

**OFFICE OF
THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS**

CNAS DINNER AND ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

**REMARKS BY
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COMMANDANT,
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GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS: First of all, we are – Bonnie and I are honored to be here. This is the gorgeous day I was talking about with a – (inaudible) – organization, CNAS – (inaudible). When you said – (inaudible) – very cautious – (inaudible) – okay, you can't – (inaudible) – and you can't say good things about anybody – (inaudible) – service. But I will tell you, I've watched this organization from afar, participated in several – (inaudible) – when I was down at Quantico. And it is a first-class organization. So thank you for the opportunity; I'm looking forward to it. (Inaudible.) To keep you aware of our two moms – (inaudible) – Mary (sp) and Molly (sp) – (inaudible) – acknowledged with as commandant when – (inaudible).

That is a path, as we were talking to probably, you can choose – probably not one that he got excited about – and he said, I'm going to be a Marine – (laughter) – I'm going to join up to be a grunt, or I'm going to be a -53 pilot. So thank you for – (inaudible). And I didn't have the – (inaudible) – a fine young man. And Mary – (inaudible) – would certainly – (inaudible) – in summer, so he's a very – (inaudible).

One of the things that happens now – I've got a great chaplain, and she's a Navy – (inaudible). And she's the chaplain of the Marine Corps. In fact, she's the first female chaplain we've ever had in the Marine Corps. And – (inaudible) – in this kind of testosterone – (inaudible) – called the Marine Corps. You know – (inaudible) – aren't given; and all the Marines go – (inaudible) – I'm not sure who signed up for this.

And I'll tell you what, having been in the Marine Corps for 41 years and seeing a lot of chaplains, we have, in my estimation, the finest chaplain of the Corps we've ever, ever had. And we've had some good ones. She's great.

So Margaret comes by to me. And we sit down, and we have a little discussion on what's going on. We kind of talk about spiritual needs; you know, she's just – (inaudible). And so we have a little bit of – (inaudible) – and I talk to her about the things that are important in the Corps. And so then, she even – she goes on. And she remembers me – (inaudible). So that's very important.

Well, I was talking to – or a week ago – when I said, you know, Margaret, we're under a lot of pressure here: The budget and OSD policies are putting a lot of pressure on me to – (laughter) – sorry – (inaudible). No, I'm just kidding. But I really need to – I really needed to start praying for a lot of money to come in the Marine Corps – (inaudible, laughter).

So we did. And she said, you know – (inaudible) – this great relationship; and she says, you know, Jim, our oldest son is graduating from high school this year. And you know, you might pray for him a little bit – (inaudible). She says, well, we had this – we weren't sure what he was going to do for the rest of his life, and so we thought we would kind of set up a test for him.

And so they did one day while he was at school – excuse me, while her sons were at school, Tim and Margaret put a lot of whiskey on this nightstand, a Bible, the silver dollars and Playboy magazine. And they thought to themselves, you know, if he comes home, let's – and this will be a test. If he comes home and he picks up the Bible, then thank god, he's going to be a preacher like his mom. If he comes home and picks up a silver dollar, he's going to put it in his pocket and he'll certainly go to be in the financial world, and somewhere along the line be a banker. So that would be good, too. However, if he picks up the bottle of whiskey, then Lord help us if he's going to be a drunk. And if he should pick up the Playboy magazine and look at the centerfold, then he's going to be nothing but a womanizer.

So the day went on and then they heard something – (inaudible) – went in his bedroom, hiding behind those doors – (inaudible). And he throws his book bag down, picks up his jacket – (inaudible) – and looks over at his nightstand, and there were these items. So he picks the bottle up and shoves it under his arm; takes the silver dollar, flips it a couple times, shoves it in his pocket – (inaudible) – uncorks that bottle of Wild Turkey, and takes a big swig while he's looking at the centerfold of the Playboy magazine. And his mother Barbara (sp) gasped and says, my God, he's going to be a United States Marine. (Laughter.) It says a lot about who we are. It certainly is – some people think we are, I think.

Look, I did just come back – (inaudible) – with George Smith (sp) – Joe Plenzler (sp) – several of us – (inaudible) – normally with me; he was with me – he just got back from Afghanistan. And I'll be happy to answer any questions about my sense for where we are in Afghanistan. I'm optimistic, but most of my experience is generally – (inaudible) – in Iraq. So I've been a little bit of an accidental tourist in and out of Afghanistan for the last – through the last three and a half, four years. But I have gone – (inaudible) – and I've watched the area change in the Helmand province dramatically over the last three and a half to four years, areas where your son is in Nawa. We fought a pretty fierce battle there about a year and a half ago. And yet Nawa is just exactly the way – (inaudible) – was described when we sent you to – (inaudible). So this is what's happening – kind of peace has broken out all over Nawa.

There is reason for optimism. As I've watched the area change, I've watched the Helmand province change, it's not a matter of winning or losing. I get asked that question all the time, and I – and I never – (inaudible). It's a function of how are we doing with regards to building the capacity of the Afghan nation to take care of its own issues with the Taliban. And I am optimistic about that. Sometime in the early part of the summer, President Karzai has already announced several areas that he is going to turn back over to Afghan control. And one of them is the capital – provincial capital of the Helmand province, which is Lashkar Gah. And that is – that's where the government is. And we happen to be fortunate in the Helmand province. We have a – we have a phenomenal governor in Governor Mangal. They got a great corps commander that's fearless, the – (inaudible) – corps commander of the Afghan National Army.

So my sense is there's reason for optimism. And I can talk about that and answer any questions that you might want to talk about.

Well, I had the three or four months over the summer to prepare the incoming commandant. I set – carved out the afternoons – he's the assistant commandant. That's why I

had an opportunity to watch the Marine Corps – (inaudible) – for several months. And I took a small handful of really bright Marines. I realize that’s an oxymoron that – (inaudible). Really bright Marines, one of the Navy units – and what we – what I wanted to do was sit with them and think about the – (inaudible) – think about what happens to the Marine Corps post-Afghanistan environment. We will come out of Afghanistan one day. We are out of Iraq. The U.S. Army is still in Iraq with a – with a sizeable footprint, but they will come out of Iraq to some degree; it’s yet to be determined what – you know, what the final situation on the ground is going to be.

But we are out of Iraq. We have 80 Marines on the ground there just spread out all over the staffs. That will happen to the Marine Corps one day when we come out of Afghanistan. It’s hard to say precisely when that will be. In fact, I can’t say that, but what I am confident is, one day we will come out.

So the level of the Marine Corps – where will the Marine Corps do the nation’s bidding, and what kind of environment will that be? Spent a little bit of time – (in fact ?) spent a lot of time looking at the future security environment. And I’ll talk just briefly about that here in just a second. But as we – as we went through the future security environment and we articulated the mission of the Marine Corps – I wanted every Marine to know precisely where the Marine Corps fits in our nation’s arsenal of Department of Defense capabilities. You know, I can look around – and I can go over to Dewey Muldin (ph) across the table – a retired colonel, a great American. I’d say, Dewey, what’s the Marine Corps doing? He’d say, okay, this is our mission. And he’d get it probably about 85-percent right. And then I’d look – I could go over to Colonel George Smith, and I say, George, tell me. And he’d get it about 85-percent right. What I wanted – I wanted to be clear – I wanted our lane to be clear to the Marines so that the Marines would know and articulate it.

So to do that, we had to figure out what the world was going to look like, best guess. We knew we weren’t going to get it exactly right, but we knew we couldn’t afford to get it exactly wrong. And we had to look into the future. So we spent a considerable amount of time in my former life down at Quantico, about a year’s worth looking, to try to determine what the future security environment will look like. We had a lot of help. We had help from CNAS. We had help from all the other services. We had help from our allies. So we had help from industry. You don’t think that some of the big, major software companies and oil companies want to know what the world’s going to look like? It’s the bottom line for them.

So with that, looking at the world to kind of define the mission, we can up with several things. One is, the Marine Corps is our nation’s middleweight force. When I used to have the senior leadership at the Department of Defense and just having a discussion about this, they said, you know, Jim, we see the Marine Corps somewhere between soft forces and heavy land forces. You’re somewhere kind of in the middle of that. You’re not light. We have forces that can do light stuff. We already have special-ops forces. And we’re not designed to be – the nation doesn’t buy us to be a heavy land force. But we can do that. And I make no apologies for what happened in the Anbar province because I think we did pretty doggone good. I mean, I think we saddled right up alongside our Army brothers, and we did a very good job. I think that’s happening in Helmand.

But when the president asks us to do those kinds of things, then we do it. It's been in our history for 235 years. But that's not why the nation buys a United States Marine Corps predominantly. It buys the United States Marine Corps to be our nation's crisis-response force. It buys us the equipment and allows us and causes us to be at a high state of readiness so that when things happen around the world, the nation has a hedge force; it has a force that is hopefully forward-deployed on naval vessels, ideally, that can react to that.

So I term – I kind of coined the phrase, our nation's expeditionary force-in-readiness. And that became kind of the headline for the Marine Corps. And then I'll talk about our lane in just a second. But let me tell you what this expeditionary force-in-readiness has done just in the last 12 months. I mean, this gives you a sense for the level of effort, because over the next year, two years, three years, we're going to be making business decisions on what our nation needs with regards to its military capabilities. And those are going to be balanced against what our nation can afford.

And the difference then – ideally, you would like to be able to afford precisely what you need. Probably not going to happen. But the difference then becomes risk and how much risk is our nation willing to take. And then when you do take risk, then you need to sort through, OK, what is the mitigation strategy? If something happens, I've taken risk in this area; is there a – is there a hedge capability, is there a – is there a mitigation strategy or a force that can – that can relieve some of the pressure? And that's – being honest with you, that's where I see the Marine Corps fitting in. We are that critical crisis-response force.

To a couple of examples: We sailed the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit off the coast of Pakistan, Karachi. And they were flying combat missions with those Harriers, those STOVLs – Short Takeoff and Vertical Landing Harriers – off the amphib. Meanwhile, we took -53 Echo heavy-lift helicopters. We went up north to help the flood victims in Pakistan. Guess what we do as a nation? I mean, this is a country that – by the way, the northern part of Pakistan is a pretty tough area. And yet the people who we – who are our friends were ravaged with a flood. And so we flew 400 miles inland and spent the next month and a half trying to do everything we possibly could to help them.

We sailed the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, three ships – large ships – and their crew 30 days early so they could go help as well. Now, 30 days doesn't sound like a big deal. But when you're on a short turnaround cycle with naval ships and you have things scheduled, 30 days is a big deal. I mean, that unit sailed, and it wasn't even certified. You know, there's a series of tests you have to take. I'm not talking about written tests; I'm talking about doing practical application kind of things.

So they saddled up alongside of Karachi. And so we had six ships there that were flying missions up in northern Pakistan, flying combat missions in Afghanistan and sailing one of the ships 1200 miles to the west, and recaptured the Magellan Star from the Somali pirates.

Meanwhile, the 15th Marine Expeditionary sails on. This is now the wintertime. The 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit sitting off the coast, flying missions. And General Mattis and General Petraeus say, you know, the Marines have had a pretty – I mean, they had success in

Helmand over the winter. You know, the winter fighting season everybody talks about – we've been pushing the Taliban back pretty hard. Let's reinforce that success, and let's put 1400 Marines off that 26th Marine Expedition, and we'll put them ashore.

So we put them ashore. Well, guess what happened? Tunisia erupts, and then Egypt erupted, and then Libya erupted. We had took two of those ships minus the Marines, added the airplanes to one of them, and they sailed up through the – around Yemen through the Red Sea through the Suez, then off the coast of Libya. In the meantime, we – not activated – we got 20 hours' notice; we took 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines, and took the majority of that battalion and put them on airplanes and flew them to the Mediterranean where they joined up with the ship.

Why am I telling you this? It's because that's what a crisis-response force does for our nation. It gave the president and our national command authority the ability to respond to Libya. What a lot of folks don't know is in the early days of the no-fly zone, the majority of the flights that were taking place were taking place with AV8-B Harriers, fixed-wing airplanes flying off of – (inaudible) – amphib. When the F-15E pilot in – was – you know, ended up ejecting out of his airplane, he and his WSO, 90 minutes from the time they were notified off the Kearsage to pick him up and bring him back aboard the Kearsage – in the MV-22s. That's what – that's the hedge that our nation does.

I talk – I get to talk to all the war colleges and their bright-and-shining lieutenant colonels. And they're real smart, and they've been going through their curriculum, and they're looking for schoolbook solutions. And I was asked up at Army War College and at Navy, well, as a member of the Joint Chiefs, you know, how come we didn't move sooner on the Libya operation? And I told them – I said, you know, the difference between real life and what you're experiencing in the classroom is real life doesn't play by the rules. Real life – the solutions are often not readily apparent. Real life, sometimes the vision is occluded, and you need the ability to step back and look at things and try to make, OK, what's really the best move rather than just jump in on plans.

And that's what we do. We buy decision space for the United States of America. That's what your Marine Corps does. It allows – because we are this crisis-response force, because we are hopefully forward-deployed on naval vessels and engaging in all the things that QDR 2010 kind of articulated, then we're there. And when something happens, whether it be a Libya or whether it be off the coast of Northern Japan – within 12 hours, 550 Marines launched from Okinawa and flew north on 42-year-old helicopters and our C-130s, and positioned themselves on mainland Japan without even a mission. They had not been told do one thing. But the three-star commander on Okinawa anticipated that they would be needed. And sure enough, the next day as dawn broke, we ended up flying those Marines in those old helicopters up there to help our friends, the Japanese, at Sendai. Nobody even knew their reactors were going to have a problem. We just knew there was huge devastation.

They're responding to today's crisis, with today's force today. That's what that nature of the Marine Corps does for our nation. And so as we began to articulate this in this – in the effort to try to carve out precisely so the Dewey Muldins (ph) and the George Smiths and the Joe

Plenzlers (ph) and everybody else could look and say, OK, that's what the Marine Corps does for our nation. That's where we fit.

You know, the Army has – the Army has a domain. And when we think about the United States Army, we think about land. Now they have aviation assets. They have cyber. They have information operations. They have all of that. So I don't mean to say that they don't cooperate in other domains. But when we think of the United States Army, we think of the land domain.

And when we think of the United States Air Force, we think of air and space. And we should. But yet they have forces – they've got special-ops guys and gals – I mean, they have all that. They have cyber. But that's their domain.

When we think of the Navy, we think of the maritime. We think of the water above, below. But when you think of the Marine Corps, if you look at a Venn diagram, imagine this thing, the Marine Corps kind of intersects all three of those domains. We don't really have a domain. We have kind of a lane. And that's the only way that I can describe it, is the lane that the Marine Corps operates in. And it straddles all three of those domains in the other services.

And then the question is, OK, is that lane worth – is the juice worth the squeeze? And I'll tell you, as America's crisis-response force, it doesn't mean that somebody else can't respond to crises. But we are – I mean, that's what we do. Our readiness is high. Our equipment is expeditionary. We have an expeditionary mindset. We can live in some pretty hard conditions. We don't need some of the niceties that we've experienced over the last 10 years of fighting. And I'll tell you, we were in some places over on Christmas and the last – a week ago where Marines haven't had a shower in well over a month.

I'll tell you one story, because this really sets it up. We were all the way to the southern part of the Helmand province, where the Helmand River turns and goes west, and it parallels the Pakistan border and kind of heads over towards Iran. And right down there is about 120 miles of open desert between the Pakistan border and where the Helmand – I think we're down the rivers. We put a light armored reconnaissance battalion on the ground. Those are the guys driving around in those LAVs. And they're kind of the modern-day rat patrol.

While we were there, the battalion was turning over with the new battalion that was coming in. We were standing there talking – Sergeant Major Kent and I were talking to probably about close to 1500 Marines. And it was 115 degrees outside. You know, these – a lot of these kids hadn't had a bath in a while, but they were OK with that – (they're already living pretty ripe?).

But while we were standing there, in drove four of these LAVs, and filthy – I mean, just covered with dirt. And out of the top of them, four bright, shining faces with helmets on, with mics on and waving and smiles on their face; packs – all their packs and all their kit kind of tied to the outside of the LAV. They looked like a bunch of – I won't say it – anyway, they looked like a bunch of folks on a summer vacation maybe in Europe, OK? I'll leave it at that.
(Laughter.)

And they drove in, and I asked the battalion commander – I said, now, these – (inaudible) – who is coming in because we’re going to go home next week. They had left that base camp in February. Ladies and gentlemen, this is May, a week ago. They had not been back to that base camp. So what had they been living in? They’d been living in their LAVs. Marines had been going out in their helicopters, and they’re going out there, dropping off ammunition, water, food, medical supplies, mail. So for almost three and a half months, I guarantee you, they hadn’t had a bath because they hadn’t been close to the Helmand river. And they’d been living out of their LAVs.

So that’s – I’m not trying to – it’s not bravado, but I’m just trying to give you a sense for this crisis-response force and when we can go into the places of the world, where, I think, we will operate unless we come out of Afghanistan.

Which kind of takes me to the future security environment. And it’s really – well, I get asked, what are you going to do for a living, Amos, when they come out of Afghanistan? And my sense, there’s going to be no shortage of war. I think – my sense is – you know, I think we’ve heard the secretary of defense say probably it will be a long time before – or some time before American commits a large ground force on the ground again. And my sense is, I agree with Secretary Gates. I think it’s going to be – so does that mean everything’s going to be great? No, I think – I think what we’re seeing around the world in some of the – some of the sense of lawlessness and some of the sense of extremism that’s going to occupy our nation’s attention for quite some time over the next many years.

So my challenge is to try to – try to strike a balance between what I believe the world’s going to look like, this force that I believe we are going to operate in, and then try to balance that against kind of the fiscal realities of where we are and where we’re headed. So what I’d like to do is maybe just take just another minute or two and just – and then I’ll go over this for questions; we can all stay as late as anybody wants to ask questions.

But by putting it in kind of the who, what, where, when and why format, let me just use that, then I’ll briefly go through this. The “who” obviously is the Marine Corps. And forgive me for being – (inaudible) – but they asked the commandant of the Marine Corps to come talk to you. They didn’t ask the chief of staff of the Army or Norrie Schwartz or Gary Roughead, so I got to talk about Marines. So forgive me for that, OK? I actually can be a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and talk ecumenically.

But as we take a look at the Marine Corps and reshaping it, this is – you know, I look in the future. This is – the future force is not going to be the force that we have today. It’s going to be a force that’s been recrafted. It’s going to be a force that’s going to be reshaped based on the lessons learned in the last few years of war. Last fall, Secretary Gates went out to San Francisco, and he stood at the Marine Memorial Hotel – which is a great place, and I would recommend it to anybody that goes to San Francisco. And you don’t have to be a Marine to stay there; we’ll take – we’ll take anybody with money. And – but he stood out there at the Shultz lecture, and he challenged the Marine Corps. And I was the lady-in-waiting at the time. I was about a month away from taking the helm as the 35th commandant.

And he challenged the Marine Corps. And he said you need to define yourself. You need to take a look at what the Marine Corps is going – should look like in a post-Afghanistan environment, and you need to think about the lessons learned.

Well, when the secretary of defense says something like that, you know, we pretty much paid pretty close attention. And we did. And that then began to generate this thing called the Force Structure Review effort. We spent the last – all of fall taking a look with about 60 brilliant and really smart Marines down at Quantico, and we locked them up. We locked them up in the basement of our big building down there, and I shoved pizzas under the door. We didn't let them out until they had come out with the products and some sense of the direction.

And ended up with a force that would come down from 202,000 down to 186,800 – but it incorporates the lessons of 10 years of combat; it reshapes the Marine Corps. I think it's a much more capable Marine Corps; I think it's a much more affordable Marine Corps. We're downsizing numbers of units; we're – (inaudible) – headquarters. I mean, that's pretty significant. I mean, we're getting rid of 21 headquarters, and we're combining headquarters; we've changed in many ways our – (inaudible) – the landscape of the Marine – we're still battalions and squadrons; we're still that expeditionary force. But based on what we think the future security environment is, we built a force that can operate in that.

The other thing that we've done is, we've taken all these high-demand, low-density requirements that have been plaguing all of us for the last 10 years, and we said, let's make them – let's make them right-density, high-demand – let's get the right amount of Marines in there.

So we've done that; we've built that force. We're probably about another 60 days away now from having all the detailed analysis of moves, rank structure, cost, how many vehicles. To give you an example, we're going to come down from 42,500 ground vehicles – go down to 32,000 vehicles. We've asked for and reduced by 25 percent the amount of ground vehicles the Marine Corps has. And that's a significant expense; that's a significant savings.

How about (what ?)? Well, we've talked about the SECDEF's strategic review; that's what we did. I will tell you, there will probably be some more of those – I'm a big boy, I can understand that. And as they come up, as they're required and make sense, then the Marine Corps will adjust – (inaudible) – accordingly.

But what we have done – and today, we're the only service that's done it – we actually spent the time to put the rigor in determining, OK, what should that force look like based on the guidelines the secretary of defense gave me based on that future security environment and the mission moving forward? We've actually done that. So there's a lot of rigor behind it that's – (inaudible).

Where – I talked a little bit about the future security environment and kind of where we're – I think we're going – Marines – I think it's going to be in the lawless places of the world. I think that there could be areas where crime – everything from narcotics to religious extremism to – those are the places that – or those are the kinds of places where our nation may very well have interests. Kind of hard to imagine when I describe it that way, but when you think about,

well, how did Somalia get to where it was? You know, if we had an opportunity many, many years ago to engage in that, then perhaps – and I don't know this, but I'm just – I'm just guessing – perhaps Somalia would be a different country than it is today.

My sense is that the Marine Corps is going to operate in areas of the world that we're not even tuned into right now. And we'll do it at our nation's – to represent our nation's interest. And I think that's the Marine Corps that we're going to build.

Probably towards the end here, lastly, or next to last is the whole idea of assuming a level of risk. When we designed the Marine Corps from 202,000 where we are right now down to 186,800, we were asked to take risk at the high end. Well, what does that mean?

That means it built a need for the Marine Corps to go and go to some country, be a part of a major theater war, and be able to sustain itself for long periods of time, be able to rotate forces through there, maybe be able to do other things around the world as well.

If you take risk at the high end, it doesn't mean you don't have the capability to do that – because we do. If something happens in one of the – one of the major areas of the world that traditionally requires a large amount of forces, the Marine Corps will be there. But we'll go there and we'll stay. And we won't leave till we come home – I mean, we won't leave until it's over. We won't have the depth on the bench and be able to rotate forces in and out – large combat forces. And that's OK. I think that's a risk that is a smart one to take.

So we have taken that risk, and in doing so, we were returning back to what I call our frugal roots. You know, for years, the Marine Corps has been known to be the penny-pinchers of all the services. It became a point of bragging rights for the Marine Corps; some of the equipment we have, even some of the personal gear we carry, and those things – I remember when we got GORE-TEX, and it was General Krulak, and we all thought we'd died and gone to heaven – (laughter). We have GORE-TEX.

You wouldn't even step out in the rain today without your GORE-TEX jacket on. And yet, we were freezing in wet, cold snow up in northern Japan – excuse me – yeah, northern Japan and in Korea in our old, cotton jackets and cotton uniforms when GORE-TEX wasn't even a part of the Marine Corps kit – (inaudible).

That was kind of the extent of our foolishness. But we are returning back to our frugal roots. We are going to – I told Congress through my testimony this February and March, April, that the Marine Corps will only ask for what it needs. It will not – we're not asking for what we want.

And I've been – and there's a significant difference. My sense is, is that all the services have been flush with money for the last four or five years, six years. And we need to turn that around, and I think we're starting to see that way now.

I want to throw a figure out here. You've heard some of these before. Sounds – (inaudible) – bravado, but I don't make any apologies for it, because I think it's important – and

it's the bang for the buck – (inaudible) – numbers. We used to say – I think – I think General Mundy used to say – I think he was the first one who started it – for 5 point some odd percent of the total of Department of Defense budget, you've got all these capabilities.

So I was looking at that about six months ago, and I went, you know, what do we really – how much should we really cost? So I said, I don't want anybody to ever call me up (short ?). So we went through, looked at all the ships that the – that the Navy provides for us, all the airplane parts – (inaudible) – chaplains, doctors, I mean, everything. And for 8.5 percent of the total Department of Defense budget – and this was that – (inaudible) – so what we're talking is the (June 4th squeeze ?). (Inaudible) -- I'm talking about, this crisis response force, is 8.5 percent of the Department of Defense budget. And that 8.5 percent provides 31 percent of the operational ground combat forces for our nation. It provides 12 percent of the fighter/attack aircraft for our nation, and it provides 19 percent of – (inaudible) – for our nation for that 8.5 percent. Nothing's linear – (inaudible). I understand. But I think it's important for you to – for you to know that there is a thing for – (inaudible).

So – and the last thing – (inaudible) – OK, well, why do we want to do this? And this probably is a cornerstone in my remarks – (inaudible.) Al Gray, who was our 29th commandant, made this comment when asked a similar question, well, why do we – why do we need this? I mean, is this – is this important? And this is a direct quote from many years ago. And a lot of you in here know Al Gray is still alive, and a great patriot. He said: The United States is a maritime nation. It has and always will rely on the seas for commerce with its trading partners, for support of its friends and allies far from our own – far and off from our own shores; for on-scene response to crisis wherever – where we have no access, rights or (permissive facilities ?) and pursuing and representing our national interests around the world. Today, our diplomatic interests are well-served by an ability to unilaterally position a force and then – (inaudible) – control its deployment to suit – to suit the scenario. And that's what we do. That's what the Marine Corps does for our nation. That's our (lane ?). That's where we fit in here. Thank you for your patience and indulgence, and I'll be happy to take your questions. (Applause.)

MR. : General Amos, thank you, sir. I'm going to invoke the power of the chair and just throw the first question out. (Inaudible) – today at CNAS was Liam Fox, the secretary of state for defense of the United Kingdom. And it's fitting that you went on – (inaudible) – because he spent about 45 minutes of our one hour talking about – (inaudible). And he – (inaudible) – in doing it. And he made an offhand comment that stuck with me.

He – his assessment was that the United Kingdom was looking at a decade without modernization and recapitalization of existing equipment, not new acquisitions. And you make a compelling case for the Marine Corps as a middle-weight force. It's a lot heavier even than the force that I served in seven years ago – 400-plus M1s, 1,800 artillery cannons.

Could you speak a little bit about your thoughts on modernization, recapitalization, maintenance of what we've got, versus the need for new acquisitions in the context of your view of – (inaudible)?

GEN. AMOS: I sure can, (Major ?). First of all, (I agree ?). If you take a look at – take a look at the vehicles – and I mentioned 42,500 vehicles were coming down – we have – we have – we have a program under way now, the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle program, for the last three or four years. And the program is – it's various – you know, it's hard for me to determine just precisely where it is. But the vehicles that were beginning to take shape were expensive and were heavy. Now, two things that don't fit with us is heavy.

Now, let me backtrack just a second. When Congress gave \$40 billion to buy mine-resistant ambush protection vehicles for our men and women in Iraq, that was – not only was it a significant expense, but I'll tell you what, we have sons and daughters today – and I met them just last weekend in Afghanistan – that had they not been in those kinds of vehicles, they wouldn't be alive today. So (over ?) the war we've been in for the last 10 years has required vehicles to grow or necessitate (the really ?) heavier, larger, kind of more (throw ?) weight. There is a – there is a quality that mass and weight has when you have an explosive going off underneath it.

The problem is, is that for an expeditionary force, that becomes problematic. Those same vehicles you want to have to carry underneath a CS-53 helicopter or you want to be able to put on an amphibious ship, you want to be able to put on some type of delivery system, an LCAC, an air-cushioned vehicle coming out – (inaudible) – ship or an LCV (ph), it takes a space for heavy – and quite honestly, there are places in the world where you can't put an MRAP. It would just sink. Can you imagine putting an MRAP in the jungles of some of the islands around the Southwest Pacific? You'd never – it'd never make it.

So for us, as we look at Joint Light Tactical Vehicle being expensive and heavy, that didn't suit our needs. So we're – (inaudible) – on this. To your point, Nate (ph), we – (inaudible) – with the leadership of the Marine Corps three months ago, having a sense for where the economy's going – not the economy but the budget process – and said, OK, what's good enough. In other words, out of that 32,500 vehicles that – well, let's just imagine we got rid of 10,000 of them overnight. So now we're down to 22,500. How many of those are good enough for what our – (inaudible)? They're seven-ton trucks. They're MRAPs. They're new MATVs that we're running around Afghanistan. They're our old 35-, 40-year-old assault amphibious trackers. They're a host of these soft-sided vehicles – (inaudible). My sense is that if there's a large portion of those that are going to be good enough.

I think your point about the economic or the fiscal – (inaudible) – as it relates to the Department of Defense and probably national spending, kind of get into macroeconomics, this traditionally did – this traditional – (inaudible). In other words, we start down in – with Department of Defense spending, it takes about eight to 10 years before it starts turning back – (inaudible).

So as I look at it as the 35th commandant, you know, I think this is going to be an issue for the 36th commandant, and I think it's going to be an issue the 37th commandant will probably begin to realize some growth and some – and some modernization of significant proportions when we come out of it.

So I'm at a point right now, Nate (ph), where we are looking at what is good enough. You know, just because a Humvee doesn't go outside a forward operating base or combat operating post in Afghanistan, it doesn't mean that it can't leave the wire in some nation that is – (inaudible) – somewhere or someplace else around the world. So we're looking right now. There's an effort under way to determine what is it we really need. I'll tell you. If our old amphibious trackers – I think everybody in this rooms knows that I recommended to the secretary of defense they cancel the expeditionary fighting vehicle program. Now – and I can talk about that for anybody that has any questions about is. It was expensive, late and – (inaudible). And I say this is a bad – (inaudible).

But the vehicles that it was going to replace are old. So what do we do with those? Well, one of the things we're going to do for sure is we're going to put service life expansion on them, and we're going to – we're going to – we're going to drive them into some depot somewhere – (inaudible) – and we're going to take everything off of them and we're going to put a new motor in it; we're going to put a new transmission in it and we may put a new gun on it and – (inaudible) – on it and say, that's good enough for a portion of the Marine Corps.

So – and I wouldn't want to replace that with modernization – (inaudible). I have to start something, for those kinds of things take a while. But how much, and for how long? So we're working through that right now. We've got – I think everybody knows we're replacing our – really they're 42-, 44-year-old CS-46 helicopters. I mean, we're replacing – (inaudible). So you say, well, is that investment worth it? Well, they're on their ninth combat tour, (the airplanes ?). And they just did about a month and a half ago what we predicted they would do. We rescued that – (word inaudible) – pilot. You don't buy an airplane because it's going to recuse one Air Force pilot, no offense to – (inaudible). (Inaudible) -- a F-15 pilot, so just in case you don't know that. So we -- but you don't but for that, but that's OK for – (inaudible) – that can be used for that.

So there are things that we absolutely have to do. There are some things that I think we can postpone, and then there are others that we're probably still kind of – maybe we'll start recapitalizing in four or five years. So I think it's – (inaudible).

MR. : (Inaudible.)

Q: General, some experts have called for a review of military personnel benefits, health care, the retirement system. These benefits have been promised to the troops and yet they're eating up an increasingly large portion of defense dollars. I'm just wondering what is your guess, what is your opinion as to what the Joint Chiefs will say or do or recommend with respect to personnel benefits in the future.

GEN. AMOS: That's – that is a very pertinent and – question right now. But the – during testimony this last – this is February, March, April time frame – the Joint Chiefs signed a letter to Congress talking about raising TRICARE premiums. There's an example. And we were talking about raising the premium to \$5 a month. If you take a look at the Marine Corps budget, 60 percent of my operating – of what my total – what we call total obligation authority –

in other words, I have – if you gave me \$10 to operate the Marine Corps, \$6 of it would go to personnel costs.

Now, \$2 ½ dollars would go to operations and maintenance costs; in other words, the cost of my munitions and – not weapons but munitions, gas, fuel and deploying Marines into combat.

And then I have about a 2 percent – well, a little bit less than 2 percent – I've got a few – I've got R&D in there – (inaudible) – for procurement.

So I don't have a lot of money to recapitalize, back to Nate's (ph) point. So the only place that we can begin to gain some efficiencies, I think – not the only place but a major place – would be in those kinds of benefits that you're talking about. And it doesn't sit well with a portion of our society. And I do understand that. I've been in the Marine Corps for 41 years. My father spent 27 years in the United States Navy. There is an expectation – but my sense is, is that we have – we have gone beyond what we can afford. And our retirees are retiring out there, we're still paying close – I didn't realize this until I became a commandant, by the way. I thought somebody else paid for all that stuff and then I found out I did. (Soft laughter.) And I began to pay very close attention. So all of that, all of those benefits, I think, certainly are very – (inaudible).

So the question is, is what should be looked at. And I think there's an effort under way right now trying to determine what's reasonable. I think this – you know, I'm using the TRICARE example. A \$5 raise in premium – I think the last time TRICARE raised its premiums was – it was either in the '80s or the '90s. I think it was, like, '93. I may be off a year or two, but I think it was 1993. That's the last time. I mean, everybody – all the other premiums for anybody else's health insurance company – (inaudible) – program have increased at an index since then. You have TRICARE – (inaudible) – and that – and the – and it's just – it's eating us alive.

So I think there's room to look at benefits. I realize it's dangerous waters to tread into. I think we have to as a nation. And I think there – you know, I'll just speak for one person in the Joint Chiefs, but my sense is that you could, because we've talked about. The other Joint Chiefs would support that as well. The question then, (is what ?) and in – and to what degree.

MR. : Sir.

Q: General, I'm Robert Haddick. I write a column for Foreign Policy magazine, and I also write for Small Wars Journal.

You quoted General Brady talking about the importance of United States as a maritime nation and the Marine Corps' support for diplomacy, so I'd like to talk about the Marine Corps' role in the South China Sea. And I'd like to approach this from both ends of the spectrum for the Marine Corps.

First, in the future, what will the Marine Corps' role for security force assistance in the nations throughout the South China Sea be? Do you – what changes in the – in SFA activity do you see in the future in the nations around there?

And then from the other side, other end of the spectrum, what contribution will the Marine Corps make to the Air-Sea Battle concept?

GEN. AMOS: Let me – let me answer the second one first and then I'll go to the beginning question.

You know, the – we have always been – the Air-Sea Battle concept first kind of began here – (inaudible). And it was easy to think that this was the United States Navy, the United States Air Force effort. And the truth of the matter is, is that, as we looked at it as the Marine Corps, we – (inaudible). Number one, we're part of the naval team. We're part of that naval force that hopefully is forward deployed somewhere when our nation needs us.

And we come with a significant amount of capabilities. First of all, we will have fifth-generation airplanes on our large – (inaudible) – amphibious ship – (inaudible). But we also bring other capabilities in the air-sea battle. It's all about assured access and access denial. So what we want to do is be able to – (inaudible) – that back in the air-sea battle and be able to get into wherever we – wherever our nation decides it wants to, you know, put its forces – put its forces ashore or cross the beach. We can do that. We know how to do that. There's capabilities that we have with regards to (deception ?).

You know, and the key to a lot of this is to – is to give the enemy a dilemma, where the enemy doesn't know where you're coming from. And it's easy to say, well, OK, I'm going – I'm going to take a stealth – (inaudible) – whatever and I'm going to fly – (inaudible) – around; I'm going to penetrate your anti-access radar belt. But there are other capabilities that the Marine Corps has as well, and being part of that – (inaudible) – team, I think we have – I think we have a significant role. It may not be quite as glitzy and as kind of mainliner or headliner as the Air Force or the United States Navy, but as part of that team, I think – I think it'd be ill-advised to kind of ignore the Marine Corps ability. So I think we'd be active part of it for both – (inaudible) -- fifth-generation airplanes but also the – all the other capabilities – (inaudible).

But back to the issue of security force assistance – and really, there's a lot of things we will offer, building – (inaudible) – capacity and (we do food ?) security cooperation. I mean, all those things, each one has a different definition, but they're all nested together in the – in that part of the city. If you were to ask a – (inaudible) – commander in I guess a – well, I don't want to speak for – (inaudible) – but if you just ask – (inaudible) – spent a fair amount of time in the city and having – as a member of the Joint Chiefs – we'd like to be more engaged in the Pacific, in the Southwest Pacific and that area of the world than we are. I don't think – I think everybody in this room understands that. Our ability to be able to have that kind of forward presence in that part of the world is challenged right now, because we're occupied in another section of the world.

I'll tell you, you know, this post-Afghanistan environment that I was talking about – and one thing I failed to mention in here is kind of where my sense is, is that when the Marine Corps comes out of Afghanistan, we'll always have – we'll always have strong interests in the Central Command part of the war. We will always; we will have marines there in some capacity.

But my other sense, though – (inaudible) – there will be times that the Marine Corps will reorient it back into the Pacific. It has always been the spot where Marines are very familiar. As you know, we fought our way all the way up from north of Australia all the way up through the Pacific. So it's an area where we're comfortable with. We've got relationships. Are we there now? No. Do we need to get there? Yes.

And we need to be there to do the things you're talking about. You know, the ability to help train militaries when asked to do so, the ability to provide even more – just the kind of security force assistance kinds of things that we can do as a ground force. It's hard to engage – it's hard to engage nations solely from the air or from the sea. If you're truly going to interact with the nations and build relationships, you have to put forces ashore somewhere – and I'm not talking about forcibly; I'm talking about invited forces ashore. That's – (inaudible). So I think we need to be there. I don't think we're there – (inaudible) – where we need to be. I think our nation understands that. We'll have to turn that around. And I'm hopeful for the future.

Paul.

Q: Thank you. General, my name is Paul – (inaudible). I'm the president of – (inaudible). And I just wanted – (inaudible) – happy to be here and glad you're here, because nobody would come to a dinner with me. (Laughter.)

I want to make first a recommendation by the way of comment, and then I want to ask a question, if you don't mind. My recommendation is that when I was on active duty in the Navy – I was – I (managed ?) the Japan Alliance for about five years at OSD. And I followed this issue very closely. And there's a fable among American – some American commentators that Marines in Okinawa are tied down; that they're irrelevant because they can't get new ones. So my recommendation is that you take your rendition, let those Marines off the coast of Pakistan – (inaudible) – and let those ships in going through the Suez and apply that with your interlocutors in Japan, because I think that would really make a big difference.

My question – and I don't think I'm asking the same question that Robert Haddick just did. It's about the high-end in the agency. It seems to me that if you look at the future, the Chinese are coming out. And this is what I referred to as the Japanese, the Chinese maritime – (inaudible). And that incorporates many of those familiar places where the Marine Corps has bled, fought and died. But you haven't said much about the high-end as a – as it relates to the air-sea battle and amphibious operations, because if the Chinese are, in fact, coming out into that new battle space, if you look at the map, it's a tremendous amount of land incorporated in what – (inaudible) – to Singapore to Guam. And the U.S. seems to be – I'll let the Pentagon and the State Department speak for themselves – is moving back into South East Asia. It seems to me that these are trains heading for a collision. So I'd like to hear what you have to say about forcible entry at the (high end of ?) war in that part of the world.

GEN. AMOS: First of all, I think whether it's in that corridor or not, our nation needs – (inaudible) – capability. I means, it's – we tend to – in fact, the analogy I've heard you use when we start talking about those two wars, forcibly entry – (inaudible) – or it's terms of like, oh, they'll never be another Inchon. Interestingly enough, they're probably going to – (inaudible) – and operations that it will be much better examples, because Inchon was actually hugely successfully and probably one of the – one of the greatest examples of naval warfare, of going where the enemy wasn't. When the marines landed in Inchon, they came in the backdoor with little – (inaudible) – and set the conditions. And so our nation needs – (inaudible). So how much and where or how much is – you know, is up for debate.

But so I believe we needed – we are – I don't know whether we're moving back into Southeast Asia right now. I made a comment a minute ago, I don't think we're moving there probably as much as or as quickly as we'd like to.

But this whole question about the influence of China throughout that part of the world, if you take – in fact, it's not just there. It's now in South America. Now it's in Liberia about 15 months ago. And the Chinese ambassador to Liberia made a point to come up and introduce himself to me at a dinner on Saturday, and he was – he wasn't part of that dinner group – (inaudible). So they're there. They're all over the world.

Their influence is growing greatly in that – certainly in the Southwest Pacific. And is that a concern? I think it is. Is it a – is it a – is it a concern for me thinking that we're going to go head to head? I don't think so. I don't sense that. I think it's a – it's a – the ability to influence. They're certainly working hard to influence in that part of the world and in others.

And that's why we need them. We've got a lot – we've got a lot to offer. And right now, our ability to influence is fettered because of our being tied up in other parts of the world. So I don't – I watched their amphibious trackers that they built. That built a vehicle that looks very similar to the expeditionary fighting – (inaudible). They're building amphibious ships. And I think we're paying very close attention to it.

Am I – am I concerned that there's – that crisis is looming? No, I'm not. And you could probably go around this room and get – (inaudible) – opinions from a variety of different people. But I'm comfortable, as commandant of the Marine Corps, saying that. I can't speak for our nation at the highest level saying, OK, how do we feel about this? But where I am as commandant of the Marine Corps, I'm watching what they're doing, I'm watching what they're building, and it's – and it's of great interest to me. So I'm – but am I – am I concerned that we're going to be exercising forcible entry and opposing forces in the near term? (Not ?) personally, no.

Yes, sir.

Q: General, Richard McGregor, Financial Times. You talked about what you see as greater improvement in security in parts of Afghanistan that you've been visiting in recent years. To take you out of your neighborhood, what is the economic basis for confidence in

Afghanistan? Iraq has oil. How can Afghanistan sustain itself and its own security without a viable economy?

GEN. AMOS: (Inaudible) – there's a lot of minerals in the ground that have yet to be in many cases discovered. There have been articles in the last six months that have talked about that. You know, the forecast is that it's a very rich country, mineral-wise.

And – but the truth of the matter is the – their hope – in most of those villages that we operate in, we're hoping it's not so much a bustling economy. They just want to have a market that they can sell their vegetables. In fact, you know, the Marines have been fighting for – (inaudible) – since around October up in the very northeast corner of Helmand province, up in Sangin. And in the U.K. – I talked about the U.K. (ph) task force – (inaudible) – south us – (inaudible) – right now and brothered up with them.

But the truth of the matter is, there are – there are tribal chiefs that all they want is – they don't want electricity. Now, I don't want anybody to leave this room and I don't want to see the headlines in tomorrow's paper where it says: General Amos says the Afghan people don't like electricity. OK? So all you people who are writing here, you know, what I'm saying is, is that there are – there are folks, there are tribes, there are (pieces ?) that would just like to have peace and they'd like to be able to grow their vegetables and they'd like to be able to have a market that they could sell their vegetables at.

And the truth of the matter is, there was a couple tribal chiefs said, I don't care about electricity. Just help me get my markets back (on line ?). And so I think we're talking different kinds of – (inaudible). We're talking about different abilities to have satisfaction as a tribal chief – (inaudible). I mean, that's – this is not a – this is not going to be a Western economy as you and I know.

Does that answer your question? I mean, if you go to Nawa where (Mary's ?) son is right now, the district governor of Nawa, this big heavy-bearded short guy, spent time with me not too long ago, about – really about a year ago, and I was hoping to get to see him again on this last trip but I didn't. What he wanted was he wanted some – he wanted some medical – just small medical capability – (inaudible) – village of Nawa. He told me the story of two women from his village that were in the very late, late months of pregnancy, and this was just before I got there. And they were having problems, complications. They put them in the back of an old pickup truck and they drove them on what is really not much of a road to Lashkar Gah. Both women died. All he really wants is a nurse or a doctor or the ability to have – to be able to have some care. He just wants some fresh water. We've dug wells. We've put water purification units in there, solar-powered water purification units. In his case, that's what he's looking for, and a place to sell his goods – (inaudible). That's – the truth of the matter is, that's the economy. That's probably – if he's happy in Nawa and his people – and his people are happy in Nawa, then that's probably all – (inaudible) – the economy – (inaudible).

MR. : Sir, despite your kind offer to answer the last question, I would rather not be on – (inaudible) – bad side, so Greg Jaffe has the last question of the evening.

Q: Hey, Greg Jaffe with Washington Post. (Inaudible) – question as well. You talked a little bit about budget pressures on DOD on the Marine Corps in terms of procurement. Do you see budget pressures playing a role in our commitment to Afghanistan, and do you worry at all about the progress that you talked about in Helmand and, more broadly, the country being compromised because either lack of patience or the financial resources to stay over the long term?

GEN. AMOS: Greg, from a – from a U.S. perspective are you asking that question – you know, in other words, the financial pressures that are going within our Department of Defense, within our federal government may have an impact on our willingness to stay? Or – I want to make sure I understand –

Q: Yeah, a willingness to continue to pay the – whatever it is, the \$10 billion a month that's required to sustain the presence in Afghanistan.

GEN. AMOS: I think I'd be disingenuous if I didn't tell you – if I didn't say that the financial – the cost of war is pretty significant. I think we all know that. I mean – what I'll tell you from my perspective as the commandant, my number one priority is putting whatever resources, whether it be manpower, money – (inaudible) – forces going into Afghanistan, to support them. That's – that is – if you look – you know, if you don't have – (inaudible) – because I gave you a copy of the plain text, but our number one priority is doing whatever's required for our Marines and sailors in Afghanistan.

So I don't – you know, I'm kind of caught in the middle. I'm willing to pay whatever price in people, equipment, money and budget – (inaudible) – to do my best to guarantee success for the Marines in Helmand province. Whether our nation is going to be willing to continue to do that is yet to be seen. But I think it's – I think it's something – I think money impacts – (inaudible) – right now. I think – I think I'd be disingenuous if I didn't say that. But how much – (inaudible) – and what does that mean? You know, I can't – (inaudible).

(END)