselves – and the challenge we find ourselves in Iraq, where there will be secular governments who will harbor this movement, and for whom the movement will use, not only ungoverned spaces throughout the world, but also those that are governed spaces. And so the enemies of our nation will find themselves adapted to where ever it is they need to go and whatever it is they need to do. That is, as the colonel has mentioned, and as I've tried to express in terms of our training, our biggest challenge is to adapt and to adapt on an on-going basis.

I can speak to the specifics of that war in one second, but I wanted you to consider for a moment the challenge of training forces in this world and in this situation that hereafter engage a hostile secular and non-secular enemy, often at the same time, across what are often conventional and at the same time irregular forces, across multicultural and religious identities, formed from both nation states and non-nation states, fighting multiple forms of insurgencies from safe havens with or without boundary restrictions. And that they do this under the intense glare of embedded news media, while fielding new and complex equipment that we give them, thank God, by carrying hundreds of pounds of equipment and understanding – needing to understand vastly foreign language and cultural connotations while having to sense the presence, day and night, of concealed IEDs. And they do this in a sea of humanity, as the colonel mentioned, where a split-second decision makes the difference between theirs or their Marines' lives.

Every one of these magnificent reservists do this, and it's been my personal experience in country and here in training, that they will say to you that it is the greatest privilege of their lives to fight for this country. And they will also tell you, as General Mr. Maddis (ph) said as he began to lead in the First Wing Division, to say to the Iraqis,

et al, that there is no better friend of an American, but for those that earn it there will be no worse enemy. And I will say that as I have spent time in the interagency organization, one of the greatest challenges for our services, will be that this is not strictly going to be won by the military. Indeed, military force, as I mentioned earlier, is only one of the six lines of operations necessary to win the war.

And if you think back to conventional warfare of the Second World War type, you saw General McArthur and General Marshall had massive post-kinetic, post-conventional operations at – massive systems to help them alleviate the situation that their conventional forces brought. This is the power that our nation has, and if rallied, could bring to bear. I would argue that part of the guard and reserve, that they bring unique talents sets, which I would like to speak later on, that could capitalize on this. But I will tell you that al-Qaeda and the associated movement, and this – al-Qaeda, of course, is on the Sunni side; you saw Hezbollah coming out of the Shi'a side, and the Shi'as themselves have a revolution. Only 15 percent or so of all of Islam are Shi'a, and the balance, of course, is Sunni. But the war gets won, the moment that the moderate ummah marginalizes the violent Islam.

And when that moment happens, when the moderate ummah – that's the body of believing Islam; that's the majority we hope – marginalizes their own violent Islamist, the war is over. It ends. And because of that, it is absolutely essential as we train Marines in kinetic and non-kinetic movements, and of all our Reserves and Guard, and all our services, that we be sensitive to the fact that one slipped error creates a thousand additional enemies. Or said in the political manner, it gives the moderate middle less reason to marginalize their own violent extremists.

So, unless they do that – and it's clear to me that we cannot do that; it is clear to me that only Islam can marginalize the violent Islamists, but we have to do everything we can through what it is we do in our national security, and I mean national security at large, to be able to create a condition upon which the moderate ummah can indeed do that. And that leads to powers well beyond that which are present in today's military. It's important, I think, to recognize that, and my numbers may be incorrect here, but the DoD component is probably about 3.8 percent of GDP on a \$13 trillion economy. And during the Second World War, 40 percent of the GDP was launched to fight that war. We have significant needs in intelligence, we have significant needs in these other essential areas, and we have significant needs in building of irregular warfare and irregular capabilities, that must be build to be able to place our nation in a secure fashion.

I will say without question, and it is probably the – not that I have (lost hope ?); I don't. I am, indeed, inordinately optimistic about winning this. But this may well be, as the Cold War was, a 70-year war. And because of that, and because of the nature of the Islamic religious component of this, it will require every single piece of national power that we have. And military and the reserves are a part of that, but the reserves are unique. The guard and the reserves are unique by the nature of the skills that they can bring to bear, that could well be properly leveraged, an answer to the final solution.

MR. PUNARO: Great, thank you. Appreciate it.

If time, I'd like to come back on some of that, but our next questioner is Commissioner Dan McKinnon. As I've indicated, he's our sub-committee chairman of the readiness training and equipping area, and he spent an inordinate amount of time visiting and traveling and learning and getting on top of all of these issues.

And again, Dan, thanks for the tremendous program you set up for us here this week. Commissioner McKinnon.

DAN MCKINNON: General, I'd just like to follow up a little bit on just what you were talking about.

If the good Islamic people can control the bad, you say the war is over. But the reality of it is, how do you do that when your life is threatened and they're killing is just a way of life with them. And so, you can intimidate the good guys, the bad guys can intimidate the good guys, so I don't see how you get the good guys to overcome the bad guys.

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Well, remember that the Islamic nation, perhaps, is as much as 1.6 billion, I'm going to guess. It probably is about the same size as the Christian nation, or Christians all taken together. That Islam is not strictly Arab. Islam is also Persian, it's Indonesian, it's Indian, it's Pakistani. There's a broad spectrum of other countries, by and large, countries larger, Philippines, et al., that are greater than the number of Arab Islamic portion of the ummah.

Because of that, not all cultures are the same. And although, if you take a look at Iraq, you can go back thousands of years and you can take a look at the problems and the challenges that they've had as a society, oftentimes bringing to bear strong leaders who are dictatorial, oftentimes, as in the case of the Shi'a, bringing to bear leaders that are also religious. But it does seem to me, in my experience in both speaking the language, as well as reading the Koran, as well as engaging with folks on a reasonably intimate basis, that it seems to me that there is a very broad spectrum of moderate Islamic feeling and regard.

That it properly empowered, if brought to bear, and I'm not sure how to do this, although it includes things like helping them with aspects of the things that I mentioned earlier – essential services, infrastructure, governance, training – as well as a very aggressive and very effective, information operations campaign, that they will find a way, through their ummah, through their leadership of their religious leaders, to marginalize the radical belief. Because, you see, at the end of the day, the violent Islamists are operating within a construct of their religion that they believe.

And because of that, they will ultimately take responsibility for the religion. You're quite correct that it is a violent society, but it is also violent in many places of the world that are not Islamic. We can look all around the world and find many, many places

where hundreds of thousands are killed on a yearly basis. So violence alone is not a good measure of it, but rather, the will of the Islamic people, when they are ultimately tested to marginalize their own radical side.

I believe that will happen. I don't believe it will happen without a lot of support, example, and work, and I don't believe it's going to happen in a decade or two. But I do believe over time it will happen. And I believe at that core of who I am that it is in our best national interest to do that because of the nature of the weaponry, the nature of the savagery that this violent Islamist movement can bring to bear in our population. And finally, if you read the words of Osama bin Laden – and they are well published now – and I take him a face value for everything he says – they believe that there is exact – there is – that they have a ruling and a responsibility to go forth under the fatwa as well as under the current jihad to kill as many as had been killed in their mind, and that is a very, very scary scenario.

MR. MCKINNON: Let's get back on the training a little bit for both of you. From the standpoint of the average guardsman who is spending a weekend a month and two weeks in the summer, about 39 days a year in training – is that enough training, or should that be increased, and if so, how much to really be confident by the time they finish your course? Both of you.

COL. BLAIN: Sir, I would say that without question there is a front-end cost that has got to be paid in terms of training. And the biggest resource that precludes that cost from being paid is time. For the guard and the reserves, as we watch them come out to execute the brigade-level operations. And all of them may have been at the Mob site for different periods of time that – absent the 39 days that they normally get. They are simply not prepared at the same level if the de-active component is to execute the collective competencies necessary to drive a brigade in taskforce level operations.

It's not for lack of trying and it's not for lack of desire, it is just simply the time required to pay that front-end cost up front. That is the primary resource that they are short of. That is what I would highlight. And you hit the nail on the head, and that is the front-end that has got to be done.

That is where you get your individual skills competencies, and your basic battle-skill competencies at the company level and below in order to then progress into the collective skills, which are even more critical in the counter-insurgency environment where we live in a bottom-up fed intelligence paradigm where the soldier is the sensor, and everything that comes in off the street has got to be analyzed in order to conduct focused kinetic operations, because we can't afford to conduct kinetic operations that are unfocused because then we would cause bigger problems for ourselves and our information operation.

In order to get to that level, in order for the taskforce to conduct those focused kinetics, as well as maintain the non-lethal engagement and keep that on track, those

lower skill sets that have got to be trained repetitively to maintain that drill competency, that is the front-end work that has got to be done, and that is what we see is lacking.

Now, like I said in my opening statement, we're beginning to see some of that in active component as well because of the reset and the rapidness with which we are trying to turn units around and get them back into the fray. And when you turn a unit over, you know, 60, 70 percent of its leadership and soldiers, then you have kind of got to – you have got to go back into that rebuild process.

MR. MCKINNON: If you were in charge of determining how much training the reservists or the guards got, what would you change, from 39 days to what? I mean, you're on the frontline here in a way for the final training, I mean, so since you're the expert on it.

COL. BLAIN: Sir, I would say from the standpoint of what it takes to get a rifle squad, taking your basic fighting element, the individuals of that rifle squad, and that rifle squad preparer, and working up through platoon competencies, you're probably looking at a – on the outside, maybe about a 90-day requirement.

MR. MCKINNON: Okay, now, the other side of that coin is, is how does a fellow keep his job if he spends 90 days out of the year training. It's a dilemma there obviously. General?

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Well, sir, it's inconceivable that a – if you would – the concept of a drilling battalion – say, when I was a battalion commander and they have two days a month and two weeks – it's inconceivable that that battalion can be lifted up today and taken into this conflict.

So the question then becomes what does – what amount of training is appropriate, and how do you do it. And it's not as simple as saying, call the battalion up a year ahead, although that would be a simple answer, and that would help to suffice it. In the Marine Corps, we are honored and privileged to have – most of our Marines have had extensive combat – extensive combat experience. They come off active duty, they go to school, they take a job, and then they form into a reserve battalion with a lot of combat experience.

During the peacetime environment before 9/11, there was the highest percentage of combat veterans in the military was inside the reserve. So that is not in and of itself a problem with a lot of experience there. The problem really comes with the officer staff, NCO leadership, who have not been doing this on a full-time basis, who are not current, can't be current with the ability to deal with, to understand all of the new TTPs, and the activities that, frankly, we struggle with just to stay current on a weekly basis on. So it's that level that I would have the greatest concern about. And I would ensure as a minimum that those levels that were brought up earlier.

I think that the colonel's 90 to 180 days as for the straight-leg infantry or combat service support troops is probably not a bad number, but I frankly would err on the side of longer tours of mobilization if we called up mobilization periods for the leadership – and to ensure that they have a series of things that they do – and I could speak to that later if you like. But they would include perhaps working on my staff at Mohave Viper, that would include being a part of the Marine expeditionary force staff to understand it, that would include being in country to understand the situation.

I would also go back to and raise some questions about command selection and ensure that those kinds of things are considered. But as a minimum, the officers and staff NCOs are essential to establishing the command climate when companies and battalions operate so desperately independent as they do for us in the al Anbar Province.

Lastly, I would just argue that eventually that battalion has got to come together. They have got to operate as a battalion. They are in our system accountable for having block one and block two training before they come to me, and when they come to me they get block three if they are a combat service support or a block four if they are a combat unit. They must have those to block one and block two training levels fulfilled or they will essentially get an evaluation, pre-evaluation from me that they are not there.

The way that the reserves today do that, for a combination of reasons, is exhibited in this last battalion that just finished today or yesterday, and that is that they took an entire reserve regiment to build one battalion. And so it's clear that the strains are on the system, but it is also clear that the reserves are doing the right thing by finding folks that can come together.

Additionally, I might comment that the Marine Corps Reserve is also augmenting with active-duty officers. So approximately half of the company commanders in the last battalion were active-duty component commanders.

MR. MCKINNON: Leadership is obviously a difficult situation in providing fellows that have the right skills to lead into these kind of situations, but let's go over to equipping a little bit. Everything we have discovered on this commission is that we've got severe problems on equipping. Earlier this year I was Fort Dix for a MOB center operation. They were complaining, a lack of Humvees, ring mounts, radios, night-vision goggles. I mean, what happens when you're training? Do you have the necessary equipment to really train these fellows so when they get in theater they are qualified on the equipment over there?

BRIG. GEN. STONE: This is a problem that is not strictly reserve; this is active component as well. And the reason for it is probably not clear and apparent unless you have lived it in the course of the last year. But essentially we went from – and I'm going to use one example – a soft-back Humvee to guys inside the country going I have got to weld steel against this thing. We then came up with the Marine armored kit and began to slap steel on the sides of these things, while the factory was creating the new up-armored Humvee with the ring mount and the things that you mentioned.

I think Congress mandated it, or at least it was interpreted I believe as a mandate that all of the 1114s, the up-armored vehicles as well as the up-armored 7-tons – or mass MTRV, et cetera. All of that equipment would go in country, appropriately so. And when that happened, those that were training either at their home station or at the training center – at least I can only speak for 29 Palms, we didn't have it either. And so Marines were getting to go and fall in on up-armored Humvees, for example, in country, that had not trained with them at 29 Palms.

Many months ago, I sat down with a commandant and explained this in very terse terms. The conversation probably didn't last longer than five minutes. He took the recommendation; he pulled the sheet of paper; he went back, and he ordered that day that the system would stop, and it did. The moment that he made a phone call, and I think the phone call happened within minutes, ships were unloaded, equipment was sent out, and today, when you walk around the expeditionary exercise, equipment where we check out everything through our battalions, you will find that we have virtually everything, perhaps sometimes more, than what it is that our troops will have in country.

Now, that does not mean that the home stations have it. The Marines at Camp Pendleton or Lejeune or elsewhere within the reserve establishment, they don't have that equipment there either. So it's just at my training evolution. But the system is working, the factories are producing this equipment, and it is beginning to flow.

One last comment: There is new equipment coming in all of the time. As you look at the new jamming – and I would rather not go into detail on this here, but the new jamming and devices that we are receiving are now flowing in in great numbers. We are learning to use them. The Navy is being superb in helping us provide electronics of warfare technicians to help that training. The JIEDDO – the other services have folks at 29 Palms assisting us. We are learning to work and use this equipment, put together the TPPs and allow Marines to actually exercise as they will do in country. That expertise doesn't exist anywhere but at 29 Palms either.

So I would be cautious about – and I would bifurcate this problem – it is absolutely true in my judgment that reserves need to look at having a table of equipment as oppose to a table of allocation where they just have what they need to do to get by on a drill weekend. That model, in my judgment, doesn't work anymore. They need to have equipment at some place at some time with some ability to maintain it, and that is a big task – trust me; I understand it – because you are not going to pack a rifle-company-worth of equipment into a drill center in San Bernardino.

But at the end of the day, you have to find ways to do that so that they have the same equipment. But today the bigger issue is that – unless in the Marines Corps case, we are still building that equipment for our MEFs before they go in country. So the only place they have it is at 29 Palms, and we wouldn't – and we wouldn't have it if we didn't have the superior leadership of a commandant and his staff who just looked at the problem, mandated it, and it got shift out.

MR. MCKINNON: Colonel?

COL. BLAIN: Yeah, I would just add that we have I think traveled the same road as 29 Palms in terms of equipment availability in order to get the latest stuff in the hands of the soldiers, training with it before they get on the ground. The general cited the example of the up-armored Humvee. We have gone through a process of attempting to get all of these stuff supported very well by the material command, General Griffin over there, who has helped us immensely to get our pre-position fleet up to speed. We still are not there completely in the numbers and the amount of stuff that we would need, but we are in much better than previous. In the case where we have had some shortfalls, we have actually made a lot of money in the development of surrogates.

The example I'll give you is the Buffalo system, which is a route clearance, up-armored route clearance vehicle that is used by route – to support route clearance operations in Iraq. It is a large vehicle set on a five-ton chassis and it has an articulatable arm that the soldier inside can manipulate and move out. And if we have a suspected or a known IED, it is another asset, along with the robots and everything else that we are incorporating to interrogate that suspected IED. And it offers protection to the soldiers that we did not have 18 months ago even.

Well, this is an asset that obviously we want to get in the hands of the soldiers to train within the national training center, as well as all of the other ECM systems that the general spoke about and everything else. Well, all of the Buffalo systems were going to theater. So what we did working with AMC was develop a surrogate because what the soldiers really need to train on is the use of the mechanism itself in interrogating the IEDs and to get those operators trained in the use of the available systems, in conjunction with the robots and everything else that you do in a comprehensive IED defeat arena.

Nothing is going to blow up against this surrogate at the NTC, so that the need for the armor was not that significant. So what we did is we created six surrogates – well, we have actually got four on the ground now and we have got two more coming out that is everything that a Buffalo is minus the up-armor. We have other – we are working surrogates on other like equipment as well, not just in the IED defeat arena, as well as in other areas to fill the gap for when we have equipment issues in order to get the latest technology in the hands of the soldier. That is just an example of what we have been doing.

And the first surrogate came on the ground, and soldiers have been using them now for about three months at the NTC.

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Commissioner McKinnon, I would like to offer one other comment. It is – I gave you an example of a Humvee. In and of itself, that is kind of something you would say, well, the Humvee probably won't change. But I would say that that is a very small piece of the overall formula. If you consider new technology and new equipment that is present in ISR or UAVs, in body armor, in robotics, in software, in

intel, in pattern recognition, in counter-IED tools, et cetera, all of that is changing, and sometimes by the time that it arrives and we field it, and we train three or four battalions in it, it is already outdated and being replaced.

It would be very difficult I think to think in terms of let's get the reserves an entire equipment set of something because frankly, on balance, much of it may be outdated by the time it was actually delivered. That does not mean we don't have to fix that problem and we shouldn't find a way to fix it, but I want to be clear that the technologies here are moving very, very quickly. And much of the equipment that we are putting in place today will not be used 12 months from now, in my judgment.

MR. KINCANNON: Yes, Colonel.

COL. BLAIN: The last point I wanted to make is the way we incorporated this into the guard and reserve training. We have a very close relationship with General Honoré in the First Army, and as you know, they are responsible for certifying the guard and reserve for the army forces. We have taken them under our wing, so to speak, using the JIEDDO and the JCOE that we do have that the general referred to, the Joint IED Defeat Organization. And all of the – they are an offshoot I guess of one of our, one of our surrogates in sharing information as well as equipment.

So, for example, up at Fort McCoy, we just ran a series of training events, and we shift Buffalo surrogates and some other stuff up there for the National Guard soldiers to utilize as well so that they would have the latest that we could get.

So working with the First Army in conjunction with – in all of these things that we're talking about, we're moving along on the parallel path with them, with First Army to make sure that we incorporate them to the best of our ability, that we can, from the National Training Center standpoint, in getting them the latest stuff as well. And it doesn't just have to be done at the National Training Center; if we can get it to them so that they can train in Shelby or McCoy or some place else, we take that on.

MR. MCKINNON: Well, our time is limited obviously, and so is yours, so I think we have probably ought to move on. We really appreciate you being here, John.

MR. PUNARO: Thanks, Dan. Thanks for your leadership in this area. The next questioner is Commissioner Larry Eckles.

LARRY ECKLES: Good morning. My question this morning deal with the post-mobilization training issues, if you will. We have recently heard from deactivated members that they often had to miss scheduled training in order to complete administrative requirements, those types of things that should have been addressed sooner in the mobilization process. Are these types of things – are you finding that they are detracting significantly from the training that you conduct at your training centers?

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Sir, I can only speak for the Marine Reserve units when they arrive, and we have had no such concern.

COL. BLAIN: I have not seen them. No, sir.

MR. ECKLES: Okay, thank you. What were the biggest problems that you experienced during post-mobilization training at your training sites?

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Sir, again, on the Marine Corps side, I would say that the – coming up on this stuff in terms of training is the biggest challenge. I mean, understanding that there is a challenge ahead, and what that is, being able to lock in even before they go to our Mojave Viper exercise means that those precious four or five, six weeks, of ILOC (ph) – is what the Marines call it – are absolutely critical. Or said, in our parlance, block-one and block-two training needs to be accomplished, and that is big single – biggest and single challenge.

I will say that they have issues around staffing, et cetera, but on balance, getting themselves trained to a block-two standard so we that we can pick them up and take them to three and four is probably my biggest concern.

COL. BLAIN: I concur with that same comment.

MR. ECKLES: Thank you. That is all I have, Mr. Chairman.

MR. PUNARO: Thank you.

Commissioner Patty Lewis.

PATTY LEWIS: Thank you both for being here this morning and for enriching our perspective of the challenges faced by our troops. I think you have done a very articulate job of doing that, and I appreciate it.

We have talked a lot about training and equipment. I would like to just touch on family readiness. And we have heard in some focus groups that our staff has conducted, that many family issues remain unresolved at the point of mobilization. What opportunity do your commands offer to assist reservists with family readiness problems?

BRIG. GEN. STONE: I will say that on balance this issue of being a reserve and suddenly jumping from civilian to soldier is perhaps one of the really culturally difficult things for families to do. As a commander of reserve units and now watching them, it is never easy for somebody who doesn't know what an ID card means or how to get to a PX or a commissary, or how to jump onto TRICARE. That being said, our service has a very aggressive peacetime, wartime team at the home center that brings them onboard with a key volunteers network that my key volunteer network also assists with.

Remember that many units that demobilize will get mobilized for other than Iraq, so they may come to something else, but on balance, when they come through me, they have my full active-duty key volunteer network to draw on, and they do draw on it.

I will say that my concern in this regard has more to do with individual augmentees; that is the individual Marine who gets a notification, who now says I am going to go some place by myself, and by the way, it might not be a Marine unit; it might be a joint force unit. They show up at a joint command, and for goodness sakes, their spouse, the dependents are still not being processed, et cetera. So these are the challenges. There are ways in which the Marine Corps addresses them and works at them very hard, but it seems to me that is where the bigger problem is as opposed to the units who have pretty formal now and reasonably experienced manners to handle them.

COL. BLAIN: From the standpoint of units that are coming to the National Training Center to train, we don't touch the family readiness issue. We don't see that. However, I can speak to Reserve and National Guard units who have come into the training center to backfill units that we have **deployed**. We are a dual-mission post, so the 11th ACR – which **deployed** into Iraq for a year, which is the backbone of the opposing force out at the NTC for when the units come out to train as well as a support brigade, which has four companies, all four of which have **deployed** twice now over the last years. In order to backfill those, in order to keep the training ongoing, we have brought Reserve and National Guard forces in. The 122-1, which is a Nevada National Guard armored battalion came in and backfilled the 11th ACR for a year, and we have had the 540th Maintenance Battalion and some others who have come in and backfilled.

I will just tell you, when they come in from the standpoint of family readiness and family support, we bring them in, and they are integrated into the family readiness operations that are fully up and running by the active-duty forces on Fort Irwin. In the case that a soldier or somebody who backfills in these units that come into backfill, that I have spoke of, they will receive full-up integration training for their families as well as that chain of support that exists across the NTC to address their issues, and that is how we have dealt with that.

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Commissioners, if I might offer one other comment in this regard, it is striking to me that the active component has in many ways this same issue, and that seems counter-intuitive when you think that Marines would always be living on a base, they would have access to something. But in reality, what really happens in a lion's share of our Marines, is that they will be in a base, Camp Pendleton; they will be transferred to or **deployed** from 29 Palms, and their family, particularly if they have a pregnant spouse or a dependent, will go home to some other place in the United States. And a disproportionately large number do that.

And so those active-component dependents, while they may be familiar with the system, perhaps more so than a reservist, also have the same interesting dilemma of having to get on TRICARE, finding a doctor, working from some kind of location that is very different than they are at. And it's not infrequent that our reserve structure

throughout the United States helps with and assists active-component dependents who are now living in their areas. So it is not strictly a reserve problem.

MS. LEWIS: That is an important point to note, and I appreciate you mentioning that. And I know that while the Congress has done a lot to expand benefits for families, especially healthcare benefits, that benefit is different in the pre-mobilization status when you are on active duty and post-mobilization. And I know it's quite confusing for families. So we are looking for every opportunity we can to try to eliminate some of that confusion and provide the support not only for the service members but their families.

I want to thank you both for being here today. I know, General Stone, you had a complex schedule and you really disrupted it to get you here, but thank you both

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Thank you.

MR. PUNARO: Thank you, Patty.

Commissioner Wade Rowley, who is co-chair of our Homeland Defense and Homeland Security Subcommittee – and again, thank you, Wade, for everything you have done to make our stay here so productive, and a real expert on this whole border security area. When we visited the border last night, he knew as much as, if not more, than the experts that were there. And he helped them answer a few of the questions we had for them. So, Commissioner Rowley.

WADE ROWLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yeah, it's hard to let go of that. (Chuckles.)

Thank you for your time this morning. I really appreciate the sacrifice you have made to come here and talk before us today. Pretty much the questions I have are along the family – or the TRICARE enrollment issues you have just answered with Commissioner Lewis. But, quickly, a lot of guard and reserve members live a considerable distance from where they are reporting to their units and where they train up to **deploy**. And we have members that are as far away as North and South Dakota, and some pretty remote areas. And there really isn't readily available access to major military bases for their dependents for DEERS enrolment, TRICARE, and a lot of doctors don't take TRICARE. Do your installations see that as impacting the training on your initial **deployment**, having to deal with that stuff?

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Mr. Commissioner, we do not.

COL. BLAIN: No, not at all.

MR. ROWLEY: Okay, that pretty much answered my question. There will be nothing further, Mr. Chairman.

MR. PUNARO: Okay, Commissioner Jimmy Sherrard.

JAMES E. SHERRARD III: We had a focus group on Monday with several Marine and Army, National Guard and reserve members who had in fact **deployed** – (off mike) – third **deployment**. And they raised a lot of questions that – you have answered most of the issues that I had just taken notes from – (off mike) – regarding training. But one of the big ones that I would want to ask is from your process or lessons learned – (off mike) – whatever title you want to put on it, is there a formalized process whereby when the Marines and soldiers return home, that you actually get a critique from them as to what they saw that maybe they didn't see in your particular course of training, and it adds to or is incorporated in with your other things that you are seeing from your instructors as you talk about them going into theater and then bringing back the lessons of CENTCOM as saying this is the procedures that are necessary for us to do our job today?

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Sir, it is the responsibility of our Lessons Learned organization at Quantico to do that. All returning units and their individual members are grappled from the moment they hit the grinder and asked those questions. Those are fed back. I will say that on balance, most of these comments that we received, we have already changed; they have already commented on it or we have heard about it, or it has been a concern to us.

And let me give you – and I would offer as an example, we had a reserve battalion go through who had some difficulty in practicing the new liquid explosives in breaching, and they were used in the facilities that we had and they were able to do much of the mechanical and physical breaching, but they didn't feel, when they got in country, that they had had the right level of experience in using these liquid explosives. We had already understood that problem while they were here, and today, through the generous funding of our nation, we are building a portion of our range 200 where those explosives are actually being employed.

So I frequently find that, A, we do collect all of the information and we do get it. I cannot underline enough how strong our lessons learned and how current our lessons learned, and how every single day everybody on my staff who is in the business of training reads every single lessons learned. Monte Dunard just came back from Iraq two days ago. He has just arrived in Washington, D.C., and last – or this morning at 0100 I was reading comments from him after he hit the ground, and those are already inculcated into our training package.

So I feel very good about this. That doesn't mean that we couldn't do more, and I think we should explore every potential opportunity to garner more information, but I feel pretty good about what we do now.

COL. BLAIN: I will just say, sir, that – as we have said previously – staying current is job one in order to win this thing. We have several mechanisms in place, several of which I have spoken to. This is another mechanism that you bring up that we do have in place. I will just say from my own personal experience, I have trained – as the senior infantry taskforce trainer at the National Training Center before I assumed the role

of chief of staff, I trained 17 battalion commanders of battalions, six of which were National Guard battalions.

I would say – my numbers may not be exact, but over half of those, I maintained communications with that battalion commander throughout his entire tour of duty in Iraq. Additionally, when we do our quarterly trips into theater with the observer controller teams, we touch base with the units we have trained, which is another mechanism, and then we bring back. An example of that, real quickly, is the weapons intelligence teams, which we have not trained as well to the degree of fidelity that we ought to in order to do the post-forensics analysis to get it back into the cycle, the whole comprehensive IED defeat thing. These weapons intelligence teams are operating in theater, and some of the feedback we got from these units was to get these guys on board, and as a consequence, we have taken that feedback and actually have three National Guard soldiers, as a matter of fact, that just returned from Iraq that are a WIT team, who wanted to extend their time. And so they are going to come out full time in the National Training Center and serve as a WIT team out there for us to integrate into the scenario.

So that is an example of exactly what you're talking about how we maintain contact, get the feedback and then roll it back into what we're – as we try to purify our performance, sir.

MR. SHERRARD: Well, I – (audio break). The breaching issue was one of the issues raised by one of the young Marines and I'm glad to hear that that's been incorporated.

One of the other key concerns, I guess, that we all are facing, and I need to ask you because you see it first-hand – as we go through with the current policies that we have of second and potentially third or more tours, is the issue that it requires cross-leveling among organizations in order to get, as was mentioned a few minutes ago, I believe, General Stone, the issue of a regiment in order to get a battalion-sized organization. Do you see that as being a critical issue in terms of the quality and the capabilities of the organization that, in fact, will be going into theatre to do the needs of this nation?

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Sir, I think first of all it's important to understand the responsibility for Title X staffing, et cetera, as Marine forces reserve. I am a trainer and so they deliver those battalions to me; in the case of the Army, they deliver brigades. How they get those Marines assimilated and brought together, how they staff those units is their responsibility. I can only tell you that they're not going to leave and go and be assigned if they are not deemed to be ready by the force commander. That is not going to happen if we don't assess them in a manner that is tough and as we keep the same standard. So we're not going to let it happen, at least in terms of our putting units in country.

As I already mentioned, in this last battalion they did indeed have apparently some challenges that they had to bring three battalions together – I'm sorry, three

battalions to form one. That may be evidence of a lot of things that, you know, are putting some pressure on the reserves. I know that the officer leadership has always historically been a challenge because of the nature of many active duty guys coming off and going in.

So I think that personnel issues are going to be a challenge, but I don't want to speak to it because it's not my domain and I can only say with great assurance that they will not go in country if they are not ready.

COL. BLAIN: And I echo that as far as making sure they're ready. From the standpoint of the training side, quite frankly, we have not seen that as an issue in the guard battalions that have come through.

MR. SHERRARD: One last question. If given a clean sheet of paper, are there limitations that you face in your training environment that you feel you need in order to have the troops better prepared to go into theatre?

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Well, sir, those who know me and have served with me in the better part of this last year would say that I was being somewhat duplicitous if I didn't tell you my top concern. So I will put it out here knowing full well that half the State Department, the INS and a bunch of other people would come down my throat. But the reality is I would like to bring my Marine battalions into an entirely Iraqi city. I would like not to just hundreds of Iraqi Americans, but I would want 1,000 Iraqis at 29 Palms to immerse – totally immerse in all of the challenges and dilemma that is possible for our Marines to train. I would prefer to do that with Afghanis as well. I know full well and have been discussed with multiple times that that is a difficult request, but I use it as a manner to tell you that the more that we can bring realism, the more that we can place our Marines in precisely the environment in which they are going to have to serve our nation, the better trained our Marines will be, and I can see no better way than to bring real Iraqis to them and train in that environment.

Now, I say that knowing that there's lots of challenges with that, et cetera, but all that being said, that would be the one thing we could do. I am not concerned about our equipment, the staff, the training. I'm not worried at this point about our funding, or I'm not concerned about the commitment and dedication that we have by our joint forces, the joint IED efforts. I can't tell you the amount of work that comes about in terms of DARPA and others and how fast they turn around solutions for us. I can't tell you how supportive my fellow services are across the board in the nation is and the people writ large are in terms of supporting this training activity. So we do not suffer for any of that except for some of the things that might be in that, you know, interesting block that I just mentioned.

The last comment that I might make is something that I would hearken back to something that Commissioner Punaro mentioned, and that is that it seems to me that war-fighting is one component of this solution, and so for me, having active involvement by the Department of Agriculture and Education and Health, by USAID et al, all of the

interagencies in our training would be helpful, but it would be no more helpful than having an in country alongside of our NMFI forces today, which is something that I would really hope for.

COL. BLAIN: I'll take his last point and make it my first point. Interagency interaction is one area that we are a bit behind in. We are working several initiatives to try to get that ingrained out into the training.

Our urban settings are inadequate and I – you know, we need larger towns. We need brigade-sized problem sets in terms of the urban terrain. And I say that also seeing that DARPA had just given us \$10 million to research and construct an authentic Iraqi-type village, which – so what we've done is we've gone and went into the engineering research and development community and took a cross-level of about 20 to 30 Iraq complexes actually out of Iraq, where we have captured or destroyed bomb-making and IED-making facilities, and we've taken a cross-section of commonalities of all of those in terms of construction material, traffic patterns, all of the things that you would see there and we're going to build that into one of our current towns. So we're making progress on this and that will actually be a huge advance in terms of realism when it comes to our urban settings, but I think we're still a little bit inadequate on that and we're working towards getting that fixed. The soldiers need a bigger problem set in terms of urban terrain.

MR. SHERRARD: Thank you so much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. PUNARO: Commissioner Don Stockton.

DONALD L. STOCKTON: Good morning. One of the tasks that Congress has given to this commission is to assess the adequacy of funding provided for the National Guard and the other reserve components. Now, I have heard, General, you say – you talked on the one hand earlier about the part of defense budget overall to this economy. I also heard you just say that that wasn't one of your major concerns – just momentarily ago you said that – but I'm wondering if Congress feels the need almost every year to add on to the budget request by the Department of Defense because they feel that some things have been left out that needed to be considered. And so I guess I'd like to ask both of you, with that backdrop, what deficiencies have you observed in reserve components units that are the result of inadequate funding?

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Sir, let me clarify one point. As it relates to Marine training, with the very generous TAD dollars and supplementals, I feel as though we are being appropriately funded for the mission at hand. As it relates to the greater set of issues that may have to be fought at the national policy in the national security level, which may entail other forms of national will and national power, I think that percentage may need to be increased, but that is outside of my domain.

I try to think all the time about what it is we could do differently and would that cost us more. I want to say upfront that right now I feel as though we are appropriately funded. That does not mean that there might not be manners in which we could do things for the reserve. The reserves might need more TAD money to travel or may need to – if the law would allow, or the personnel policies will allow to have them mobilized earlier – maybe that’s an additional expense, but if it’s in the upfront preparation side before it gets to me, I’d spend every dollar and ask for every dollar I could get, so that they are genuinely block one, block two trained, that their leaders are up to snuff, absolutely current when they show up at our doorstep for Mojave Viper. That in the broader sense is where I would invest the money.

Colonel?

COL. BLAIN: Yes, sir. On my end in what we see by the time that they arrive at us, I could not correlate any deficiency specifically to funding, other than to go back to what I said earlier, and how funding fits into that I cannot say. And that is the front end piece, the front end cost in order to ramp them up to a greater competency level, proficiency level before they arrive at this high-end collective event. And where the funding would land, that I cannot say.

MR. STOCKTON: Thank you.

MR. PUNARO: Commissioner Gordon Stump.

E. GORDON STUMP: Good morning. We talked a little bit about the cross-leveling and obviously there’s a lot of cross-leveling in the guard and the reserves because we don’t have a TTHS account and we’re only funded for 85 percent money to begin with. But we also heard at Fort Hood that putting the aviation brigade together, that many of the National Guard soldiers showed up with no equipment that had to be given to them once they arrived on station. And in a combat area I’m sure that some of these soldiers show up for their post-mobilization training having never trained on the type of equipment that is going to be used in combat and to use out here at NTC to get those soldiers ready for that.

Are there instances where this happens, and do you allow for extra training to accomplish this when the soldiers had not trained on that equipment, and is there a difference in the program when you have units like this that come in?

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Sir, I will answer for the Marine Corps on this matter. Marines that show up – the reserve battalions that show up at Mojave Viper have the equipment they need personally – their personal equipment to conduct training. It is rare that they do not. As I mentioned earlier, like their active duty counterparts, when they experience a new up-model Humvee in level 14, it may be for the first time, but that was for the aforementioned reasons.

So in principle, the concept that you mentioned is not a concern for the Marine Corps reserve, as I have witnessed.

COL. BLAIN: Yeah, nor is it an issue for the Army, the reserve or guard, that we have seen. They show up with everything they're supposed to. As a matter of fact, they will tell you that the guard units that we trained in late '04 and throughout '05 were fielded the – all the newest REF (ph) equipment and everything off the shelf. They came out with the new ACUs, the latest and greatest IBA – you know, the body armor. They were – they were in good shape when it came to that stuff.

MR. STUMP: Thank you. That's all.

MR. PUNARO: Okay. Commissioner Stan Thompson.

J. STANTON THOMPSON: Colonel Blain, glad to have you here, particularly – I'm an old navy guy, so hearing the word "fleet" out of your mouth means you must be joint. (Chuckles.) No, I'm just teasing you.

It's our understanding that at least as the National Guard got drawn into this conflict, that the – there was about a six-month period, four- to six-month period that a guardsman went through at a mobilization site in order to ramp-up to a level before they came to you. Am I correct with that? Is that –

COL. BLAIN: I think that is basically correct. Yes, sir.

MR. THOMPSON: Okay. That appears to us to be an investment strategy in readiness of the Army with a regard to a level of preparedness that they wanted the National Guard to be in. There has been some testimony in front of us that indicates that that ramp-up period has to be reduced in order for the time away from home to be shortened, their **deployment** – the National Guard or Army reserve **deployment** to be shortened.

Are you seeing any initiatives within Army in training in general that is going to shorten this period of four to six months before they actually get into the level of training that you provide?

COL. BLAIN: No, I have not heard nor have I seen anything that would indicate that to be the case. No.

MR. THOMPSON: And then, General, you mentioned earlier in your remarks that there really isn't any difference between the reserve component and active component training at your station, and I can believe that. However, I'm getting a hint from you – and I'd like you to expand upon this a little bit. A Marine goes through your training cycle, **deploys** and goes back to St. Louis, Missouri and is there for a period of a year or two before **redeploying** – I'm assuming, and you might help me correct that – and that's when they get the block 1 and block 2 training. Am I understanding that correctly?

And then – so compare block 1 and block 2 active component to block 1 and block 2 reserve component, and is there a difference there?

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Well, sir, let me first say that the expectations for block 1 and block 2, which I could lay out here for you if you had an interest, are precisely the same. The expectation is that block 1 and block 3, those things that we expect to have trained, are the same on active and on reserve. There is no difference.

Interestingly enough, and due in large part to the **deployment** cycle, both reserves and active duty have a very similar challenge in the delivering block 1 and block 2 training. On the reserve side, it's because when they come back and they stand down their unit, many choose to go to a different form of reserve capacity. Many choose that they would like to jump back in and go again, and you probably saw some of that in this most recent battalion when they crossed deck to come across.

So there's no clear answer to what it is, but the battalion gets reformed and is mandated to sort of be building up over the course the next couple of years, which is what their requirement is, and they will then go back into staffing and building up. They're going to a normal training cycle and they will bring themselves up to a block 1 and block 2 training level before it is that they are **deployed** – excuse me – mobilized to then come over to Mojave Viper and **deploy**.

On the active duty side, it's a similar problem in that they **deploy** and come back. They have seven months before that unit may be up on the stump to go again. They will do precisely the same kind of a thing only, of course, they won't get out of active service, but they will come back, stand down, be reassigned; new Marines will come in, new leadership will come in, the leadership that's there now will go on to a career school or something else. So they are then standing up their battalion. They then have to get, in that short period of time, block 1 and block 2 training and then get up on the level necessary to be block-2 qualified when they come to me.

So the problem is in a sense the same. It's just different timeframes and different sort of dynamics.

MR. THOMPSON: If I understood it – kind of piling on what Commissioner McKinnon said – you don't believe that 39 days is – a year is the correct matrix for accomplishing block 1 and block 2.

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Sir, it would be difficult for me to believe – and this comes from being a battalion commander and having **deployed** in Gulf I as a battalion commander, and I think having had a very aggressive couple of years of build up in the same battalion, that strictly expecting a week and a month and two weeks in the year to be fully block 1- and block 2-qualified before coming to – before even getting mobilized, it would – if you simply take the arithmetic, there is not enough days to train in that period of time.

Now, that being said, it is the rare battalion that would ever consider even trying to do that. Most do get called up. They have months of active duty. They lock themselves down at some training center before they come in to see me. Sometimes they indeed lock themselves down at 29 Palms for months before they then enter the program.

So the reserves make every accommodation to try to ensure that they get that level of training, but strictly at face value. To think that you could take a drilling battalion who was putting on a weekend and their two weeks and then say, turn this switch now; show up at Mojave Viper, that does not – in today's day and age does not seem adequate.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you very much.

That's all I have, Mr. Chairman.

MR. PUNARO: Okay. We're going to close this panel out with one last question from me to General Stone. And, General Stone, I'm going to ask you to give us your professional military judgment on this question. You know right off the bat that I'm getting ready to put you on the spot when I tell you that as a congressional commission you're authorized to provide your professional military judgment even if that might differ from certain officials. And so you've spoken very eloquently about the need for realistic training. You'd like to make it even more realistic. You've talked about the incredibly complex environment that the Marines are going to face when they get into Iraq and the fact that you want to train them to be able to make these split-second decisions and deal with a variety of situations they have to deal with and, you know, where there are no clear answers.

And so my question to you is, when we're training them at 29 Palms and when you're trying to describe the culture – and you talked very eloquently about the need to understand that, where the Shia's are coming from, where the Sunnis are coming from, where the Kurds are coming from, and all the other issues – what do we tell our Marines that are going over to Al Anbar Province, which all accounts is as insecure today as it was, you know, two or three years ago, and the Marines are buttoned up as is the Army? Do we say, Marines, you need to understand you're going over to a country that's in the middle of a civil war and you need to understand how to operate in that environment? Or what are we telling our Marines about the nature of the threat they're going to face when they get over there on the ground, because if you don't conduct realistic training, they don't really understand what they're getting into. Are we training them with politically correct labels or are we giving them the honest – the truth about what's going on?

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Well, sir, you know – and I know your background and your distinction in combat. You'll know that every Marine understands very well the situation because they're next to the Marines. We do not even use political jargon at our training; we use the very specific mettle that they're to train to, the mission-central tasks. We place – and they receive – battalion commanders, they receive VTCs with their leadership that they're going to be replacing in country. They actually go in country and they see the area of operation where they will operate, and then the NMFJ leadership,

whether it be General Zomer or General Miller today – soon it will be General Gaskin (sp) and his staff – they speak specifically to the battalion about specifically what is going on in their area of operation. I think they leave here fully understanding precisely what the condition is.

The question on the table is to whether or not sectarian violence is at a level that might approach, you know, what we would define as a civil war – which I would argue from an Islamic standpoint may not be the same definition – is almost irrelevant to the Marines because they know that they have to practice the cultural techniques, they have to restrain their kinetic capability that they have, they have to work with and work through the Iraqis, and frankly, they cannot, and we as a nation cannot want this more than the Iraqis do.

And so the end of the day, Marines leave here understanding full well that is a very dangerous environment, but that it is an environment wherein there's great hope. And what my personal tours in country – and I'll be going back in a few – in a couple of months with the leadership again – what I have seen and what I talked – what I understand from those that are there today is that there are real pockets of improvement and there are real pockets of really nasty environments that haven't gotten a whole lot better in a long time.

So whether or not that condition is acceptable from a political standpoint, whether or not that meets the objectives of the initial – as set forth by the combatant commander is irrelevant to the individual Marine on the ground who cares about the Marine next to him, who understands his mission when he goes into his convoy, who needs to understand whether or not his jammer is on and his troops are in and he's got his throat protection, his glasses and so on, whether or not he is able to deal with the split-second decisions and to cope with all of those things that he would – he will have to engage in a matter of days.

So for them, this is less an issue that you see debated in our public news and it's more an issue of doing precisely what they are told to do and to act like and conduct themselves as Marines in combat. That is what I train them to do. When asked the question, nobody ever ducks it but it's just not a topic that we bring up. It is perhaps a topic that gets brought up by the NMFJ West commanders when they hit the country, but my own experience is that's not the case.

MR. PUNARO: All right. So what you're saying is you're training the Marines to the realistic threats they're going to face. It's not through any kind of rosy scenario. Is that correct?

BRIG. GEN. STONE: Oh, absolutely, sir. I would –

MR. PUNARO: Okay. That's all I need.

Colonel Blain, that would be the same for the NTC?

COL. BLAIN: Absolutely.

MR. PUNARO: Right, okay. I thought that would be the case.

Again, I want to thank both of you for your tremendous service to the nation in uniform. You're performing critical responsibilities. There's nothing more important to the success of outcome in any kind of battle than being properly trained, and both of these institutions, 29 Palms and NTC, have a long legacy of outstanding training, and we look forward to staying in close touch with you. If you think of anything that you would have liked to have told the commission, please feel free to get in touch with you and we'll stay in touch with you also. Again, thank you very much.

We'll take a short – less than five-minute recess so we can reset the witness table for our second panel, and we'll get cracking right along.

(End of panel.)