

**OFFICE OF  
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**MIRAMAR PRESS CONFERENCE**

**REMARKS BY  
GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS,  
COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS**

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GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS: (In progress) – got to talk to the recruiters and the drill instructors and two sessions of full theater over there, so it's pretty exciting. And a whole new company of brand new Marines. They were in there, too. So pretty exciting. What can I do?

MR. : We'll start with the questions.

(Cross talk.)

Q: – with the Marine Corps Times. Good to see you, Sergeant Major.

SERGEANT MAJOR CARLTON W. KENT: Good seeing you.

Q: We are here in San Diego. One of the items that you mention in your planning guidance is looking at bolstering and maybe expanding the Marine Corps' role in homeland defense and homeland security. What do you envision in terms of what changes the Marines should expect in terms of that? And being this close to the border of Mexico, considering a lot of the things that are happening south of the border, what kind of role do you see the Marines playing in Mexico –

GEN. AMOS: You know, I went back to a little experience I had with Katrina. I was down at Camp Lejeune at the time and I was the MEF commander. And I remember watching the hurricane build down in the Caribbean. And then all of a sudden, they started talking about category three and category four, and all of a sudden, they introduced this thing called a category five hurricane.

And I'd never been involved in anything like that, but I remember watching it. And we had a Marine expeditionary unit that had just come back. And as I recall, it was the 24<sup>th</sup>. They'd just come back home from a deployment, so the Marines were still pretty fresh and still, kind of, together. And I remember thinking to myself, when they started narrowing it down and it started heading towards New Orleans – and they were pretty confident that it was going to – now, whether it was going to be a category five or four or whatever, they weren't sure.

But it became obvious to me that we, the Marine Corps, had an opportunity to help in this case. So this gets to homeland defense. And I'll tell you what we did. We worked with the Navy. They sent I can't remember how many amphibious ships – I think to Shreveport, for sure. And several of them came down, came by Camp Lejeune, and we offloaded – or we on-loaded bulldozers, front-end loaders, big dump trucks, big seven-ton vehicles, food and water.

We didn't take any ammunition or weapons down there. Took communications, command-and-control kind of stuff. And sure enough, those ships sailed around and they came up behind Katrina. And Katrina roared ashore and we know what happened in Katrina. And those amphibious ships pulled off the shore of Biloxi and Gulfport and that Highway 10 that runs

along there was just completely impassable. And yet, those Marines were coming ashore in amphibious tractors and LCACs and they were bringing water, were bringing our bulldozers ashore, just like we do if we were doing it in combat.

And we got some great pictures of the amtracs down in – I can't remember what the number of the ward is that's just south of New Orleans – it's the parish or the ward that – remember, it stayed flooded. It had water, in some cases, seven, eight feet deep all through there. And we've got pictures of our amtracs going through there. And they were the only – besides somebody in a Boston Whaler or something like that – but our amtracs full of Marine were going through there and providing relief and rescuing people.

So we provided command and control. There was a period of time where, I remember, we set up a command-and-control suite at an airport inland about 50 miles. So I look at that and I go, this is – you know, this is what Marines can do for our nation. This is homeland defense. Now, it's not bad people, necessarily, coming across the border, but it's things like natural disasters and that – we do this, by the way, out here in California. We help fight fires. I mean, that's part of it.

I just think that there is – without taking a big chunk of the Marine Corps and saying, we're going to commit you, this is what you're going to do, we have enormous capabilities – and what I've asked the Marine Corps leadership to do is just step back a minute, just open your eyes, think a little bit beyond what we typically do every day, and what is it we could do for our nation with regards to homeland defense?

And that's really, kind of, where it began. I was just thinking about that and I thought, first of all, it was the right thing to do. We really made a difference. In some cases, like Haiti, when we had 10 amphibious ships and two Marine expeditionary units down there in May and June, they were the best – I'm prejudiced – but they were the best capability and resource that came down there because we didn't need anything.

We had ships; we had helicopters; we had our own airplanes; we had our own amphibious tractors and capability to come ashore. And we made water and we brought water and we had food and we had medical care. So that's what I'm talking about. So I don't know what it will be, but I suspect that if we put our imagination to it, there are things that we can help protect our nation in homeland defense. So that's kind of what I had in mind.

Q: Does that include, you know, more interaction with Mexico and Mexico's military?

GEN. AMOS: I don't know. I think it could. I think all things are possible. You know, there was a period of time several years ago when Marines were participating in some border security. We don't do that right now. I think if our president came to me and said, General Amos or the secretary of Defense, what could you do, I would sit down and I would provide him a capability.

But he hasn't done that yet. And you know, I think we all share some anxiousness about border security. So I'd be willing to listen and it would just depend upon what the secretary of Defense wanted to do or what the president wanted to do along those lines.

Q: Welcome back, sir.

GEN. AMOS: Good to see you again.

Q: Here at San Diego, and at Miramar, we're awaiting for the West Coast basing decision on the Joint Strike Fighter. Somewhat related to that, I'm wondering, what is the Marine Corps' plan B in case their special STOVL variant is killed off? Is it to use the Harriers – keep those in operation? Or what is it? And is it true that you were, quote, “furious with the British” for cancelling their order and threatened to kick out all of their exchange pilots?

GEN. AMOS: Let me go to the last one, first – (laughter) – which is actually the easiest one. I don't get furious about anything, so that was – I don't know that I've ever had anything ever written about me that was so completely, 100 percent in accurate and incorrect. So I guess if I got furious, I was furious at the absolute audacity that somebody writing from another paper would say something that was so completely untrue.

And by the way, I had nothing – I mean, no one ever asked me what I thought about that. I've never been asked what I thought about that. So that was absolutely, completely, 100 percent untrue. And in fact, I've had some very senior military officials from the United Kingdom write me personally and say they apologize for the foolishness of the newspaper. So let me put that one aside for right now.

Plan B – there is not a plan B. There are derivatives of plan A, and plan A, as you know, takes our current assets – you know, we've gone from three what we call type/model/series – and type/model/series is like an F-18; it's like an EA-6B Prowler; it's like an AV-8B Harrier. Those are type/model/series.

And about 12 years ago, the Marine Corps made a decision – this was about 1998 – and they made a decision that somewhere out in the future, we would what we call sum down those assets – in other words, they would eventually run out of service life – and instead of buying just a replacement for the EA-6B Prowler and another replacement for the F-18 and another replacement called the Harrier, we would combine that in this airplane called the STOVL F-35B.

And so we've gone down from three type/model/series down to one. And just to give you a sense of magnitude of what that saves in operations and maintenance costs a year, the forecast is, we save a billion dollars a year just by having one kind of airplane instead of three different kinds – a Prowler, a Hornet and a Harrier. A billion dollars a year just in savings on that!

So if you look at that and you go, well, that makes a lot of sense. The F-35B has all the capabilities of those other airplanes. It lacks just a little bit on the electronic warfare. There are mods that are out there in the future, which I can't get into, which will provide the F-35B every

bit as much capability as the current Prowler. So I'm very optimistic about that. So that made – that was a good business decision.

The other thing that happened was that, when we made this decision in 1998, we decided – and I came to the Pentagon in 2000, and so I was part of this effort at aviation – we decided we would skip a generation of what we called fourth-generation airplanes. We would skip that generation and not buy anything to replace the Prowler, the Hornet and the Harrier in the near term, and we would end up putting all our money and our hopes in the F-35B.

So besides the billion dollars a year you save by having one kind of airplane, we saved untold billions of dollars a year of monies that were not spent to recapitalize the TACAIR in the Marine Corps by waiting until the F-35B. So that gives you a sense. We've spent 10 to 12 years of not spending money on replacements and what we would call a third- or fourth-generation airplane, waiting for that fifth-generation Joint Strike Fighter. So that's money that has been saved.

So we find ourselves now, here at the end of 2010, and the F-35 – there are four of them, as I recall, flying at Pawtuxet River. The Air Force has their models flying, I think, at Edwards. And the Navy has one of their airplanes – one of their test models out at Pawtuxet River flying today. So the actual air vehicle is flying just fine. Horizontal flight – it flies perfectly. Vertical flight – it flies perfectly.

It's the transition between horizontal and vertical flight where they're discovering some issues, mechanically. I've been told that those issues actually have engineering fixes and, in fact, the engineering fixes are either in place now or they will be in place on the four airplanes that we have. Assuming that, that fixes them, then we'll be able to retrofit the airplanes that are currently on the assembly line. So that's our goal.

So these are mechanical fixes. We have engineers at Lockheed Martin and with the Department of the Navy that can help us figure this out. So any new airplane has issues. So the plan has been that when the F-18 and the Harrier run out of service life – and they will. They'll run out of hours; they'll run out of cats and traps; they'll run out of – but the airplanes will eventually end up being retired.

And depending upon what specific bureau number and what specific kind of airplane, that's somewhere around 2018 to 2020. So if we lose the STOVL Joint Strike Fighter, this is what it means to the nation. Right now, we have roughly 11 aircraft carriers. We have roughly 11 big-deck amphibious ships like the Kearsarge and the Iwo Jima and the Nassau and these ships.

So our nation has, effectively, 22 carrier-type capital ships. We want to put fifth-generation airplanes on 11 of those big-deck amphibs. If the F-35B doesn't make it, for whatever reason, then our nation is going to have only 11 Navy aircraft carriers with fifth generation, instead of 22 because what we'll end up doing is, somewhere along the line, the Harriers will run out of service life.

Right now, I don't have a replacement for the F-35B or the Harrier. And what we'll end up with, now, is our nation – this is bigger than the United States Marine Corps – our nation will only have 11 large-deck carriers with fifth-generation airplanes, instead of 22. IF you want to do our nation's bidding, more is better. So we don't have an answer for it. I'm optimistic. I'm very optimistic that the engineering fixes are absolutely possible. In fact, like I said, I think they're already done.

I don't know whether they're in the airplanes yet or not but I think they've already been figured out by the company. So I'm optimistic and I think the future of the airplane is bright. Again, if the airplane was not flying well, it would be a different story. The airplane is actually flying very well right now.

And by all accounts, as of last week, I think – you know, you schedule – each one of those four airplanes and test articles have so many flights they're supposed to make every month to test certain test points of the airplane. It's my understanding that the last two that were delivered – aircraft three and four – are ahead of their test schedule and have flown more test points and more sorties than what had been planned. So I'm optimistic.

Q: Hi, sir. Lacey Dean (sp), NBC San Diego. Obviously, you met with family members of the 3/5 yesterday, and I was wondering if you could share, part of your message to them and how you were able to somehow reassure them and comfort them during this difficult time, for that given unit. And also, can you speak to some of the particular challenges 3/5 is facing in Sangin? Because unlike some other kinds of – like Marja, Sangin has largely gone unreported up until now. So could you speak to some of those issues?

GEN. AMOS: Yeah, I'd be happy to. It is basically unreported. And it's interesting you bring that up because we were talking this morning – in fact, Major Plensner (sp) and I had a discussion and I just got off the phone talking to the assistant commandant of the Marine Corps just before I walked in here. And I said, you know, we've got to change that. We are reporting all throughout the theater about the other operations that are hard, other operations that have significance.

And for some reason, the battle at Sangin, the valley, is not being reported on. So I'm going to Afghanistan for Christmas. Sergeant Major Kent and I are going to spend Christmas there together. We'll leave sometime before the holidays and we'll spend the – and so we're working right now to turn that around. What I'm looking for is, I want to take somebody with me. I want somebody to go with me and go in there and live with those Marines for a short period of time and tell the story of the raw courage and sacrifice that those men – and it's mostly men up there.

You know, we have lots of great female Marines in Afghanistan, but in this piece right now, it's mostly men. And I want that story to be told because it's a story of heroism; it's a story of courage; it's a story of fidelity. It is the essence of what being *semper fidelis* is all about. So I'm going to try to fix that, and we're working on it right now to turn that around.

The families – we went there thinking – let me back up. One of the main reasons that Sergeant Major Kent and I came out, besides we wanted to look all the Marines in the eye and tell them thank you for being Marines in a period of time for great sacrifice, Sergeant Major Kent and I wanted to see the families of 3/5. And it's a tough fight. Three-five (3/5), who is no stranger to sacrifice and no stranger to tough missions, it's no surprise – shouldn't be a surprise to anybody – that the toughest fight we have had in a while, we've assigned to our most ready and toughest battalion.

Three-five is one of our more storied battalions in the Marine Corps – goes all the way back to Belleau Wood, when they charged the Germans in 1918 and turned the Battle of Paris around and saved Paris, France. So this battalion has been placed in a really, really tough spot. They've had a significant amount of casualties. Not significant amount of casualties because of anything other than the nature of the fight. I want to be very clear about that.

The enemy, in the Helmand province, now, has been pushed out of just about every place there. You saw on the news today where our commander on the ground in Helmand, Major General Rich Mills, who you know, one of our great war-fighting generals, made the comment publicly that the fight for Marja is over.

Now, let me take you back to the middle of February this year. Marines surrounded Marja with two battalions of Marines – 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 6<sup>th</sup> Marines and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 6<sup>th</sup> Marines – and three Afghan kandak battalions. And the fight went on. Marines landed in the middle of the city. It's really not a city. I want to be clear. It's really just an agrarian area out there spread out over the countryside.

And the Marines landed square in the middle of this thing and then they pushed out and they came in from the outside. And the press reported, over the next month-and-a-half to two months, oh my gosh, we looked real good to begin with, but then it started – you started reading reports, well, I'm not sure the Marines can do this. I'm not sure the NATO allies – can they absolutely do this? And it went on and on and on about, this may be a tougher fight than we reckoned, and I'm not sure that – I wonder if we're in over our heads.

That was the implication for all that I was reading from the press. You don't hear a thing about Marja anymore, do you? When was the last time anybody in this room can remember somebody saying, you know, I wonder how Marja's doing, until Rich Mills came on the Net today? You can go down to Marja right now –and Rich was down there with General Petraeus, stopped, had a cup of tea at a café. That's what's going to happen in Sangin.

When we went back to Iraq in February of 2004, we went into the Anbar province. Places like Fallujah and Ramadi were just the most feared places on the face of the planet. When was the last time you heard anything about Fallujah and Ramadi in the press? You can't think of it, and neither can I. That's what's going to happen in Sangin.

So I just want to give you a glimpse of what the future holds. The Taliban think that Sangin is going to be their last stronghold in the Helmand province. We've got news for them.

Sangin Valley will be just like Marja, will be just like Fallujah, will be just like Ramadi and Husaybah and all the other places.

The Marines will go in there. They're going to do the honorable thing. The people in those villages in that area and out in the countryside are going to realize we are not the enemy. And they're already beginning to realize that now and they're beginning to help the Marines. So back to the families. They are, more than anybody in this room, acutely aware of the cost of the battle up in Sangin Valley.

We figured it would take – just looking at our schedule, we'd spend about an hour; we spent about three hours. When I think of all the things I've done since I've become commandant of the Marine corps in the last seven weeks, this was probably the most worthwhile, most sincere, and I guess, uplifting three hours I've spent since I took this job because those ladies – and there was a dad there, one of our wounded lieutenants who lost his leg. We met him at Bethesda a couple of months ago. Just shortly after 3/5 got in, he lost his leg.

And he was there with his dad and his mom. We had one of the widows who lost her husband and her mom there. And that battalion is so well-led by its commander. The battalion commander's wife is such a strong, great woman. The support structure in that battalion is so strong that they didn't – they weren't angry at me. They just wanted to know – they were just appreciative of the fact that the senior leadership of the Marine Corps understands what's going on and we pay attention.

And we talked about that. I told them I talked to the battalion commander last Thursday on a VTC, said we're going to spend Christmas with the battalion out in the field – Sergeant Major Kent and I are – and I talked to General Mills on the VTC last Thursday. And I read a message that the battalion commander asked me to read to the families and I gave them an update. And I gave them the encouragement. I just said, the Marines are very, very encouraged. Their morale is high. They know what they're doing is the right thing and they know they will prevail.

And so we went along those lines for about three hours and the wives, families shared with the sergeant major and I. It turned out to be a great, great three hours. So the families are doing as well as they possibly can. It's a great sacrifice and I guess for the people of San Diego, I'd just like the people of San Diego to understand that's going on – that this is not business as usual, and this is a great battalion full of great leaders.

MR. : Sir, we've got about 10 minutes.

Q: Sir, just moving forward from there, as well, you know, obviously the assessment is coming out later on this month – the overall assessment, I guess, on how progress is being made. (Inaudible, off mic) – don't want you to misspeak there. But your own assessment – you're going there to have eyes on, and I'm sure you've already heard from General Mills, as well. Your own personal assessment? And you've sort of touched on a few of them, as Marja went so well down there.



GEN. AMOS: My assessment is – and I've been asked this question often. They say, General Amos – even before I became the commandant – can you tell me how we're doing? And I'm very optimistic. And this is not false optimism. Two years ago, I was in there and I visited bases – not bases – I visited combat outposts, forward operating bases that were right in the heart of enemy territory.

And once you landed in the helicopter, you had to jump out and jump in an armored vehicles because you never knew when the next mortar was going to hit or the next sniper shot was going to come down. I went there last Christmas, in some of these places – and I'll name some of them for you – Now Zad.

This time last year – I mean, right now – today's December the 8<sup>th</sup> – the Marines had surrounded Now Zad. The Taliban had driven the villagers out four-and-a-half years ago. There was not a villager from Now Zad that lived in the town. And they had driven them out, and the Taliban had ruled that city or that town for four-and-a-half years.

At this time last year, the Marines surrounded that place with two battalions and a kandak battalion and assaulted it. I walked into that village on December the 24<sup>th</sup> with the district governor holding my hand. The place was in rubble. The villagers had come back. There wasn't a Taliban around. The district governor took me into a school that he had just opened up.

And there were four groups of children in there, four male teachers, and they were all sitting on rugs – one chalkboard. And we think we've got it bad here in California education – I'm telling you, all they had was a chalkboard to teach with a piece of chalk and that was the extent of it. And he was conducting classes for the first time in four-and-a-half years as the people came back.

People came back to reclaim their homes. And they took me over to the corner – sorry, I've got one more thing I'm really the most proud of – and there was a little group of girls. And they were about this big. And I'll tell you that the absolute cutest girls on the face of the earth are young Afghan girls wearing beautifully colored clothes. And they were sitting there and they were in school. He was the first district governor I'm aware of in the Helmand province that put little girls in school.

So I went from place to place to place last year and I thought, man, this is good, compared to the year before. Well, we're going back Christmas, and those places, now – the bustling markets are open. The Marines have backed away in many of those places. The Afghan police are in place. They're critical. They are a critical point to have stability in these villages.

The police are there. The Afghan leadership is in place. The Afghan National Army is there. So the Marines can kind of back out of these places. And it's exciting. So I'm very – I can't speak to the rest of Afghanistan. That's what I tell everybody. I can only talk to the piece of Afghanistan that the Marines have been assigned.

This is not wishful thinking. There has been a significant difference. You walked down to Nawa and a little over a year ago, it was completely run by the Taliban. And you walk

through there and you're going to walk with the district governor, great, big guy – actually, he's a little, short, stocky guy, big beard. And he'll hold my hand – I did it with him – walk me through the market, walk me through his place where he's going to build his district headquarters, where he's going to build his hospital. So I'm very, very optimistic. And I think our nation has a reason for optimism, at least in our piece of it.

Q: Is that message getting out?

GEN. AMOS: Pardon?

Q: Is that message getting out?

GEN. AMOS: I think so, a little bit. You know, when I got up this morning, I was kind of reading the Early Bird and going through, and it's my understanding that General Petraeus is – I don't know what he's saying specifically about our – but I think the message that I got this morning on several articles from Secretary Gates' visit, there's optimism. We should be optimistic, at least in our piece of it I've been talking about.

Q: David Davis with KUSI TV here, Local 8. And from the general public's point of view, having said what you've said, in the last two months, 17 to 20 of the 3/5 have fatalities. People may not see that as progress, as success. Are we still in for the worst of it, or where do you see this going, in terms of fatalities, in terms of what the general public's going to see?

GEN. AMOS: First of all, I think we always need to go back and understand that this really is warfare. It's combat. And combat is not necessarily nice and combat is very unforgiving. Combat comes with casualties. And in our business, it's the young Marine on the ground. That really is the truth.

You can fly over it. You can look at it. I'm a pilot. I used to command this air wing. I took this air wing to war, so I appreciate what airplanes can do. But at the end of the day, it's young men and young women on the ground that have to maneuver on the ground and actually come face-to-face with the enemy.

Depending how determined that enemy is will dictate the amount of the struggle. The Taliban are very determined. They are skilled fighters. They've been doing this for decades. So we are up against skilled fighters. And I'll say that – and I'll tell you, we have met with the great success that I just got done describing, and it has not been without a cost. Nor was it without cost in Iraq. We lost a significant amount of Marines and had a significant amount of Marines wounded to get to the point where you don't hear anything about Ramadi or Fallujah, or these other towns that I've mentioned their names.

So there's a cost in anything like that. So there's a cost right now in Sangin. Sangin is viewed, in our zone, the Helmand province, as, probably, the last Taliban stronghold. They've been up in that valley – it's a very agrarian valley. When I say lush, it's not lush like we would imagine – Southern California lush – but it has, because it has a river in it and because it's surrounded and the climate in there – you can grow a lot of stuff.

Well, the stuff that's being grown up there are poppies. And the poppies now feed the drug trade and the Taliban harvest off the top percentage of that money, and that feeds their ability to buy weapons and feeds the insurgency. So that's where the Taliban have been. And we've gone up there and we have been very successful. We are now spreading out in the valley to places where, quite honestly, coalition forces have never been.

And that's where the Taliban are kind of squeezing out to. So it's an individual, personal fight right now. And that kind of fighting, against a determined enemy, has a cost. And that's where we find ourselves today. It will stop. We will be successful. But the cost has already been pretty healthy, as you talked about.

Q: James Gill with FOX 5. Sir, could you talk to me – I've got a tough question and an easy question for you. The tough question first: You were quoted in the Washington Post as saying there's risk involved with the repeal of "don't ask, don't tell." What do you mean by that, and would you feel differently if it was peacetime, as opposed to having multiple fronts? The easy question is, what would you like for Christmas?

GEN. AMOS: What would I like for Christmas? I want some great reporter and cameraman to go with me into Afghanistan to tell the story, with the sergeant major and I, on Sangin. So that's what I want for Christmas, and I want it to get national and I want it to get out. And I want it to be unbridled and I want the story of the Marines' courage that are up there doing the fighting – I want that story out. So that's what I want for Christmas.

Look, last Friday, all four Joint Chiefs of Staff and the commandant of the Coast Guard sat in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Everybody in here watched that, and you're well-aware of all that took place during that hearing. We were asked – our obligation – and when I became the commandant of the Marine Corps, I stood in front of the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee when I was in my confirmation hearing, and I was asked if I would swear that I would always tell the truth, that I would always give my best advice and that, if asked, that I would give my personal opinion.

And I raised my right hand and I swore that I would do that. And I take that obligation seriously. And what was asked last Friday by all four members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was to give our best military advice. The Senate asked that. The Senate, if you read the – or watched the hearings – right towards the end, almost every single senator – it didn't matter what side of the issue you were on – looked at all five of us and thanked us for our honesty; thanked us for our sincerity; and thanked us for our willingness to provide our best military advice.

I gave my best military advice last Friday. Where I sit right now, this issue sits right where it belongs. We are a military that's even – our very existence, in the Marine Corps, is established in law by Congress. Our civilian leaders are in charge of our government and they're in charge of our Marine Corps. And I believe that with all my heart.

I have great confidence in the Senate. I have great confidence in the civilian leadership. This issue rests with them right now. I've given them my best military advice and I'm going to

sit back now and I'm going to wait until the Senate and the leadership of our nation makes a decision as to what they want to do, and then I'm going to enforce it with every fiber I have in my body as the commandant of the Marine Corps.

Q: Hi. Allison St. John with the KPBS – the local public radio station. I was at another event this morning in which there was some discussion from General Jackson, who mentioned that the medical care of Marines in Afghanistan there is so high quality that 98 percent of them who are injured survive. But the cost – we've been talking about the cost of the war – do you think this nation is really prepared for the cost of this war, in terms of the casualties and the injuries of the Marines that –

GEN. AMOS: I think they are. I think they have been. I think they've proven that. You know, we've had close to 10,000 Marines wounded since we crossed the border in Marja in 2003. And I have not seen, in anything – and Sergeant Major Kent and I, and our wives, travel a lot and visit – now, in the job I'm in, I don't have a lot of spare time, but prior to this, when I was the assistant commandant and I was the MEF commander, we tried to go to as many of the major military treatment facilities as we could.

First of all, I have not seen any finer medical care. I don't think it exists anywhere in the world. You pick the most famous hospital that you read about or see on TV and they're not providing any better care than Bethesda or Walter Reed or Brooke or Balboa, number one. So the care is there. The will to care is there.

I've not seen any shrinking of the will of the American people or the taxpayers, or Congress – in fact, Congress, quite honestly, has been our greatest supporter in this thing, to the point where they – I mean, they dictate, you know, you pay attention, military. You pay attention and don't you dare even throttle back at all on the care and the attention for our families in our military. So I've not seen anything at all. I have no indications – in fact, I'd be the most surprised person in the room if somebody said, you know, we've lost our will to provide the care, to pay for the care, even though it's very, very costly.

One other point on that: What we've seen, of late, is in addition to the Department of Defense medical care, we've seen significant groups of other medical professionals – not only the mental, but physical – step forward, inspired by great Americans and their benevolence, to come forward and care for our families and provide, maybe, some care that is not readily available.

And I'll give you an example. Up the road up here at the University of California, Los Angeles, there is a member of the board of directors by the name of Ron Katz. He's not a doctor. He's just a great American. He saw one of our young Marines – in fact, he was one of my young Marines – Corporal Aaron Mankin had a burned face in January of 2005. And he didn't have a nose. His lips were all gone – no ears. And Ron Katz contacted UCLA medical and the head of plastic surgery, Dr. Tim Miller, and he says, can't we do something about this?

And they put a new – they rebuilt his face. And they've done it to about 30-plus Marines, soldiers, sailors and airmen. We're seeing that in other areas around this nation. So not only

have I not seen a lack of will for money and, kind of, stick-to-it-iveness; I've also seen just the opposite among the population of our great country. They're stepping up to the plate and it just warms my heart.

Q: And General Jackson also said, this morning, that if the "don't ask, don't tell" policy is approved, he would adjust at Camp Pendleton. What do you see as the most difficult adjustment that would have to be made?

GEN. AMOS: If the policy is repealed, then the Marine Corps – there will not be – the Marine Corps will step right up to the plate, as I said in my testimony, and we'll get on with it. And I'll leave it at that, okay?

Q: Tony Perry with the Los Angeles Times. The fight against the IED – has it gone about as far as it can go or is there anything on the horizon that can mitigate its ability to kill and maim? Any technology on the horizon? Any four-legged additions on the horizon – the dogs – that we can look forward to in the next 12 months?

GEN. AMOS: First of all, there's a great amount of research and development that's been going on, now, since I was head of requirements as a three-star down at Quantico. I remember speaking to the DARPA national convention in Los Angeles about four years ago, and there was about 3,000 scientists. And I challenged them to find some ability to pre-detonate IEDs. In other words, there's some device that always is the triggering mechanism.

And I'm not talking about the pressure plate that you step on that completes the electrical – but something follows itself to the actual explosive, itself, and initiates the explosion. That's what I've been looking for. To date, we have not been able to find that. We've tried high energy and that's not particularly been successful. We've tried ground-penetrating radar, and that's not been – that's been met with mixed reviews.

We've tried the ability to look at the ground, over time – keep filming ground over time and look for changes in the ground. And that's been met with mixed reviews. I will tell you that there is significant effort trying to figure out how we can pre-detonate the IEDs. The thing that has turned out to be the most successful for us has been the human element of this. And let me tell you – and it began right up here at Camp Pendleton, and it was called Combat Hunter.

And the Marine Corps went and found a big-game hunter in Zimbabwe. They found a big-game hunter in Colorado. They found a tracker – a man that taught animal tracking and human tracking down at Fort Huachuca. And they found – and I believe he was from Chicago – a retired Chicago cop who worked the streets for 40 years. And they put together a course on what they call observation.

In other words, how does a cop in Chicago or New York City survive? Because they learn observation skills. They learn to pay attention to what's going on in the environment. They learn to see what has changed. So then you talk to the big-game hunter and they spend thousands and thousands of dollars to buy a set of binoculars that are so pure, and they know

where to look and they know what to look for and they use these binoculars, as they look out, to track big game.

And then we bring the hunter in – the man that is trained to track animals and track human beings from Fort Huachuca. He's been teaching it and doing it for 30 years. You bring him in and now, all of a sudden, you've got a potential combination where you're going to teach Marines how to become more observant; you're going to teach Marines what to look for; we're going to give the Marines the equipment, in the way of high-quality binoculars; and we're going to teach them how to look out for one another in an environment that, perhaps, they've never been in before. This includes IEDs. This includes snipers.

You go into a village – now, what we taught them – and by the way, this really works. So you want to talk about something that's not high tech that really works? I was with Marines and they demonstrated this. And there were two IEDs out in an area in an old Army base in California, and these Marines had never been there before – had not seen this. And the IEDs were planted precisely the way they're planted in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The snipers were in areas where they would be found in villages. And the Combat Hunter team of about five Marines walked through that – this is an urban area. And they went through practicing their observation skills, looking the likely places, looking for where the IEDs would more than likely be, using binoculars and using the skills. They found every single IED – every one – before they got to them. And they found every sniper.

So we train our Marines that way right now. And I'll tell you that we are finding more IEDs in Sangin, which, there are a lot in the ground up there – we're finding more IEDs in Sangin than we are stepping on them. We're finding them. We're finding them because of the observation skills. So Mr. Perry, I don't know of a single panacea. If I could find one, I wouldn't care what it would cost: I would pay it to find IEDs with some mechanism.

We've got Assault Breacher Vehicles now that go down the road that can pre-detonate or detonate. We've got mine rollers. We've got these Assault Breacher Vehicles that, you know, if there's a minefield, it will fire a line charge out and then the whole thing blows up and it detonates the mines. And then we can walk across where that area was. So we're trying everything we possibly can, but there's not one single – the best we have are the observation skills to the Marines we've taught.

Q: Dogs? Do you have the rest of those dogs there?

GEN. AMOS: I'm sorry, what?

Q: The dogs? Are you going to have professional dogs there?

GEN. AMOS: Oh yeah, oh yeah. The dogs have just been terrific. And in fact, we've just put more dogs into Afghanistan. I won't tell you how many, but we just brought a pretty significant installment of new labs in, and we're sending a pretty sizable amount of those up into Sangin. In fact, I suspect they're already there.

But dogs have been great. We were out at Twentynine Palms the day before yesterday and one of our battalions is in their final stages of prep. And they had their labs out there, and there were four of them. And every one of them is a combat vet. One of them had been on, I think –

MR. : Seven, seven.

GEN. AMOS: Seven deployments. I asked them how their noses were, and they said, sir, their noses are great. So dogs – I mean, this is pretty basic stuff here – a dog and a Marine, which, by the way, is the best combination on the face of the earth. Those Marines love those dogs. They keep them warm in the cold winter.

MR. : Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much. I think that's all the time we have today, sir.

GEN. AMOS: Okay, thank you, everybody.

Q: Thank you.

(END)