

Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James F. Amos

Opening statement

House Armed Services Committee

1 March, 2011

Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith and Members of the Committee, it is my honor to appear before you today for the first time as Commandant to articulate the posture of your Marine Corps.

Today, the Corps serves as America's Expeditionary Force in Readiness — a balanced air-ground-logistics team of 202K' active, 39,600 reserve and 35K' civilian Marines. Our ability to serve as our Nation's principle crisis response force is due in large part to this committee's and Congress' continued strong support...thank you!

Today, there are roughly 32,000 Marines forward deployed around the world. As we sit here, it's 7:45 in the evening in Afghanistan. The rainy season has hit...the evenings remain cold and damp. It's in this nation where 20,000 of our young men and women are engaged in full-spectrum combat and counterinsurgency operations. I am encouraged by the significant progress they have made in the Helmand Province, and you have my assurance that this effort remains my top priority. Sergeant Major Kent and I spent Christmas with our Marines and Sailors in Afghanistan, and I am happy to report that their morale is high and belief in their mission remains strong.

Partnered with the U.S. Navy, we are forward deployed and forward engaged. This past year alone, our afloat forces conducted humanitarian assistance missions in Pakistan, Haiti, and the Philippines; recaptured the pirated ship Magellan Star, rescuing its crew from Somali pirates; and partnered with allied forces in engagement missions in the Pacific Rim, Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe. Half way around the world this morning, Marines are ready...honing their skills onboard our Navy's great capital ships...prepared to do our Nation's bidding. Such a role as America's crisis response force necessitates that we maintain a high state of unit readiness. You're either ready to respond to today's crisis, with today's force...today...or you risk being late...and thus - irrelevant.

I am keenly aware of the fiscal realities confronting our Nation. During these times of constrained resources, the Marine Corps remains committed to being the best stewards of scarce public funds. We maintain a longstanding tradition in Congress as DOD's "Penny Pinchers." Our institutionalized culture of frugality positions us as the "best value" for the defense dollar. For approximately 8.5% of the annual Defense budget, the Marine Corps provides the Nation 31% of its ground operating forces, 12% of its fixed wing tactical aircraft, and 19% of its attack helicopters.

This year's budget submission was framed by my four Service level priorities. We will:

- 1. Continue to provide the best trained and equipped Marine units to Afghanistan***
- 2. Rebalance our Corps and posture it for the future***
- 3. Better educate and train our Marines to succeed in increasingly complex environments***
- 4. Keep faith with our Marines, our Sailors and our families***

While these priorities will guide our long-term plan for the Marine Corps... there are pressing issues facing our Corps today that concern me...issues for which I ask Congress' continued assistance in solving.

- Our equipment abroad and at home stations has been "heavily taxed" in the nearly 10 years of constant combat operations. The price tag for reset is \$10.6 billion, of which \$3.1 billion has been requested in FY11 and \$2.5 billion is being sought in FY12. The remaining \$5 billion will be needed upon the completion of our mission in Afghanistan.
- The F-35B STOVL Joint Strike Fighter is vital to our ability to conduct expeditionary operations. Continued funding and support from Congress for this program is of utmost importance. During the next two years of "F-35B scrutiny" I will be personally involved with the program and closely supervising it.
- Both the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Navy have reaffirmed the necessity of the Marine Corps' amphibious assault mission. We must develop an affordable and capable amphibious combat vehicle to project Marines from sea to land in permissive, uncertain, and hostile environments. I ask for your support to reach this goal.
- To ensure the Marine Corps remains a relevant force with the capacity and capability to respond to the demands of the future security environment, we recently conducted a detailed, internally-driven, force structure review. The results of this effort provide America a strategically mobile... "middleweight" force...optimized for forward presence and rapid crisis response.

As we look to the future, the Marine Corps is committed to finding ways to be more energy efficient. Since 2009, we have aggressively pursued energy efficient capabilities that will make Marine units more energy self-sufficient, increase our combat effectiveness, and protect lives. Two weeks ago, I signed our new "Bases to Battlefield" Energy Planning Guidance, which sets goals, metrics, and a plan for implementation.

Finally, I would like to comment on the impact the current continuing resolution has had on our operations and programs. As of today, \$567M in military construction contracts have not been awarded; \$2.4B of MILCON is at risk for the remainder of the year. These projects impact the lives of Marines...the local economies of communities around our bases and stations...and are projected to generate over 63,000 jobs from the Carolinas to Hawaii.

If the continuing resolution extends through the entire fiscal year, 13 bachelor enlisted quarters...totaling 5,000 affected spaces...will not be built, thus stymieing our BEQ modernization efforts. These 13 BEQs will allow eight infantry battalions to move out of 50 year old cold war barracks. Finally, a continuing resolution could prove catastrophic to our procurement accounts, resulting in the loss of almost 1/3 of our procurement budget.

Lastly, you have my promise that in these challenging times ahead, the Marine Corps will only ask for what it needs ... not what it might want. We will make the hard decisions before coming to Congress and we will redouble our efforts toward our traditional 'culture of frugality.' As has been the case for over 235 years, your Marine Corps stands "ready to respond whenever the Nation calls...wherever the President may direct."

Once again, I thank each of you for your continued support...I am prepared to answer your questions.