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STATEMENT OF

GENERAL ROBERT MAGNUS  
ASSISTANT COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

BEFORE

THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

On

READINESS

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Chairman Ortiz, Representative Davis, and distinguished Members of the Committee; on behalf of your Marine Corps, I want to thank you for your generous support and I welcome this opportunity to report to you today.

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

The operational tempo of the last several years has demonstrated the flexibility and exceptional capability of your Marines. This sustained effort has come at substantial cost in terms of both personal sacrifice on the part of individual Marines and in the cumulative wear and tear on our equipment. It is imperative that we continue to support our Marines in combat as the first priority and that we look to the future and ensure we can restore and maintain our Corps. We remain true to our Congressionally mandated mission “*to be most ready when the Nation is least ready*”; providing the Nation a flexible force in readiness to meet both current and future challenges.

#### **I. Supporting the Plus-up for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.**

Currently, the Marine Corps has approximately 4,000 Marines affected by the plus up of forces in Iraq. The units affected will be extended for approximately 45 - 60 days. This change impacts our Marines and their families, but we believe that the support systems that we have in place within the units and family support systems back home will help our Marines and their families meet the challenges associated with this extension on deployment. Furthermore, between their return and next deployment, the addition of new infantry battalions will allow these units to lengthen the dwell time at their home station.

Battalions moved forward in the rotation cycle will complete all required pre-deployment training that fully qualifies them for employment in combat operations. These battalions will be subject to the same pre-deployment training standards as their fellow Marines. We have accelerated the normal cycle through our main mission rehearsal exercise, Mojave Viper, to accommodate consistent training for all units rotating into theater. Units assigned missions other than their primary organizational missions develop training programs tailored to their new assignment. By using standards-based Training and Readiness Manuals, these provisional units conduct home station training that prepares them for their new tasks. The effectiveness of this training is then assessed during mission rehearsal at Mojave Viper, or alternate training venues, in events tailored specifically to their new Mission Essential Task List. For example, an Artillery Battery assigned the role of provisional Military Police Company is trained and assessed in detainee handling and firm base operations rather than conventional artillery tasks.

The accelerated battalions will deploy with equipment from their home stations, and the additional equipment required will be provided by cross-leveling assets in theater as well as leveraging equipment already positioned forward. As we ensure that our deployed forces have the right amount of the right equipment, this has resulted in some home station shortfalls and has limited some stateside units' ability to train for other missions and contingencies. While the readiness of deployed units remains high, we have experienced a decrease in the readiness of some non-deployed units.

There are no Marine Corps Reserve units involved in the plus up of forces.

## **II. Personal Protective Equipment**

Marine units preparing to deploy to Iraq or Afghanistan are fully equipped for the mission assigned. The Corps will continue to pursue technological advancements in personal protective equipment—our Marines deserve nothing less. Fully recognizing the trade-off between weight, protection, fatigue, and movement restriction, we are providing Marines the latest in personal protective equipment—such as the Modular Tactical Vest, Quad Guard, Lightweight Helmet, and Flame Resistant Organizational Gear.

**Body Armor.** Combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have highlighted a need to evolve our personal protective vest system. Therefore, in February, we started transitioning to a

newly designed Modular Tactical Vest or MTV. This vest is virtually the same weight as its predecessor, the Outer Tactical Vest, but it more easily integrates our other personal protection systems. It provides greater comfort through the incorporation of state-of-the-art load carriage techniques that better distributes the combat load over the torso and onto the hips of the Marine. The acquisition objective for the Modular Tactical Vest is 60,000 systems, with anticipated completion of deliveries in September 2007. The MTV also incorporates our existing Enhanced Small Arms Protective Inserts, or E-SAPI, and Side SAPI plates. These plates are currently provided to every Marine in theater. The E-SAPI provides the best protection available against a wide variety of small arms threats, to include protection against 7.62mm ammunition threats.

**QuadGard.** The QuadGard system is designed to provide ballistic protection for a Marine's arms and legs when serving as a gunner on convoy duty. This system, which integrates with other personal ballistic protection equipment such as the Modular Tactical Vest, Enhanced SAPI, and Lightweight Helmet, reduces minimum standoff distances from the Marine to ballistic threats, particularly improvised explosive device fragmentation.

**Lightweight Helmet.** We are committed to providing the best head protection available to our warfighters. The Lightweight Helmet weighs less than its predecessor, and provides a high level of protection against fragmentation threats and 9mm bullets. We now require use of the pad system as study results demonstrated it provides greater protection against non-ballistic blunt trauma than the sling suspension system. We are retrofitting more than 150,000 helmets with the pad system and have already fielded enough helmet pads for every deployed Marine. Now, Lightweight Helmets are being produced by the manufacturer with the approved pad system installed. Additionally, we are procuring ballistics pads which attach to the rear portion of the helmet and provide enhanced protection to the occipital region of the head.

**Flame Resistant Organizational Gear (FROG).** In January, we began fielding FROG components to all deployed and deploying Marines. This life saving ensemble of clothing items – gloves, balaclava, long-sleeved fire resistant shirt, combat shirt, and combat trouser – is designed to mitigate potential injuries to our Marines from flame exposure. These clothing items provide protection that is comparable to that of the NOMEX combat vehicle crewman suit/flight suit with additional comfort properties to include moisture wicking, anti-microbial, and reduced drying time.

With this mix of body armor, undergarments, and outerwear, operational commanders can determine what equipment their Marines will employ based upon mission requirements and environmental conditions.

### **III. Protected Vehicles and Mobility**

**Ground Mobility.** The Army and Marine Corps are leading the Services in developing light tactical wheeled vehicle requirements for the joint force. The defined capabilities reflect an appropriate balance in survivability, mobility, payload, network enabling, transportability, and sustainability. The Army/Marine Corps Board has proven a valuable forum for coordination of tactical wheeled vehicle development and fielding, the production of Central Command armoring kits and up-armored HMMWVs, and rapid response to Combatant Commander's requests for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles. Additionally, the Army/Marine Corps Board has been the focal point for development of the joint requirements for a Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) focused on providing protected, sustained, networked, and expeditionary mobility to the joint force in the light tactical vehicle weight class.

**Mine Resistant Ambush-Protected (MRAP) vehicles.** MRAP vehicles are designed with a "V" shaped hull and are employed to protect against the three primary kill mechanisms of mines and improvised explosive devices—fragmentation, blast overpressure, and acceleration. These vehicles provide the best available protection against improvised explosive devices and experiences in theater have shown that a Marine is four to five times safer in a MRAP than in an up-armored HMMWV. There will be three categories of new near-term MRAP vehicles. Category I, a Mine Resistant Utility Vehicle, will accommodate up to six personnel and will be employed in urban operations. Category II vehicles are similar to Cougar/Joint Explosive Ordnance Disposal Rapid Response Vehicles, and will accommodate up to ten personnel, and will be multi-mission capable. Category III, Buffalo vehicles, will be used for route clearance and explosive ordnance disposal missions.

The MRAP is an example of our adaptation to evolving threats. It is an attempt to acquire the very best technology available in the shortest amount of time in order to protect our Marines. The USMC requirement is 3,700 MRAP vehicles and we are aggressively pursuing the acquisition of this rapidly emerging requirement. This quantity includes vehicles designated

specifically for the MEFs and for the training establishment. Our long-term MRAP vehicle training plan is for Marines to receive operator-level skill training at their home stations, followed by additional training at Mojave Viper mission rehearsal exercises, and concluding with vehicle and theater-specific training once they arrive in their area of operation. Given sufficient resourcing up front, we are confident that we can have this capability fully fielded within a year.

**M1114 HMMWV– Upgrade via Fragmentation Kit 2 and Fragmentation Kit 5.** The Corps' already fielded M1114 fleet is undergoing an upgrade with Fragmentation Kits 2 and 5. Fragmentation Kit 2 enhances ballistic protection in the front driver and assistant driver wheel-well. Fragmentation Kit 5 degrades improvised explosive device effects and reduces armor debris that results from overmatch. Installation of both Fragmentation Kits is underway, with anticipated completion of 1754 Fragmentation Kit 2 and 2142 Kit five requirements by 31 March 2007. All new Marine Corps M1114, M1151, M1152, and M1165 HMMWV's will have Fragmentation Kits 2 and 5 protection integrated prior to delivery. We will continue to evaluate lessons learned and potential improvements to this family of vehicles.

#### **IV. Marine Corps Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance Enterprise (MCISR-E)**

Since 2001, the Marine Corps has worked towards transforming its ISR programs to provide a robust, integrated system of ground and air platforms. We have matured our Intelligence Fusion Centers to provide commanders with the analysis and fidelity to locate, identify, track, and target threats. Our Counterintelligence and Radio Battalion Marines continue to do Yeoman's work in providing needed tactical and operational intelligence and are two examples of units whose operational tempo will improve as the Marine Corps grows. In addition to these critical assets, the Marine Corps also employs and incorporates aviation and persistent ISR assets that I would like to highlight.

**The Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Family of Systems (FoS).** The MAGTF role of the USMC UAS Family of Systems (FoS) is to provide Battle Space Awareness, Force Protection, and Force Application through a joint-interoperable, three-tiered approach.

**Tier I UAS.** Tier I UAS are man-packable, hand-launched, autonomous systems designed to support and provide the small unit commander with a reconnaissance and

surveillance capability to see over the next hill on the battlefield or around the next building in the urban environment. The Marine Corps is transitioning this year from the highly successful Dragon Eye UAS to the Joint Raven B UAS. Our deployment of Raven B down to the battalion level will begin in Sept 2007. This year's Presidential Budget has \$13.1M programmed for the continued procurement of Raven B systems, and our total Acquisition Objective (AO) is 467 systems.

**Tier II UAS.** Tier II UAS are designed to support our Divisions, Regiments, Battalions and MEUs. Tier II is funded to begin in Fiscal Year 2008 with an Initial Operating Capability scheduled for Fiscal Year 2011. In the interim, we must continue to employ Scan Eagle UAS under a fee-for-service agreement to fill this capability gap. We are working with the Navy, Air Force and US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) to develop a tactical, expeditionary, and long endurance UAS capable of multiple missions. It is being designed with plug-and-play payloads, advance target acquisition, and fire support capabilities. We plan to use an incremental acquisitions approach to reach our requirement of 26 systems.

**Tier III UAS.** Tier III UAS are designed as the primary support for our MEFs and Joint Task Forces. We currently fly the Pioneer UAS and this legacy system has served us well since 1986; it has proven its worth in the fight against insurgent forces and terrorists in Iraq. However, due to the Pioneer's age and obsolescence, the Marine Corps decided to transition to the Army Shadow UAS during the fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 2007. The Shadow will provide the MEFs with a day/night ISR and target acquisition capability. This year's Presidential budget contains a request for \$90.3M for procurement of five of thirteen Shadow systems. We envision the Shadow serving as an interim system until a Vertical UAS (VUAS) is developed.

**Persistent ISR (P-ISR).** The focus of P-ISR is to enable the MAGTF Commander to sense enemy activity across the electromagnetic spectrum in near-real-time values without any interruption. UAS FoS and their payloads fulfill unique attributes associated with P-ISR. They will allow for a much more robust set of capabilities to include, platform endurance, sensor fidelity, fire support, strike, communications relay, and electronic warfare.

Additionally, we are bringing two critical capability sets into the fighting force, based on valuable operational recommendations from both I MEF and II MEF. Combined with current

UAS capabilities, ANGEL FIRE and Ground Based Operational Surveillance System (G-BOSS) will give us insight into the future by providing critical layers to the MAGTF P-ISR concept. This systems approach to current operational challenges will contribute to the MAGTF Commander's all-encompassing view of the battlespace.

**ANGEL FIRE.** ANGEL FIRE provides enhanced situational awareness and support to urban warfare, disaster relief, and other operations. The initial deployment of this capability is scheduled for late spring/summer 2007.

**G-BOSS.** The G-BOSS System of Systems concept is to integrate command and control; commercial off the shelf and government off the shelf sensors to ground, airborne, and space-based platforms. The military objective of G-BOSS is to detect, identify, and track insurgent activities, specifically associated with the emplacement of IEDs. The initial employment of autonomous camera tower systems has performed admirably in theater. The integration of a fully networked G-BOSS system of systems is anticipated to begin this month.

## **V. Aviation Survivability Equipment**

The Marine Corps is mitigating threats to rotary wing aviation in GWOT theaters through a combination of tactics, centralized command and control, and upgraded Aircraft Survivability Equipment (ASE). Increased DoD Science and Technology (S&T) community focus and funding on developing the next generation helicopter survivability equipment is required to counter emerging threats, i.e., advanced technology MANPADS, and to operate in degraded visibility environments. Marine aviation has invested \$390M on rotary wing ASE development and procurement from PB00 through PB07. We have additionally requested \$225M in the FY07 and FY 08 Supplemental budgets for continued RDT&E and procurement of the latest available ASE technology for our helicopters. For POM 08 the Marine Corps has requested \$193M for continued Directed Infrared Countermeasures (DIRCM) development, a state of the art ASE system that will enable Marine aviation to stay ahead of the threat as we see increased proliferation of advanced anti-aircraft systems. Your continued support of this critical need for our fleet of aircraft is greatly appreciated as we ensure our pilots and aircrew have the most current survivability technology available to them.



## **VI. Right Sizing our Marine Corps**

To meet the demands of the Long War as well as the inevitable crises that arise, our Corps must be sufficiently manned in addition to being well trained and properly equipped. Like the Cold War, the Long War is a continuing struggle that will not be measured by the number of near-term deployments or rotations, and while we seek to capitalize on advances in technology, we know it is our magnificent Marines who invariably decide the outcome.

In order to ensure the readiness and protection of our most precious asset, the individual Marine, we must ensure that our personnel policies, organizational construct, and training are able to operate at the "sustained rate of fire." Operating at the "sustained rate of fire" means that the Corps will be able to maintain operations indefinitely with proper considerations for unit readiness, cohesion, individual deployment tempo, and families. The proposed Active Component end strength increase is intended to enable us to operate at the "sustained rate of fire."

**Strain on the Individual.** Despite an unparalleled personnel tempo, the morale of our Marines and their families remains high. To avoid an adverse toll on our Marines and their families, and to prevent a decrease in readiness, the former Secretary of Defense established a 1:2 deployment-to-dwell ratio goal for all active component forces. This ratio relates to how long our forces are deployed versus how long they are at home, e.g. the goal is for every seven months a Marine is deployed, they will be back at their home station for fourteen months. We need to relieve the strain on those superb Americans who have volunteered to fight the Nation's battles.

**Strain on the Family.** We must not forget the sacrifices made by those families who also endure the strain of separation. Increasing time between deployments is crucial in relieving the strain placed upon our Marine families. Our family support programs, such as the Key Volunteer Network and the return and reunion programs, are critical to educating and informing the families of our Marines and Sailors. Over the last several months, we have hosted several conferences to ensure that these programs are on a wartime footing and meet the needs of the families and service members.

**Strain on the Institution.** The current deployment cycle requires commanders to focus solely on those skill sets required to accomplish the mission in Iraq and Afghanistan. This

deterioration of capabilities is exacerbated by individual augments and training team requirements and by many units being deployed for missions outside of their normal duties. The result of this strain is evident in the Marine Corps' limited ability to provide trained forces to project power in support of other contingencies. Reduced training time and a necessarily singular focus on current contingency requirements prevents significant opportunities for units to train to the full range of military operations in varied operating environments, such as jungle or mountain terrain. To fulfill our mandate to be "*most ready when the Nation is least ready*," our deployment cycles must not only support training for irregular warfare, they must also provide sufficient time for recovery, maintenance, and training for other contingency missions. By increasing the dwell time for our units and allowing them additional time at home stations, we can accomplish the more comprehensive training needed for the sophisticated skill sets that have enabled Marine Air Ground Task Forces to consistently achieve success in all types of military operations and operating environments. Our goal is to increase dwell time and achieve a 1:2 deployment-to-dwell ratio for our active forces—our Operating Forces are routinely falling short of this target.

**Reducing the Stress.** I must emphasize that the underlying requirement for an end strength increase is separate from, indeed it pre-dates, the plus up of forces in Iraq. The proposed increase to our Active Component end strength to 202,000 Marines will reduce the strain on the individual Marines and the Institution. Our first task is to build three new infantry battalions and their supporting structure – approximately 4,000 Marines. The resources for this force have been included in our Fiscal Year 2007 Supplemental request. These funds will pay for initial costs associated with the stand up of these infantry battalions as well as essential enablers, which are vital not only for the current fight, but are also critically needed to support long-term Marine Corps capabilities to accomplish other missions. These enablers include combat support and combat service support such as intelligence, military police, and civil affairs capabilities. We will systematically add individuals to create units on a schedule of approximately 5,000 per year. This plan will gradually improve the deployment-to-dwell ratio of our habitually high operational tempo units. We are initially funding this initiative with the GWOT request and baseline funding in Fiscal Year 2008, but will include all known future costs in our baseline budget as of Fiscal Year 2009.

**Reserve Component End Strength.** Our efforts in the Long War have been a Total Force effort, with our Reserves once again performing with grit and determination. Recent policy changes within the Department of Defense match up very well with our existing policies and will allow us to use the Reserve forces as they were structured to be employed—to augment and reinforce our Active Component forces. To this end, our goal is to obtain a 1:5 deployment-to-dwell ratio for our Reserve Component Marines. We currently believe our authorized Reserve Component end strength of 39,600 Selected Reserve Marines is right. As with every organization within the Marine Corps, we will continue to review the make-up and structure of the Marine Corps Reserve to ensure they have the needed mix and balance to augment and reinforce Active forces with Marine Forces Reserve units and our Individual Mobilization Augmentees. Finally, as our active force increases in size, our reliance on the Reserve forces to relieve Active force tempo should decrease—helping us achieve the desired deployment-to-dwell ratios across the total force.

**Manning the Force.** An equally important factor in sustaining a viable force is continuing to recruit and retain qualified young men and women with the right character, commitment, and drive to become Marines. With over 70% of the end strength increase comprised of first-term Marines, both recruiting and retention efforts will be challenged. A major part of this effort will involve increased funding for both the Enlistment Bonus and the Selective Reenlistment Bonus Programs. We will need the continued strong support of Congress to achieve ongoing success.

Our recruiting standards will remain high. While exceeding DOD quality standards, we continue to recruit the best of America into our ranks—in Fiscal Year 2006, the Marine Corps achieved over 100 percent of our active component accession goal. The Marine Corps Reserve also achieved 100 percent of its recruiting goals, but reserve junior officer numbers remain challenging because our primary accession source is from officers who leave active duty. We appreciate the continued authorization for Selected Reserve Officer Affiliation Bonuses in the Fiscal Year 2007 National Defense Authorization Act—they continue to contribute in this crucial area.

We forecast that both active and reserve recruiting will remain challenging in Fiscal Year 2007, particularly when viewed through the lens of accession missions to meet the increased end

strength of the Marine Corps. We will need the valuable support of Congress for enlistment bonuses and other recruiting efforts, such as advertising, which will be essential to us continuing to meet these challenges.

Retention is the other important part of manning the force. In Fiscal Year 2006, the Marine Corps exceeded its retention goals for both the First Term and Career Forces. For Fiscal Year 2007, we expect to exceed our goals again. This success can be attributed to the Marine Corps' judicious use of the Selective Reenlistment Bonus, and we now offer qualified first term and career enlisted Marines \$10,000 in Assignment Incentive Pay to reenlist in certain assignments. To keep the very best of our Marines, we must increase the size of our bonus program in order to ensure that we have the right grade and MOS mix to support the growing force. Not only will we have to retain more first-term Marines, but we will also have to increase the number of Marines reenlisting at the eight and 12-year mark. This will require a shift toward more funding in targeted key areas in the career force. We will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of bonuses and incentives to ensure we have the best tools to support accession and retention needs.

## **VII. Preparing for the Next Contingency**

To meet the demands of the Long War, we must reset the force in order to simultaneously fight, train, and sustain our Corps. To support our Marines in combat, we have routinely drawn additional equipment from strategic stocks, prepositioned stocks, home stations, and from units not in the predeployment or deployment phases, which need to be replenished to remain responsive to emerging threats. The Congress has responded rapidly and generously to our requests for equipment and increased protection for our Marines and Sailors. It is our responsibility to manage these resources prudently, as we modernize our force.

**Equipment Readiness.** Extended combat operations have severely tested our materiel. While the vast majority of our equipment has passed the test of sustained combat operations, it has been subjected to more than a lifetime's worth of wear stemming from increased vehicle mileage, operating hours, and harsh environmental conditions. This increased maintenance requirement is a consequence of not only operational tempo and operating environments, but also the sheer amount of equipment employed in operations. Approximately thirty percent of all

Marine Corps ground equipment and nearly twenty-five percent of our active duty aviation squadrons are currently engaged overseas. Most of this equipment is not rotating out of theater at the conclusion of each force rotation; it remains in combat, used on a near-continuous basis at an operating tempo that far exceeds normal peacetime usage.

As our priority for equipment is to support Marines serving in harm's way, we have drawn additional equipment from the Maritime Prepositioning Ships (MPS) and prepositioned stores from the caves in Norway; we have also retained equipment in theater from units that are rotating back to the United States. The operational results of these efforts have been outstanding—the average mission capable rates of our deployed forces' ground equipment remain above ninety-three percent—but there is a price.

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

**Reset of Ground Equipment.** Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are placing demands on ground equipment far beyond what is typically experienced during training or home station operations. Some of these demands rise from higher usage rates, others from the rigors of extended operations in harsh environments. These higher demands increase the maintenance requirements for equipment employed in theater and continue when this equipment is redeployed to home stations. For example, in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) crews are driving Light Armored Vehicles (LAVs) in excess of 8,700 miles per year—3.5 times more than planned annual utilization rates of 2,480 miles per year. Overall, our light and heavy tactical vehicle fleet is experiencing some of the most dramatic effects of excessive wear, operating between three and six times the planned rates

Our ground equipment strategy is focusing in on reset for today and modernization for tomorrow. We continue to take advantage of active production lines to procure ground equipment to backfill the effects of GWOT crossleveling deficiencies within our home station and prepositioned inventories. Wherever possible we are pursuing ground equipment modernization programs such as the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle that will provide the warfighter with superior protection and expeditionary mobility. We have ramped up depot rebuild capacity for legacy weapons systems where commercial production lines are no longer active in order to sustain those capabilities and support the Long War.

**Reset of Aviation Equipment.** The operationally demanding and harsh environments of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Djibouti have highlighted the limitations of our aging fleet of aircraft. In order to support our Marines, sister Services, and coalition partners successfully, our aircraft have been flying at two to three times their planned utilization. Despite this, the efforts of our maintenance and support personnel have sustained an aviation mission capable rate for deployed Marine aircraft at 79 percent over the past twelve months. The corresponding aviation mission capable rates for our units in garrison, who have either recently returned from deployment or are preparing to deploy again, have averaged 75 percent over the past twelve months. To maintain sufficient numbers of aircraft in deployed squadrons, our home squadrons have taken significant cuts in available aircraft and parts as they prepare for deployment. Reset funding will eventually mitigate this strain, but continued funding is needed because we are simply running short of aircraft on our flight lines due to age, attrition, and wartime losses. Maintaining the readiness of our aviation assets while preparing our aircrew for their next deployment is and will continue to be a monumental effort and a constant challenge for our Marines.

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

Resetting Marine Aviation means not merely repairing and replacing damaged or destroyed aircraft, but getting more capable and reliable new production aircraft into the operational deployment cycle sooner. Your Marines rely on these aircraft on a daily basis to provide a wide array of missions including casualty evacuation for our wounded and timely close air support for troops in contact with the enemy. Most production lines to replace legacy aircraft lost in support of the Long War are no longer active; therefore, it is urgent and imperative for the Marine Aviation Plan to remain fully funded and on schedule. Additionally, to ensure Marine aviation is postured to support the current needs of our country, the Marine Corps is working to restoring 7 CH-53E war reserve aircraft for return to active service. For the FY08 budget, we are asking for the restoration of two additional CH-53Ds and one CH-53E and acceleration of the upgrades of MV-22 pre-production aircraft to help maintain aircraft inventories at minimal acceptable operating levels. For example, the Marine Corps is modifying pre-production MV-22s to provide capable aircraft to meet transition schedule operational demands and deployment timelines. Resetting our full aviation capability requires full support of current and future budget requests for repair, restoration, and upgrades of destroyed or damaged airframes, unmanned aerial vehicle components, refurbishment of air traffic control equipment, replacement of targeting pods, and numerous other efforts.

**Reset of Prepositioning Programs.** Eleven Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) vessels from all three Maritime Prepositioning Force Squadrons (MPSRON) were downloaded and used in theater during the initial phases of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM operations. The Marine Corps has reconstituted two of three MPSRONs to meet potential contingencies in other areas of the world. This reconstitution was conducted both in theater and at the USMC's Blount Island facilities in Jacksonville, Florida. In February 2004, MPSRON-2 was downloaded in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM II and has been partially reconstituted.

Since the MPF offloads in support of Operations IRAQI FREEDOM I and II, MPSRON-1 and MPSRON-2 have gone through a complete maintenance cycle for attainment and supply rotation. Attainment for major end items is 91 percent and 48 percent respectively. Some of our major end item shortfalls are a result of ongoing Operation IRAQI FREEDOM / Operation ENDURING FREEDOM equipment requirements and component availability from the manufacturers. Our end item shortfalls in the MPF program will be reset during the ships'

maintenance cycles as equipment becomes available. Readiness for all equipment loaded aboard the MPS has historically been 98 percent or better. MPSRON-3 is currently undergoing its maintenance cycle and we project an attainment of 100 percent for equipment when completed in April 2007. MPSRON-2's maintenance cycle should begin in April 2008 and be completed by June 2009.

Equipment from Marine Corps Prepositioning Program – Norway (MCCP-N) was used in support of Long War operations and to reset other Marine Corps shortfalls with a higher operational priority. Current attainment for major items is 38 percent. The USMC will reset MCCP-N as soon as practical in line with USMC operational priorities.

**Depot Maintenance.** The two Marine Corps depots have rapidly realigned capability and capacity to meet immediate needs. This has been accomplished by overtime, additional shifts, and utilizing commercial vendors and other DoD depots. The depots are currently working a 10-hour first shift and 12-hour second shift in selected areas of high demand or expedited requirements, with the option of expanding to accommodate increased requirements where applicable. Currently, our depots are not constrained by funding or capacity and have no backlog. We fully expect to see an increase in depot rebuild requirements as the Marine Corps increases its deployed battalions forward in Iraq, while concurrently executing a robust equipment rotation strategy for combat forces. The Marine Corps utilizes several depot level maintenance programs to repair ground equipment, to include Service Life Extension Program (SLEP) Inspect and Repair Only As Necessary (IROAN), Repair and Return (R&R), and Rebuild. Rebuild is defined as "that maintenance technique to restore an item to a standard as near as possible to original or new condition in appearance, performance, and life expectancy.

Examples of equipment currently being repaired at Marine Corps depots are Light Armored Vehicles (LAVs), Amphibious Assault Vehicles (AAVs), Logistic Vehicle Systems (LVSs) (which include both power units and trailer variations), radars, communications (electronics suites), water purification units, howitzers, and a variety of small arms.

## **VIII. Taking Care of our Marines and Their Families**

Just as every Marine makes a commitment to the Corps and the Nation when they earn the title Marine, we make an enduring commitment to every Marine and Marine family. Marines



are renowned for “taking care of our own.” Part of taking care of our own means we will provide for Marines and their families through appropriate pay and compensation, housing, health care, infrastructure, and community services. Strong Congressional support for many Administration initiatives has made possible the significant investments required to improve each of the components of quality of life. This support requires continuous assessment to ensure that it is both sufficient and relevant, particularly during war. These programs must be on a wartime footing to seamlessly sustain our Marines and their families for the duration—long past the redeployment of our Marines and Sailors.

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

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

**Hospital Liaison Teams.** To assist wounded Marines and Sailors, the Marine Corps has Hospital Liaison Teams assigned to each of the major medical centers. These Active and Reserve component Marines assist our wounded warriors and their families through their inpatient and outpatient care, assist in scheduling appointments, and provide transportation support. Additionally, these Liaison Teams interface with the local Veterans’ Affairs medical facilities to assist in the transition of wounded service members to the VA system.

**Casualty Assistance.** Each fallen Marine is a tragic loss to the survivors, the Corps, and our Nation. We endeavor to honor their sacrifices with sincerity and commitment. Our Casualty Assistance Calls Officers are trained to treat next of kin and other family members as they would

their own family. Rendering casualty assistance begins with the basic tenet that there is no standard casualty call; each case is distinct, as families grieve in different ways. Assistance to surviving families is individually tailored to facilitate their transition through the stages of grief and the completion of the casualty process.

**Wounded Warrior Regiment.** While the support to our Marine Corps and families has been exceptional, we intend to increase this support through the creation of a Wounded Warrior Regiment. This regimental headquarters will provide centralized oversight of the care for our wounded Marines and assist in the integration of their support with military, Department of Veterans Affairs, charitable, and civilian systems. The regiment will have a battalion headquarters on each coast, commanded by officers personally selected by the Commandant. Our criteria for this leadership will be rigorous, as we will seek to select only those officers with previous command experience. Our staff is reviewing the fiscal requirements for this unit now—to include facilities, manning, and support requirements.

**Combat/Operational Stress Control (COSC).** Battlefields are familiar territory for Marines—we train Marines to excel in chaotic and unpredictable surroundings. Yet all Marines will experience combat/operational stress to some extent, as transient symptoms for most, but as persistent stress injuries for others. Managing combat stress is vital to the operation of the Marine Corps as a fighting force and the long-term health and well-being of Marines and their families. All deploying Marines receive warrior preparation, transition briefs, and health assessments. In addition, mental health professionals or specially trained medical officers brief Marine leaders on the prevention and management of adverse stress reactions. We have also implemented the innovative Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) program, which embeds mental health providers with ground forces. Operational Stress Control and Readiness provides early identification and treatment of combat/operational stress problems, attempts to defeat the stigma of combat stress, and overcomes the barriers to care.

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

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

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

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

## **IX. Conclusion**

This Nation has high expectations of her Corps—and Marines know that. Your Marines are answering the call around the globe, performing with distinction in the face of great danger and hardships. As your Marines continue to serve in combat, we must continue to 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 simultaneously 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 support to date and thank you in advance for your

ongoing efforts to support our brave countrymen and women in combat. I promise you that the Corps understands the value of each dollar provided and will continue to provide maximum return for every dollar spent. Today 180,000 Active and 39,000 Reserve Force Marines, growing to 202,000 Active Marines in the future, remain ready, relevant, and capable... and we aim to stay that way.