

Office of the Commandant of the Marine Corps

Navy League Sea Service Chiefs Panel

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GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS: Good morning, everybody. It's great to be here. John Cotton, it's good to see you again and the whole team of the Navy League. Thank you for inviting us to kick this thing off and set the conditions for the next several days. I'd like to double-down just a little bit on what John Greenert was saying. First of all, with my two sea service partners, I suspect in times there have been relationships that have not been quite as strong as they are right now, but I want everybody here to understand that the relationships between the three of us are the best that I have ever seen, and we would do anything for one another. It's that sense of teamwork. So everybody out there in contractor land quit trying to play us against one another because that won't work anymore, okay? Those days are gone. But it's good to see everybody and see some old friends. I have some of the Marines from the west coast that have come back.

Let me make a comment about first responders, and that's the piece that John Greenert talked about, being first responders. I want to talk about the fact that we are the United States of America's crisis response force. That's what we do. That's what the naval forces do. We've been talking about that in the Marine Corps for the last year and a half, but I will tell you that's what we do as a naval force, a naval service. The metric, in the measure of effectiveness of our success is our ability to respond to today's crisis, the crisis that happens today. With the force that we have today, which implies readiness, which implies they're properly positioned or properly trained, they have the equipment, we respond with that force today. Not next week, not a month from now, not after we have told the President just give me 30 days to train and we'll be ready to go. America's Crisis Response Force responds today with the force we have at hand.

Today in Afghanistan, it's the Marine Corps' predominate focus of effort. We have a little more than 18,000 Marines and Sailors on the ground in Helmand Province. A couple of comments about that and I'll be happy to answer any questions later on. But I want everybody here to understand, we have reason for optimism in Helmand Province. Sergeant Major Barrett and I go in and out of there about every three months. We just got back in February. And every time I've gone for the last three and a half to four years, I come back feeling better and better about how things are going in Helmand Province. It's not been without cost. We've lost 334 killed in action as of this morning and 4,417 wounded in action in Afghanistan alone.

Today we have three Marine Expeditionary Units at sea. Roughly, 7,500 Marines, the 31st MEU is stationed off the Korean peninsula doing Korean training. The 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit is in CENTCOM. I just pulled them up this morning on the classified net and those three ships are spread out all over the Central Command area of operations. The 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit sailed from Camp Lejeune about two weeks ago and they are off the coast of Morocco today doing Theater Security Cooperation for the AFRICOM Commander. We have another 2,000 Marines between doing Theater Security Cooperation operations, MARSOC operations and our FAST Marines.

Let me switch gears roughly to what I'll describe is the future security environment. Here's how I see the next two decades and this has driven our force structure, our focus of training as we come out of Afghanistan and the equipment we buy. First of all, there's going to be a competition for resources across the globe. There's going to be competition for clean water. CNN just ran an article in February that described that within the next ten years clean water, potable water, water that people will fight wars for, will be more valuable than a liter of petrol. Food, famine across many of our continents will drive folks to do bad things. Natural disasters, social unrest, hostile cyber activity, we're seeing it every single day within the confines of the United States. Violent extremism, not just religious, but criminal and terrorist, extremism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and advanced weaponry in the hands of those that are irresponsible with those weapons. The weapons that have state-like capabilities are in the hands of terrorists. They're all becoming common. These are harbingers of the world that we will live and operate in for the most part for the next two decades.

You have before you a slide that talks about the emerging security environment as it relates to the littorals and our contribution to the defense of our country. I'd like you to take a look starting up in the upper right-hand corner. First of all, a number that is familiar to all of us from high school is 70% of the world is water. But that really pertains to why we're here this week. Twenty-one of the world's 28 megacities are within 62 miles of the sea. Going down to the lower right-hand corner, 95% of all commercial cargo travels through the littorals. And if you stop in that orange box in the middle, it's connected to those bow ties, those orange bow ties, are the seven major choke points around the world where 49% of the world's oil travels through those seven major choke points. And, ladies and gentlemen, almost 95% of the world's commerce travels through those choke points as well.

On any given day, there are 42,000 trading ships underway. Imagine that looking down from the old CNN image we used to see early in the morning where they'd show all the airport traffic and airplanes moving across the United States of America and we stood in amazement as we got a God's eye view of all the air traffic controlled. Imagine 42,000 ships going through those seven choke points delivering 95% of the commerce of the world. Fifty percent of the world's population lives within 62 miles of the ocean. And the final thing I'd point out is that 95% of the intercontinental communications travels undersea. It's not going by satellite. It's not up there in space. It's traveling underneath the waters on the face of the earth. I bring this to your attention because this is our business. You start thinking about ships, you start thinking about training, you start thinking about coalition partners, you start thinking about the littorals and that's the mission of the sea services.

Next slide, please. A lot of discussion about our pivot to the Asia-Pacific and I will tell you we've never left the Asia-Pacific. It's been the Navy, the Marine Corps and the Coast Guard's backyard for a long, long time. It's an area that we grew up in. It's an area that we started all the way down to New Zealand and fought our way all the way north during World War II. These are islands that we have shed blood on, so we're very familiar with it. So it's not

so much a return as much as it is a reorientation. But I'd like to point out a couple of things on this because I want it to make sense to you. I want you to come away thinking well, that's actually not a bad strategy. First of all, when I talked about tragedies earlier from 2000 to 2010, 70,000 people a year are killed in the Asia-Pacific region alone as a result of natural disasters. Take \$35 billion worth of international global wealth, economic damage a year just from natural disasters, all those little red islands and those little red dots represent the areas where just in the last little bit we've had natural disasters and have been tracking it. Twelve of the top 15 trading partners, import/export, are in the Asia-Pacific region. Five of our security -- of our most serious security treaties are in the Asia-Pacific region. Fifteen of the world's 28 megacities and 13 of the 15 megacities are within a hundred miles of the sea. It just makes sense.

Ladies and gentlemen, so what does that mean for us in the Marine Corps? A couple of thoughts come to mind as we reorient with our new strategy. First of all, forward presence matters. It enables crisis response. If you're not there, you're not there. Preposition forces and equipment remain essential elements of our national strategy. We're working right now, trying to determine just how much preposition forward, where it should be. As we bring equipment out of Afghanistan running through our depots and reset the Marine Corps, where should that equipment be both at sea and ashore around the world? Freedom of navigation and commerce is critically important, obvious from that last slide. And lastly, the US Military posture must be globally distributed, operationally resilient and politically sustainable.

My last comment would be on the role of the Marine Corps as it relates to the Department of Defense and this is pretty simple. As I sat as the new Commandant or the Commandant to be, I looked at all the other services' domains, the Navy with the sea, the Air Force with the air and the Army on the land and those are true domains. The Marine Corps transits those domains, and I've talked to all the service chiefs and I assured them that we have no intention of poaching on anybody's domain or anybody's territory. We've got the greatest Navy in the world, the greatest Air Force in the world and the greatest Army and Coast Guard in the world. You don't need another one of those. The Marine Corps has a temporary lane that transits those things when a crisis response pops up, and that's why America has a Marine Corps.

My goal for the next few years is we reset the Marine Corps as to maintain that high state of readiness, get us back to our expeditionary nature, which means lightening the Marine Corps. We're going to continue to be that scalable, taskable force. We're going back to our roots of amphibiousness, began with Bold Alligator 12 here about a month ago; highly successful off the east coast. And we're going to be ready in any climate and place.

I look forward to your questions and thank you for your time. (Applause)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: We talk about forward deployed, expeditionary, a large economic zone, we call it OpTempo. I'm concerned about how our people are being reacted there or being treated. Are we running them into the ground? Do we have enough time at home? I remember -

- I heard recently that a carrier had a deployment extended. That's one half of it. The other half is do we have sufficient time to do maintenance on ships and the upkeep properly in order to keep the extended life that we're trying to get out of our ships and rolling gear, is the maintenance opportunity adequate?

GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS: Just talking about the Marine Corps briefly for a second, because I think OpTempo and deployment tempo and the pace that the Marines have been on for the last ten years has been -- I think everybody is familiar with it and it's been fairly lively. In a perfect world, what you'd like to have, if peace had broken out all over and you had all your forces that you needed, you'd probably be going looking at, targeting something like a 1 to 3 deployment to dwell. We've testified to that in front of Congress, and we actually build force structure that would accommodate that. The truth of the matter is that the Marine Corps right now today with these 18,000 Marines in Afghanistan is running about 1 to 1.7 deployment to dwell. So you're gone seven months and you're home about ten months and you're gone seven months.

The truth is that Marines like to deploy. So as a Commandant, your responsibility is to find that balance because most, not all Marines, about half of them are married so there is another piece in the alchemy and that's your family. So we want to have a balance, but Marines like to deploy. As we come out of Afghanistan over the next three or four years as our Nation is planning on doing, this will be the opportunity for the Marine Corps to not only to rearm and refit, which I talked about in my opening statement, but also to reposition into the Pacific. Secretary Panetta said he'd like to have 22,000 Marines west of the International Date Line. Those Marines will be in places like Iwakuni, Japan, Okinawa and Guam. We've got Marines, as you know, down at Darwin, and they're very happy about that as you might imagine. So as we reorient to the Pacific, there will be opportunities for the deployment to dwell to kind of get back in balance probably about a 1 to 2. The truth of the matter is that if we ever do go back to 1 to 3, I'll probably have Marines crying and kicking and screaming wanting to deploy going what happened? And so there's a balance there that we look for in the Marine Corps, but there's a sense of anticipation in going back to the Pacific.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Admiral Mullen, just before he retired, stated that the national debt, which is now over a hundred percent of GDP, could be our greatest threat to national security. Would you please comment on that?

GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS: I'd like to make a comment on that just for a second because I think it would be good for everybody to understand -- we worked our way probably from the beginning of last fall until the January time frame on the budget and John talked about the Budget Control Act. I mean that's \$487 billion. That's a lot of money spread out across all the services. So all of us had an opportunity to understanding the fiscal climate and the world we live in and then also putting our hat on to be the defenders of our nation in that future security environment that I described. The world doesn't seem to be getting any nicer or more peaceful.

Our job was to take what we had and build a force that we could, and I think we've done that. I will certainly speak for my service -- I came away from that effort feeling okay, we actually have a pretty good plan and it fits. And I think we've done an awful lot to help our nation get back into its fiscal solvency.

I am concerned however about sequestration. I am very concerned about it because it will redefine much of what we know today or what we think we know today with regards to our national defense posture.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Good morning and thank you for your presentations. One of the things that wasn't addressed that I would like to ask you to reflect on a bit for us is the cyber threat, the cyber security domain, and how you see those challenges emerging as we go along here.

GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS: I'll jump on that. I'll jump on that first. I think it's greater than anybody in this room thinks it is. I think it is absolutely a domain. Believe it or not about a year ago there was discussion inside, or rather there were arguments inside, the Department of Defense whether it is a domain or not? We've got more important things to worry about because, ladies and gentlemen, the cyber realm is potentially not only in war fighting, but the commercial part of the United States. Our commercial health, I think, cyber security is a significant issue and I think we're working at it. Within the Department of Defense we probably have in my estimation probably the greatest capability to operate in a cyber domain, and I'll just kind of leave it at that. But I'll tell you what, the potential, if you just think something as simple as command and control. I'm not talking about the American banking system here or the power grid in the northeast. I haven't gotten to that yet. But think about command and control and you're in the middle of a very serious operation and somebody is inside your classified networks and when commanders are delivering operations orders and guidance to their forces, just a small subtle nuance, something that would cause doubt can delay an operation, can cause chaos, and that's the easy part. The rest of this stuff is very, very dangerous. I think it requires a national effort and a focus from our Nation.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you. Good morning. Both General Amos and Admiral Greenert have spoken about international partnerships. The Times of London leads this morning on the United Kingdom's aircraft carrier program, which is going through a bit of turmoil. We've changed from the ski jump type of deck to cats and traps, and now it looks as if we are reverting back to a ski jump having sold you, America, all our harriers, having fired all our pilots. We are now utterly, if this goes through, dependant on the F-35B. The final line in the article in the Times this morning said, "The United States Navy, which opposed the change, has now moderated its position." Perhaps, Admiral Greenert and General Amos, you might be able to say something on either the state of the F-35B or your attitude to the United Kingdom's Maritime Aviation Policy.

GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS: Just to parry off of what Admiral Greenert just said, should this turn out to be an F-35B decision, and to the best of my knowledge, I don't know of anything and I'm looking right down here at the head of Marine Aviation and he's shaking his head no. So I don't know, unless you know something we don't know, but we do know it's been discussed; okay, so I'll admit to that. It has been discussed, and my promise was just exactly what Admiral Greenert said to the First Sealord, should that decision be made that way, then he will have the full partnership of the United States Marine Corps with regard to training, training squadrons, aircraft, how we do business. So in either case, whichever way the decision is made by your nation, you're going to have complete support of the Department of the Navy. And so that I think is the concrete answer that I think we both feel good about, and that's part of that team spirit with our -- with a nation that we have been partners with for a long time.

The F-35B, I've watched this thing very, very carefully since even before I became a Commandant, but right after I took the office, the F-35 program went into a total baseline review. And I think that kind of took the wind out of all the service chiefs' sails as we looked at that and said okay, well, how did we get here? Since that point, I've made it a personal thing with me because the F-35B is a Marine Corps program. Now, that's a Marine Corps airplane, and those are Marine Corps dollars. Congress gives the money to the United States Marine Corps to pay for those things, so I kind of felt that I had an obligation to pay very close attention to that program. There were some engineering issues, some flight test issues with regards to scheduling and performance of the airplanes and test articles, and there was a series of things that I have watched very, very carefully. I don't get into the program officers, manager's job. That's his lane. But as it relates to the requirement, which belongs to the United States Marine Corps, you better believe I pay very close attention to that airplane.

So I've watched it now for 18 months and I can probably sum it up by saying I'm very bullish on the F-35B. As you know, Secretary Panetta, about two months ago, took it off of probation. There's no term, there's no official acquisition or programmatic term with regards that identifies probation. I was there when Secretary Gates said, "Okay, we're going to keep it -- we're going to keep working it. I'll put it on probation." So it was certainly within Secretary Panetta's purview to take that off. I will tell you he went through all the engineering issues and the flight test issues, so he made a very determined and educated decision when he took it off probation. Today the F-35B is flying alongside its A and C brothers; each one of them have issues. We're developing an airplane while we're making production airplanes. It's not through testing yet and yet we're building production airplanes and we're standing up training squadrons, so there's a lot of integral parts here. But I'm bullish on it. I think it sits right alongside of the A brother and the C brother, no harder, not less hard. And I think the airplane has been appropriately focused on and the fixes are in place. There will be other issues, but there will be in the A and there will be in the C as well.

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