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Subcommittee on Defense

STATEMENT OF

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ASSISTANT COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

BEFORE THE

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE  
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## **Introduction**

Chairman Murtha, Congressman Young, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of your Marine Corps, I want to thank you for your generous support and for the opportunity to speak to you today about the readiness of the United States Marines. Recently, the Secretary of Defense outlined a strategy to return the Department to a balanced force capable of prevailing in current conflicts while preparing for other contingencies.<sup>1</sup> Consistent with Secretary Gates' strategy, my statement will address our efforts to achieve that balance, the readiness challenges facing Marines today, and the critical steps needed to reset and reconstitute our Corps for today's complex challenges and tomorrow's uncertain security environment.

Despite high operational tempo, your Marines are resilient, motivated, and performing superbly in missions around the globe. They are fully engaged and winning in combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan as part of a generational struggle against global extremism. This sustained effort and performance does not come without costs – to the institution, to our equipment, to our strategic programs, and most importantly to our Marines and their families. Continued Congressional investment in our Marines and families, resetting and modernizing our equipment, and training Marine Air Ground Task Forces for the future security environment are critical to the Marine Corps' success as the "Nation's Force-in-Readiness."

## **Readiness Assessment**

The Marine Corps is meeting all OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) and OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) requirements. In the course of the last seven years, your Marine Corps has been battle-tested, combat hardened, and has accumulated tremendous experience in irregular warfare and counter-insurgency operations. Forward deployed units are manned, trained, and equipped to accomplish their assigned missions, and 99% of deployed Marine Corps units report the highest levels of readiness for those missions. However, resources are limited and non-deployed units incur the costs of ensuring deployed and next-to-deploy units have sufficient personnel, equipment, and training. As a result, 60% of our non-deployed forces are reporting degraded readiness levels. This degraded state of readiness

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<sup>1</sup> Gates, Robert M. "A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age." *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 88, No. 1, January / February 2009.

within our non-deployed forces presents risk in our ability to rapidly respond to other unexpected contingencies.

Because our equipment, personnel, and training priorities are focused on counter-insurgency operations, we have experienced degradation in some of our traditional, full spectrum, core competencies such as integrated combined arms operations, and large-scale amphibious operations. These skills are critical to maintaining the Marine Corps' primacy in forcible entry operations that enable follow-on joint forces. The OIF/OEF demand for units has also limited our ability to fully meet Combatant Commander requests for theater engagement activities. The current security environment has clearly justified the tradeoffs we've made to support the Long War, but the uncertainty of the future makes it prudent to regain our capabilities to operate across the full range of military operations – to be that “balanced force” that Secretary Gates speaks of.

In addressing the challenges facing the Marine Corps, I have structured my statement along the lines of our key readiness concerns – personnel and military construction, equipment, training, amphibious shipbuilding, and caring for our warriors and their families. I will discuss the positive steps and proactive initiatives we are undertaking, with your support, to reset, modernize, and reconstitute the Marine Corps for an uncertain future. Finally, I will conclude with some of our ongoing initiatives and programs that address the care and welfare of our Marines and their families.

### **Stress on the Force: Personnel Challenges and Operations Tempo**

The pace of operations for your Marines remains high, with over 31,000 Marines forward-deployed across the globe. In the U.S. Central Command area of operations, there are 26,000 Marines deployed in support of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM and OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM. Despite the recently concluded Status of Forces Agreement with Iraq and the plans for a drawdown of forces there, the demand and associated operational tempo for Marines will remain high as we transition requested forces to Afghanistan. Meeting this global demand has resulted in short deployment-to-dwell ratios for many units, with some deployed for as many months as they spend at home. Some of our low density/high demand units such as Intelligence, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, and certain aviation units, remain at or below a 1:1 dwell, with only moderate relief in sight for the near future. Insufficient dwell negatively

impacts our total force readiness – because it leaves inadequate time to conduct full spectrum training and reconnect with families.

Another readiness detractor has been the need to task combat arms units, such as artillery, air defense, and mechanized maneuver to perform “in-lieu-of” (ILO) missions such as security, civil affairs and military policing. Shortages of those skill sets created the need for ILO missions to meet the requirements for counter-insurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although these mission assignments are necessary, they have degraded our readiness because these combat units’ are unable to train to and maintain proficiency in their primary skill sets.

In addition to unit rotations, and ILO missions, the Marine Corps is tasked to fill a variety of assignments for forward-deployed staffs, training teams, and joint/coalition assignments that exceed our normal manning structures. The manning requirements for these Individual Augments (IAs), Training Teams (TTs) and Joint Manning Documents (JMDs) seek seasoned officers and staff non-commissioned officers because of their leadership, experience, and training. We understand that these augmentees and staff personnel are critical to success in Iraq and Afghanistan, but their extended absence has degraded home station readiness, full spectrum training, and unit cohesion.

**Personnel Initiatives.** In order to better meet the needs of a nation at war, the Corps has been authorized to grow to an active duty end strength of 202,000 (202K) Marines. This increase in manpower will ultimately result in a Marine Corps with three balanced Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEFs) and will help mitigate many of the operational tempo challenges described in the previous section. A balanced Marine Corps will provide combatant commanders with fully manned, trained, and equipped Marine Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs) that are multi-capable, responsive, and expeditionary. Additionally, the end strength growth will increase our capacity to deploy forces in response to contingencies and to participate in exercises and operations with our international partners in support of the Nation’s broader security objectives. It will also allow more time at home for our Marines to be with their families, to recover from long deployments, regain proficiency in core skills, and prepare for their next mission.

The 202K growth plan is progressing well. The Marine Corps grew by over 12,000 Marines in Fiscal Year 2008 and is on pace to reach an active duty end strength of 202K by the end of Fiscal Year 2009 – two years ahead of schedule. Thanks to the continued support of Congress, we have increased our infantry, reconnaissance, intelligence, combat engineer,

unmanned aerial vehicle, military police, civil affairs, and explosives ordnance disposal communities. Several of these units have already deployed to Iraq, mitigating the need for additional ILO missions. We have realized improvements in dwell time for a number of stressed communities. Although the plan is progressing well, the growth in end strength will not result in an immediate improvement in reported readiness because it takes time to train and mature our newly recruited Marines and units.

In addition to our end strength increase, the Marine Corps is examining other options to keep Marines in the fight. For example, we are hiring over 1,700 civilian police officers and security support personnel to meet home station policing and security requirements at our bases and stations. After our first year of implementing this program, we are successfully blending traditional military police with federal civilian police officers at the majority of our installations. This initiative enables us to free active duty military police for deployments in support of the MAGTF, reducing the need for ILO assignments.

### **Military Construction.**

As the Marine Corps grows to 202K, military construction is critical to supporting and sustaining the new force structure and maintaining the individual readiness and quality of life for our Marines. Thanks to your support, we recently expanded our construction efforts and established a program that will provide adequate bachelor housing for our entire force by 2014. In Fiscal Year 2009 alone, Congress funded over 12,000 barracks spaces for our Marines. Congressional support is still required to provide additional new barracks spaces to meet our 2014 goal. Concurrent with our new construction efforts is our commitment for the repair and maintenance of existing barracks to improve morale and quality of life.

### **Equipment Readiness**

Ensuring that our Marines are equipped with the most modern and reliable combat gear is a necessity. However, the requirement to fully resource deployed forces, often in excess of our tables of equipment, has reduced the availability of materiel essential to outfit and train our non-deployed units. Approximately 27% of all Marine Corps ground equipment and 40% of our active duty aviation squadrons are deployed overseas. Most of this equipment is not rotating out

of theater at the conclusion of each force rotation; it remains in combat, to be used by the relieving unit.

**Ground Equipment Readiness.** After seven years of sustained combat operations, our deployed equipment has been subject to more than a lifetime's worth of wear and tear, harsh environmental conditions, and increased operating hours and mileage. Additionally, the weight associated with armor plating further increases the wear on our deployed vehicle fleet and accelerates the need for repair and replacement of these assets. Despite these challenges and higher utilization on already aging equipment, our young Marines are keeping this equipment mission-ready every single day. The high equipment maintenance readiness rates throughout the Marine Corps are a testament to their dedication and hard work.

The policy to retain equipment in theater as forces rotate in and out was accompanied by increased in-theater maintenance presence; this infusion of maintenance support has paid great dividends, with deployed ground equipment maintenance readiness above 90%. However, the Marine Corps is experiencing challenges with the supply availability of a number of critical equipment items. Equipment supply availability varies depending on whether units are forward deployed or in dwell at home station. Supply readiness rates have decreased for home station units, while we work to meet the demand of deployed forces, and those next-to-deploy. Shortages of critical equipment limit home station unit's ability to prepare and train to their full core competencies and present additional risk in availability of equipment necessary to respond swiftly to unexpected contingencies.

Ground equipment age continues to be a top readiness challenge as well. As equipment ages, more time, money, and effort are expended repairing it. Ultimately, the answer to achieving sustained improvements in ground-equipment readiness is to improve logistics processes and to modernize with highly reliable and maintainable equipment. The Corps is achieving efficiencies by improving supply-chain processes, adopting best practices, and by leveraging proven technological advances to facilitate responsive and reliable support to the Operating Forces.

**Aviation Equipment.** Our aviation capability is a critical part of the MAGTF. Just like our ground forces, deployed Marine aviation units receive the priority for aircraft, repair parts, and mission essential subsystems such as forward looking infrared (FLIR) pods. Non-deployed forces, on the other hand, face significant challenges for available airframes and supply parts. Exacerbating the readiness challenges in our aviation fleet, most Marine aviation platforms are

“legacy” platforms which are no longer in production, placing an even greater strain on our logistics chain and maintenance systems.

Our Marine Corps aviation platforms are supporting ground forces in some of the world’s harshest environments: the deserts of Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa. Our aircraft are flying at utilization rates far beyond those for which they were designed. We are nearly tripling the utilization rates of our workhorses - the F/A-18C and D; the KC-130 cargo and aerial refueling platform; our EA-6B electronic warfare aircraft; and even the new MV-22 Osprey. Increased utilization causes aircraft to structurally age faster than programmed. As our legacy aircraft are lost or damaged in combat, the Marine Corps is faced with a shortage of available aircraft for training and future employment. To maintain sufficient numbers of aircraft in deployed squadrons, non-deployed squadrons have taken cuts in aircraft and parts. With our current force structure, our aircraft requirement, termed Primary Aircraft Authorization (PAA) is short 248 aircraft across all Type/Model/Series. These shortfalls include all modifications, intermediate maintenance events, depot maintenance, transition/procurement aircraft, and aircraft damaged beyond repair.

Maintaining the readiness of aviation assets while training aircrew is an enormous effort and an ongoing readiness challenge. Our aviation Fleet Readiness Centers have been able to mitigate degradation of our aircraft materiel readiness through modifications, proactive inspections, and additional maintenance actions. These efforts successfully bolstered aircraft reliability, sustainability, and survivability. Nevertheless, additional requirements for depot-level maintenance on airframes, engines, weapons, and support equipment will continue well beyond the conclusion of hostilities. Aircraft undergoing depot-level repairs are not available for training or combat. We are simply running short of aircraft on our flight lines due to age, attrition, and wartime losses.

**Pre-positioning Equipment and Stores.** Marine Corps Prepositioning Programs are comprised of the Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF), with three Maritime Prepositioning Ships Squadrons (MPSRONs), and the Marine Corps Prepositioning Program – Norway (MCPN). Since 2002, we have drawn equipment from our strategic programs and stocks to support combat operations, growth of the Marine Corps, and other operational priorities. While the readiness of the strategic prepositioning programs continues to improve, equipment shortages in our strategic equipment pre-positioned stores have forced the Marine Corps to accept necessary

risk in our ability to rapidly respond to world-wide contingency operations. With Congress' support, our end item shortfalls in the MPF and MCCP-N programs will be reset, in accordance with operational priorities, as equipment becomes available.

**In-Stores Equipment.** In-Stores Equipment refers to our pool of assets that serve as a source of equipment to replace damaged or destroyed equipment in the operating forces, and potentially fill shortfalls in the Active and Reserve Components. In-Stores equipment has been used heavily and leveraged to source increased equipment requirements in Iraq and will be used to support our transition to operations in Afghanistan. The supply rating or attainment level for In-Stores assets is degraded and listed at 31% availability. Such low levels of equipment within our in-stores equipment pools limits our ability to rapidly respond to unexpected contingencies and to replace damaged equipment in the operating forces.

**Equipment Initiatives.** To counter the readiness impact of damaged, destroyed or worn out equipment, the Marine Corps initiated a program to reset and modernize our force. The goals of our reset program are: first, to sustain the current fight by repairing or replacing worn out or damaged/destroyed equipment while enhancing our support to the warfighter by modernizing our force with newer, more capable, equipment. Secondly, reset will increase non-deployed unit readiness by enhancing home station equipment pools and pre-deployment unit training requirements.

**Equipment Reset.** Reset consists of actions taken to restore units to a desired level of combat capability commensurate with the unit's mission. It encompasses maintenance and supply activities that restore and enhance combat capability to equipment that has been damaged, rendered obsolete, or worn out beyond economic repair due to combat operations by repairing, rebuilding, or procuring replacement equipment. Our cost estimate for resetting our force is over \$20 Billion. As we continue our fight, we will update this estimate. We appreciate the generous support of the Congress in appropriating over \$12 Billion so far to ensure that Marines have the equipment and maintenance resources they need. We are committed to managing these resources wisely as we repair, reset and modernize our force.

We expect to see increases in reset requirements caused by the return of equipment associated with force reductions in Iraq and by the requirement to transfer equipment into Afghanistan to sustain deployed readiness there. As the Marine Corps redeploys equipment from theater, we conduct thorough inspections to determine appropriate reset actions.



Equipment that can be repaired and maintained is returned to home stations, where a mix of government and contracted workers, conduct maintenance before the equipment is re-issued to the operating forces. Equipment requiring depot repair actions is shipped to various DoD depots, or receives contracted maintenance. Equipment determined to be not economically repairable will be disposed of and replacements procured.

**Modernization.** As the Nation's expeditionary force-in-readiness, the Marine Corps is required to prepare for the unexpected. We are making progress in repairing and resetting existing equipment, but this effort must be augmented with continued investment to modernize our capabilities. Equipment modernization plans are a high priority within our Corps. Our Commandant's recently published Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025 will help guide our modernization efforts as we continue to be the agile and expeditionary force for the nation.

**Ground Modernization.** Prompted by a changing security environment and hard lessons learned from seven years of combat, the Marine Corps recently completed an initial review of its Operating Force's ground equipment requirements. Recognizing that our unit Tables of Equipment (T/E) did not reflect the challenges and realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century dispersed battlefield, the Corps adopted new T/Es for our operating units. This review was synchronized with our modernization plans and programs, and provides enhanced mobility, lethality, sustainment, and command and control across the MAGTF. The new equipment requirements reflect the capabilities necessary not only for the Corps' current mission, but for its future employment across the range of military operations, against a variety of threats, and in diverse terrain and conditions. The MAGTF T/E review will serve as a link with the critical work being done to reset, reconstitute and revitalize the Marine Corps.

**Aviation Modernization.** We are modernizing the aircraft we fly; changing the way we think about aviation support to our ground forces; and changing our capabilities to conduct operations in any clime and place. To help meet the growing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance requirements of our operating forces, the Marine Corps will field three levels, or "tiers," of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS). Furthermore, we are committed to an "in-stride transition" from twelve type/model/series aircraft to six new aircraft. Programs such as the F-35B Joint Strike Fighter, the MV-22 Osprey, the CH-53K, and the H-1 upgrades will vastly increase the Corps' aviation capability and ensure our warfighting advantage for decades to

come. It is critical that these programs stay on track, and on timeline with full funding support, due to the declining service life of our legacy tactical aviation platforms.

### **Training Marines to Fight**

In preparing Marines to fight in “any clime and place,” the perennial challenge to our Corps is to attain the proper balance between core warfighting capabilities and those unique to current operations. Decreased unit dwell times and shortages of equipment in our non-deployed forces translate to a limited ability to conduct training on tasks critical to our core competencies, such as integrated combined arms, large force maneuver, and amphibious operations. Short dwell times between deployments and the need for many units to perform “in lieu of missions” have resulted in a singular focus on counter-insurgency training. Our Marines continue to be well trained for current operations through a challenging pre-deployment training program that prepares them for all aspects of irregular warfare.

**Pre-deployment Training Program.** In order to properly train our operating forces for the rigors and challenges they face in OIF and OEF, we have developed a very demanding, realistic and adaptive pre-deployment training program. The Pre-deployment Training Program (PTP) contains standards-based, progressive skills training which is evaluated by commanders and assessed by our Training and Education Command at the final Mission Rehearsal Exercise. The PTP includes counter-insurgency combat skills, as well as operational language and culture skills. Unit after-action reports and unit surveys conducted by the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) are shared Corps-wide and have influenced training changes to keep PTP relevant. For example, the Afghanistan Pre-Deployment Training Program, while similar in many facets to the PTP for Iraq, includes an emphasis on both mountain warfare and the integration of MAGTF combined arms.

During Fiscal Years 2007 and 2008, the Pre-deployment Training Program resulted in over 42,000 Marines receiving theater-specific combined arms and urban operations training at Exercise Mojave Viper at Twenty-nine Palms, California. Over 2,800 Marines received mountain operations training at the Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, California. And over 12,000 Marines participated in the aviation-focused Desert Talon Exercise in Yuma, Arizona.

While our PTP focuses on preparing Marine units for their next deployment, we are further enhancing our education and training programs to respond to ongoing changes in the security environment. Through the efforts of organizations such as the Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One, Marine Corps Tactics and Operations Group, the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning, the Advisor Training Group, and the Marine Corps University, we are providing a holistic education to our Marines across the range of military operations. Based on a continuous lessons learned feedback process, supported by the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL), we are building an Enhanced Company Operations capability which will make our smaller infantry units more lethal, agile, and survivable.

**Preparing for Future Conflict.** As challenging as it is to prepare Marines for the current fight, our forces must adapt to the ever-changing character and conduct of warfare to remain relevant. To meet the complex challenges in the emerging security environment, we are improving training and education for the fog, friction and uncertainty of the 21<sup>st</sup> century battlefield. We are focusing efforts on our small unit leaders—the “strategic non-commissioned officers” and junior officers—who will operate more frequently in a decentralized manner and assume greater responsibility in operations against hybrid threats.

To better prepare our Marine Air Ground Task Force for operating across the range of military operations, we are developing an improved training and exercise program. When implemented, this program will increase our ability to maintain proficiency in core warfighting capabilities, such as combined arms maneuver and amphibious operations, while continuing to meet current commitments. Two training initiatives are of critical importance. The Combined Arms Exercise - Next (CAX-Next), and the Marine Air Ground Task Force Large Scale Exercise (MAGTF-LSE). The CAX-Next is a live-fire training exercise aimed at developing combined arms maneuver capabilities from individual Marine to regimental-sized units. It will incorporate lessons learned from today’s conflicts, while training adaptable and flexible MAGTFs for the future. The MAGTF-LSE is a scenario-based, service-level training exercise, scalable from Marine Expeditionary Brigade to Marine Expeditionary Force levels. It will develop the Marine Air Ground Task Force’s capability to conduct amphibious power projection and sustained operations ashore in a combined, joint, whole-of-government environment.

### **Amphibious Shipbuilding**

The Chief of Naval Operations and Commandant of the Marine Corps have determined that the force structure requirement to support a 2.0 Marine Expeditionary Brigade lift is 38 total amphibious assault ships. Due to fiscal constraints, the Department of the Navy has agreed to maintain a minimum of 33 total amphibious ships in the assault echelon. The 33 ship force accepts risk in the arrival of combat support and combat service support elements of the Marine Expeditionary Brigade. Of that 33 ship Battle Force, 11 aviation-capable big deck ships (LHA/LHD) and 11 LPD class ships are required to accommodate the Marine Expeditionary Brigade's aviation combat element and part of the ground combat element.

### **Caring for our Warriors and Families**

A critical part of our overall readiness is maintaining our solemn responsibility to take care of our Marines and their families. While Marines never waiver in the ideals of service to Corps and Country, the needs of our Marines and their families are constantly evolving. Marines have reasonable expectations regarding housing, schools, and family support. It is incumbent upon us, with the generous support of Congress, to support them in these key areas. Marines make an enduring commitment to the Corps when they earn the title Marine. The Corps in turn, makes an enduring commitment to every Marine and his or her family.

**Putting Family Readiness on a Wartime Footing.** Last year, the Marine Corps initiated a multi-year plan of action to place family support programs on a wartime footing. We significantly increased training and support staff at the installation level, expanded the depth and breadth of family readiness training programs, and authorized full-time Family Readiness Officers in more than 400 units. We improved the command's ability to communicate with Marines and their families with state-of-the-art information technology tools. We continue to assess the efficacy of our Marine Corps Community Services programs to ensure that we are empowering our Marines and their families to maintain a state of readiness while caring for their immediate needs.

These initiatives and others demonstrate the commitment of the Marine Corps to our families and highlight the connection between family readiness and mission readiness. We are grateful to Congress for providing supplemental funding during Fiscal Years 2008 and 2009 that enabled the initial start-up of our improved family readiness program.

**Improving Care for Our Wounded Warriors.** The Marine Corps is very proud of the positive and meaningful accomplishments of the Wounded Warrior Regiment in providing recovery and transition support to our wounded, ill, and injured Marines and Sailors and their families. Since the Regiment stood up in April 2007, we instituted a comprehensive and integrated approach to wounded warrior care, and unified it under one command. Our single process provides active duty, reserve, and separated Marines with non-medical case management, benefit information and assistance, resources and referrals, and transition support. The Regiment strives to ensure programs and processes adequately meet or exceed the needs of our wounded and injured Marines, while remaining flexible to preclude a “one-size-fits-all” approach to care. To ensure effective family advocacy, we added Family Readiness Officers at the Regiment and to its two battalions.

While the Marine Corps is aggressively attacking the stigma and lack of information that prevent Marines from asking for help, we are also being proactive in reaching out to those Marines and Marine veterans who may need assistance. Our Wounded Warrior Call Center not only receives calls from active duty and veteran Marines, but also initiates important outreach calls. Since November 2007, our call center has made over 38,000 calls and contacted over 8,800 Marines and family members.

Our Job Transition Cell, manned by Marines and representatives of the Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs, has proactively reached out to identify and coordinate with employers and job training programs to help our Wounded Warriors obtain positions where they are likely to succeed and enjoy promising careers. One example is our collaboration with the United States House of Representatives to establish a Wounded Warrior Fellowship Program to facilitate hiring disabled veterans to work in Congressional offices.

The Marine Corps’ commitment to our combat wounded, ill, and injured is steadfast; we are grateful for the support and leadership of Congress on their behalf. I would also like to extend my personal thanks for Congressional visits to our Marines and Sailors in the hospitals where they are being treated and convalescing.

## **Conclusion**

This Nation has high expectations of her Corps—and Marines know that. Your Marines are answering the call around the globe while performing with distinction in the face of great

danger and hardships. The Corps provides the Nation unrivaled speed, agility, and flexibility for deterring war and responding to crises; our ability to seize the initiative and dominate our adversaries across the range of military operations requires the right people, the right equipment, and sufficient time to train and prepare appropriately.

As your Marines continue to serve in combat, we must provide them all the resources required to complete the tasks we have given them. Now more than ever they need the sustained support of the American people and the Congress to maintain our readiness, reset the force during an extended war, modernize to face the challenges of the future, and fulfill our commitment to Marines, Sailors, and their families.

On behalf of your Marines, I extend great appreciation for your faithful support to date and thank you in advance for your ongoing efforts to support our brave warriors. The Corps understands the value of each dollar provided by the American taxpayer, and will continue to provide maximum return for every dollar spent. Today over 200,000 Active and 39,000 Reserve Force Marines remain ready, relevant, and capable as the “Nation’s Force-in-Readiness”... and with your help, we will stay that way.