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GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Thanks, General. Thanks for coming out on a Thursday night, in Washington, D.C.

We had the occasion -- just in the last hour and a half -- to have a wonderful dinner here in the museum, and I was commenting to my wife and General Dailey I said, "Who'd have thought that a couple of knuckleheads that began many, many years ago flying airplanes." Never in our life did we have the aspiration, never, to stand, first of all, in the Smithsonian in front of this great IMAX Theatre, nor did we ever think we'd be in the jobs we are, nor did we ever aspire to it. It just happened. And it's a -- I guess it's the wonderfulness of our nation and, in particular, our great Marine Corps.

So General Dailey, thank you for that kind introduction. And for General Electric -- and, you know, it's interesting because we have ethics rules that my lawyers are very careful to make sure that I get advice on a regular basis. And in this audience, there's probably at least a dozen lawyers, and I'm sorry for that. I'd ask for a show of hands, but you would not be courageous enough to raise your hand, and I don't blame you. But my lawyers, who I love and keep me out of trouble all the time, have said, "Hey, sir, we've got -- General Electric's going to do this thing. They can't be here. You can't give them any kind of juju." And I'll tell you, folks, I just want to say, in absentia for all the General Electric employees and their chairman, thank you for being a sponsor to this wonderful event for all these years.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm missing my sidekick tonight, and that's the 17th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Michael Barrett. He came in. I picked him. I had the fortune of picking him about eight or ten months ago. And when you're the Commandant and you get to pick your Sergeant Major, that's a big deal. Because in our service, the Sergeant Major is -- when you walk out from among a bunch of young enlisted Marines, the Sergeant Major is the guy that all the youngsters aspire to. All those young PFCs and Lance Corporals, they look at him and they go, "I want to be just like him." They don't look and say, "I want to be the Commandant." They go, "I want to be just like him." So Mike Barrett's not with me tonight.

Interesting, he and I run a pretty heavy schedule. He's -- we're in kind of opposing places on the planet, and then we come together every now and then. But Mike Barrett, Sergeant Major Mike Barrett, 17th Sergeant Major, sends his regards.

He and I were in Afghanistan just a little bit ago, just before -- just about the middle of February. We wanted to go before the testimony season. He and I go about every three months. And we've been going -- he used to be the Sergeant Major there on the ground. So for 13 months, he was the senior enlisted and has a lot of street credibility among our young enlisted Marines, our combat veterans. And we've been going, both he and I, off and on for the last three and a half years in and out of Afghanistan. So it's a pleasure for us to go. He's a returning veteran. It's always fun for him to kind of see how things have changed. And we were there just in February, like I said.

And if you go up to the northeast corner of the Helmand Province in an area called Sangin -- and it was arguably, in my mind, one of the most dangerous spots in all of Afghanistan, a lot of fighting – 1st Battalion, 7th Marines were there about 18 months ago. We were on the ground with them, spent time up there with them in that exact spot.

So we came back in February and, lo and behold, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines was on the ground. And we met a young man, a young Marine, who was a Lance Corporal while we were there on his first deployment. And as luck would have it, we ran into him again. And he's a Corporal this time. He's on his second combat tour in a very, very dangerous part of the world. And I'll just call him Ricky. I don't want to give away his last name. And he sent me a letter. He told me this story while Sergeant Major Barrett and I were there in February, and I asked him to write it down and send it to me.

So he sent it to me, and I'd like to share it with you tonight because it gives you a sense of the indomitable spirit that resides among Marines. And I really am going to get to Marine aviation here in just a second, so bear with me.

Corporal Ricky was telling Sergeant Major Barrett and I this story about his "Dear John" letter that he'd gotten from his girlfriend. And here's the way the letter read. It said, “Dear Ricky, I can no longer continue our relationship. The distance between us too great. I must admit that I've cheated on you twice since you've been gone, and it's not fair for either of us. I'm sorry. Please return the picture of me that I sent you. Regards, Becky.”

So, Ricky's telling us this story. And, of course, Sergeant Major Barrett and I are a couple of old guys. We're going, “Oh, how can this happen? You're in combat, dangerous, we're losing Marines,” and he gets this "Dear John" letter. Well, as you might imagine, Ricky was shaken and hurt. But typical of the kind of resiliency that Marines display and adaptability that sustains Marines during times of hardship and adversity, he asked his fellow Marines for any snapshots that they could spare of their girlfriends, their sisters or their cousins.

Why are you laughing? This is a serious story.

In addition to the picture of his now ex-girlfriend Becky, Ricky included all the other pictures of the pretty girls he collected from his buddies. There were 57 photos in the envelope he sent back to Becky along with this note:

“Dear Becky, I'm sorry, but I can't quite remember who the hell you are. Please take your picture from the pile and send the rest back to me. Take care, Ricky.”

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to introduce to you tonight that young Marine, that young resilient Marine, most of whom are male. We have great female Marines. The Marine Corps sits at 202,000. We've got a little over 12,000 females. They're absolutely wonderful. But in this case, most of the fighting gets done, the really hard trench fighting is done by young male Marines, infantry Marines. I'm going to introduce you to them tonight, and I'm going to tell you what they do for our nation.

I had an opportunity in February and March of this year to appear before Congress, five times as the Commandant of the Marine Corps. And when you do that, you provide Congress a written posture statement. And in that posture statement, it's a State of the Union. And you tell Congress how the Marine Corps is doing. The Chief of Naval Operations does the same thing,

Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and the Chief of Staff of the Army does, as well.

But I sat down and wrote this, and I want to tell you what I put. Here's my posture statement sent to the Senate and the House. And on the very first page, here's what I wrote:

"Whether patrolling in Afghanistan or planning at the Pentagon, serving on Navy amphibious ships, or engaging our partners around the world, the indomitable spirit of our greatest asset, the individual Marine, stands ready; ready to safeguard our nation's liberty, to ensure freedom of the seas, and to protect our nation's interests abroad. With your assistance, we will continue to resource this national treasure, the United States Marine."

So when I sent that to Congress, I meant every word of it. You see, we have -- we're blessed to have a lot of fancy equipment and technology. But at the end of the day, it's the young 18-, 19-, 20-year-old, 21-year-old young man or woman that carries the day for the Marine Corps. I'm going to introduce you to him here over the next couple of minutes, and I want you to understand that he is the currency of the last decade of fighting. His average age is 21 years old.

Last year at this time, that young Marine was thinking about the prom and he was thinking about graduating from high school, thinking about what he or she was going to do for the rest of their lives. And yet somewhere along the line, they met a Marine recruiter and they decided that they would join the Marine Corps. They went to Parris Island, South Carolina or San Diego. Today they're forward deployed in the fight against America's enemies and providing security and hope for our Nation.

Now, whether you agree with the war in Afghanistan or not is not the purpose of tonight, or my comments, because this is not about politics. This is about the heart and soul of the United States of America, those young men and women that come from our towns all across our country. And right now tonight while we gather here, it's eight and a half hours difference in the Helmand Province. And young men and women are up. They're fixing to go on patrols. Those that have been out in overwatch positions are coming in to their combat outposts. And they are the ones that are doing the heavy lifting of our war.

So if you bear with me for a minute, I'd like to introduce you to that young breed of young men, because they are the reason that we have Marine aviation today.

Please show the video.

(Video played for audience.)

Ladies and gentlemen, in a town like Washington, D.C., at a wonderful institution like the Air and Space Museum, there are folks in this audience that are not from Washington, not from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina or Camp Pendleton. They're from streets and cities across our Nation. Some of those young men that you saw on that screen may have been your neighbors.

I don't want you to think there's a day that goes by -- while I'm honored and I'm

privileged to have been chosen the 35th Commandant, there is not a single day that comes by, not one, that I don't stop and I think about those young men and those young women that wear this uniform. They are the heart and soul of our Corps. That's the reason why I began this presentation talking about them, because they're the reason we have Marine Aviation. We have it for no other reason. We don't have it for air shows. We don't have it to look sharp on a flight line or taxi into some great air base across our country -- on a Friday afternoon across country. We don't buy those airplanes for that and that capability. We buy it to protect those young men and women that are out there doing the heavy lifting for our country.

Tonight as we gather here, we have about 18,000 Marines and Sailors in Afghanistan in the Helmand Province. I want to tell you that despite what you read in the paper -- and I have some idea of what I'm talking about -- we have reason for hope. Again, whether you regard the war in Afghanistan as worthy, I will tell you that the mission that the Marines have in the Helmand Province -- and that's the area that I can talk about fairly authoritatively -- is going quite well.

When we leave that -- and I talk to all the young Marines and I travel around our nation and tell our Marines -- that when we leave that province when the President directs, we will have set the conditions in the most optimal way for success for the Afghan people.

Today we have those 18-, 19,000 Marines and Sailors. We've been there for a little over four and half years. We have a sizable aviation element in Afghanistan today. In 2003, myself and everybody that's in this audience wearing this uniform, for the most part, crossed the border into Iraq. We had 70,000 Marines, 400 aviation platforms, 15,000 Marines in the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing. And now we find ourselves four years later in Afghanistan having come out of Iraq under a victory pendant. And today we have a series of airplanes, and I want to show you what we have on the ground in Afghanistan. I'm going to try to tie it all together. So if you'll bear with me for just a second, let me give you a little slide show.

First of all, we have our newest Huey. Hueys were introduced in Vietnam as a single-engine airplane way back in the late '60s. Today we have our four-bladed version, which is brand spanking new. We're about two-thirds of the way through fielding that aircraft. It has twice the lift, twice the weapons platform on it, twice the command control capability on that airplane. It's our newest Huey.

Its sidekick is a brand-new Cobra. We've been flying these, our old airplanes, for about 35 to 40 years. We have the new four-bladed Cobra. Some of those will find their way into Afghanistan here shortly. We're in the process of transitioning those old aircraft to our Cobras.

We have the CH-53E heavy-lift helicopter, probably the most capable heavy-lift helicopter in the entire world. We've got the 53 Echo and its predecessor, the Ds, where General Dailey was the Commanding General, out in Hawaii.

We have the MV-22 Ospreys, quite a controversial airplane 12 years ago. Now it turns out to be one of the most capable aircraft in theatre today. We fly -- when I travel into Afghanistan, we want to fly around in the MV-22 Osprey. It flies two and half times as fast as a

helicopter, lifts three times as much, can go three times as far. And it's a stunning platform, and it's served the Marine Corps well. We're about halfway through transitioning our 44-year-old CH-46 helicopters to this wonderful aircraft.

Moving on to C-130s, we've transitioned 50 of our aircraft out of 80 to the new C-130Js. It is a phenomenal aircraft, glass cockpit. But the airplane, the C-130s it took, were up to -- they were built in the '50s and the '60s. We took delivery in 1954 of the oldest C-130F that we had in the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing when we took it to war in 2003. They're being replaced with these beautiful airplanes that you see, the C-130Js.

AV-8 Harriers came into being -- I'll talk a little bit about the history of innovation in the Marine Corps. When the AV-8 Harrier came in, in the mid-'70s as an A model, we bought it from the Brits, Hawker Siddeley. The first versions had a rough start. But my point is that it became a tactical jet that could land vertically and take off in a very short distance, and it introduced what we now know as the vertical -- V/STOL, vertical short take-off and landing, aircraft. And I'll talk more about the transition to the F-35B. But that airplane is today in Kandahar. That very one that you're looking at, they're flying combat missions in Kandahar. It's going to be replaced this year in about another two, three months with the F-18 Hornets.

F-18s have been the staple of United States Marine aviation since almost 1980. We have four different versions of this airplane. We're flying them off Navy aircraft carriers, we're flying them out of Kandahar and we'll soon be flying them precisely where the Marines are located at the British base called Bastion in Helmand.

We have our remotely piloted vehicles. When we crossed the border in 2003 to Iraq, we had two, what we called RPV, squadrons. And they were game-changers. And those of us that were new to that -- and I was a 2-Star Commanding General at the time -- looked at those things and kind of coddled them and wanted to make sure that we took good care of them. Turned out to be that they were the hardened combat multipliers in the battlefield because we could move them up with the grunts, and they flowed all the way forward and they became the eyes and ears of the Division Commander on the ground on the way to Baghdad.

Marine aviation has a host of other capabilities. We have Crash Fire Rescue. We have Airfield Engineers that build runways. They did it in Chu Lai in Vietnam. I'll show you a picture of that. And I'm going to show you a picture of what we've done in Afghanistan in an airfield that's 6,000 feet long that we built out in the desert at Camp Dwyer. Airfield comes equipped with arresting gear. We have bulk fuel capabilities. We've got aviation meteorology. We have a complete package in Marine aviation. When we deploy forward around the world, we come with what we call “the full kit bag.”

So while we're flying around the clock in Afghanistan, we're not only supporting our Marine brothers on the ground, we're also supporting our coalition partners, our Afghan partners, our French, British, Italian partners on the ground, and we're also supporting our Special Operation Forces on the ground. We're flying close air support, both fixed-wing and rotary-wing. We're flying what we call in my community, “presence missions.” Quite often, if you fly low and fast over the enemy, the enemy backs off of our forces just because he knows that we're

watching him. We're moving logistics around the battlefield. We have intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance out there with our platforms. We're looking at the enemy. We have in-flight refueling of our assets through those same C-130Js. Aviation is a true combat multiplier.

When we crossed the border in March of 2003 on our way to Baghdad with those 400-plus airplanes and all that capability that I've just described, that was the enabler. That was the energy that allowed the 1st Marine Division to flow up to Baghdad and on to Tikrit, and we did it in less than 30 days. And it was Marine Aviation that did that. I'm not taking away anything from my ground forces or all the hard work that they did, but we became the enabler. We took care of that young 18-, 19-year-old man on the battlefield. We understood our responsibility to that young man.

Major Cunningham, who was our first Marine aviator, realized the importance of aviation and what it could have -- the difference it could have on the battlefield. The difference between Marine aviators and our fellow services is, our ethos, we don't have aviators that also happen to be Marines. We have Marines that are blessed and fortunate enough to be Marine aviators.

We have a phrase that we coin often, and it's called, "Every Marine's a rifleman." And I'll tell you even to this day, those Marine aviation units that are in Afghanistan are outstanding watch, they're on patrol, they're on convoys, and they're Marines just like I am, aviation Marines that are out there because they're Marines first, and every Marine is a rifleman.

There's a special bond between Marines grunts and Marine aviators. It comes from training together. We start at The Basic School at Quantico, every Marine officer. It doesn't matter where you are going to go, what future you have, whether it be as an aviator or whether it be as a grunt or a logistician or an intel officer or an adjutant or an administrator. You all begin for six months at Quantico, and that's where you begin to bond.

And that bonding takes place there. You go to school together and you fight together. So when we meet on the battlefield and you check-in on the radio and you use your call sign and the guy on the other end of the radio who needs your help desperately recognizes precisely who you are and he pops up and identifies himself, you don't think for a second that there's not going to be a great sense of loyalty and tenacity by that air crew that's in the air. This bond comes from training and fighting together, as I've said.

Let me talk to you briefly about the history of Marine aviation, and I'm going to transition a little bit to the now.

We're in the process, as General Dailey spoke of, of celebrating 100 years of Marine aviation. Next month, we commemorate the centennial with an event that showcases the men and women who make this part of our service so great. We'll be celebrating our accomplishments both today and certainly over the last 100 years. One of the aspects that stand out in Marine aviation is the spirit of innovation, and I think you'll be surprised at what it was that Marine aviation had their fingerprints on. And it began with Alfred A. Cunningham, who was our first aviator, and his vision of what the airplane could do on the battlefield.

Like any Marine aviator in the fight in the Western front in World War I, Alfred Cunningham secured the beginnings of what would be known as a long and prosperous career. In the coming years, there would be no shortage of work with the Marine Corps often deployed throughout the Central American and Caribbean areas fighting what became known as, “The Banana Wars.” During this series of conflicts, Marine aviators continually sought better ways to support the Marine on the ground and to leverage the experience that they learned in the Great War. They experimented with the aerial delivery of ordinance and before that, it had never been done.

In 1919, while stationed in Haiti, Lieutenant Lawson Sanderson rigged a makeshift bomb rack underneath his aircraft. Can you imagine that, going out to the flight line and telling the plane captains and the mechanics, to rig some kind of mechanism that would hold a bomb underneath your aircraft? There was no technology insert there. There was no testing. He just went out and said, "Rig this bomb rack underneath my aircraft." And he put an old rifle barrel on his windshield and he used that as a sight. Putting his aircraft in a 45-degree dive towards his intended target, he released his bomb and pulled out of the dive at just 250 feet. His bomb hit the target on the first pass, and a new dive-bombing technique was born. This technique eventually caught on and was soon used by Marine and Army Air Corps aviation squadrons.

However, it was not until the Marine Corps was heavily involved in action in the jungles of Nicaragua that these techniques were put to use against an enemy for the very first time. Five Marine de Havilland aircraft of Marine Observation Squadron 7 did a dive-bombing and strafing tact against the unwitting Sandinista forces. The Sandinistas, never having seen an aircraft before used certainly in an attack against ground forces, were overwhelmed and were completely repelled. The episode is the first coordinated dive-bombing attack in support of ground forces in the history of aviation.

Just a few months later, another first occurred in Nicaragua when a Marine aircraft crashed in the jungle and a ground patrol was sent out to recover the pilot and the gunner. Soon engaged with enemy forces in the area, they were attempting to locate the downed pilots, the ground Marines tried to communicate with Marine aviators overhead by laying panels on the ground. They didn't have radios in those days. By laying panels on the ground, they indicated direction and the distance and the range to the enemy. This is the first known instance of an air attack being directed by ground forces. Thus, the notion of close air support, or CAS, as we know it today, was born and Marines worked to perfect the concept over the coming decades.

As the doctrine of amphibious assault was introduced and developed in the late 1930s, the need for aviation support was recognized and spurred the expansion of Marine aviation forces prior to America's entry into World War II. Following the fleet landing exercises in 1941, a formal requirement was established calling for 12 fighter squadrons, eight dive-bombing squadrons, four observation, and two utility squadrons, all in support of a single Marine infantry division.

As the war progressed and Marine ground forces were more and more engaged with the enemy, in 1943 close air support was limited by the availability and the proximity of air fields, preventing Marine air from remaining on station in support of ground forces for extended periods

of time.

The Battle of Okinawa marked the apex of Marine close air support. Marine squadrons, mostly flying the F4U Corsair, flew over 14,000 sorties in direct support of ground forces during the 82-day battle.

The success of Marine close air support was revisited again later on in the Korean War, perhaps in no more visible place than the invasion at Inchon. During the 33-day invasion, four Marine Corps squadrons, both carrier and land-based, flew over 2,700 missions. Marines flew nearly 39,000 CAS sorties during the entire Korea campaign and pressed the new jet aircraft into these missions as soon as they received them.

The concept of Marine close air support was valid and would be carried on for the rest of the war as it is today in the Helmand Province. Close air support was not the only recent innovation that was successfully employed in the Korean War. You see, Marine squadrons along with U.S. Army squadrons had successfully used the helicopter in combat during Korea, and it was introduced to the Army and the Marine Corps in the years earlier. Much like the other services, the Marine Corps had been experimenting with this new contraption for several years when the hostilities broke out.

Having received its first helicopters in February of 1948, they came in the form of the Sikorsky HO3S1, affectionately known as the “Dragonfly.” Marines worked quickly to devise new techniques and uses for these aircraft in support of ground forces and amphibious missions. There were many visionaries within the Marine Corps in those days who used their experiences from World War II to recognize the utility and need for such aircraft. Among them was a pioneer in Marine aviation, Colonel Keith McCutcheon. He became later on the Commanding Officer of HMX-1 at Quantico, the squadron that flies the President, whose innovative spirit and understanding of what the helicopter could bring to the battlefield helped usher in a new era of how Marines would fight.

While in command of Marine Helicopter Transport Squadron 161, his helicopters provided both the evacuation of wounded personnel and the first transport of combat forces in combat in the history of aviation. His groundbreaking vision set the stage for the development of the concept of vertical envelopment. The use of helicopters as a means to quickly outmaneuver the enemy and mass combat power at its weakest point -- was on the scene. These tactics were developed following the successes of Korea and put to use just ten years later in the jungles of Vietnam.

When Marine forces required a second air base in South Vietnam in 1965, a place called Chu Lai was chosen. There were a few skeptics when Lieutenant General Victor, call sign "Brute," Krulak claimed an airfield could be built on the sandy soil at Chu Lai in just 25 days. Using a new concept called a “Short Airfield for Tactical Support,” or affectionately known as we grew up in the Marine Corps as “SATS,” Marines were the first -- Marine aircraft, running along with Sailors from the Seabee Construction Battalion 10, leveled and constructed the airfield with innovative aluminum planking that had been tested several times, but never used in an operational environment.

The aluminum planking, now known as “AM-2 Matting,” was reminiscent of the old Marsden matting of World War II in the South Pacific Islands. However, the SATS field was a vast improvement over the Marsden matting as it provided a smooth and interlocking system fully capable of occupying jets, unlike its rough and often jagged predecessor.

The SATS airfield in Chu Lai was equipped with the full facilities needed to operate a complete Marine air base, including arresting gear and a tower. JATO bottles were used initially to launch the A-4s from the short runway. In just 25 days, the air base was up and running, proving "Brute" Krulak's premonition. They provided the much-needed air support in doing so. The indomitable spirit of the Marine and his dedication to mission accomplishment again carried the day.

We did the same kind of thing again recently, just two years ago, in Afghanistan. Most of you remember -- it was on the headlines two years ago -- the attack on one of the areas of a Taliban stronghold in the Helmand Province called Marjah. And as the focus of that fight began to take place in the southern part of the country, we started to build an airfield in the desert very near to facilitate greater air support for our forces there.

I remember when the decision was made, we picked the point on a map in the desert and we said, "We're going to build an airfield there in preparation for the attack on Marjah." We simply picked that spot, and it was 20 miles from Marjah, and we built originally a 4,000-foot runway. It took us less than 60 days to build a runway. It's the same AM-2 Matting that was on the ground in Chu Lai in 1965. We built it right in the Taliban's backyard. And later we expanded it to 6,000 feet, and we're using it today; same concept, same result, greater support for our ground forces from the whole of our aviation enterprise.

I'd like to highlight a few more examples of our capability that we've taken to revolutionize Marine aviation as we've taken technology and applied it to our profession.

One of those examples is the AV-8 Harrier. I talked a little bit about it earlier. More appropriately, the use of the vertical or short take-off and landing capable aircraft, V/STOL for short, revolutionized tactical Marine aviation off of short-deck, what's affectionately known as, small carriers. When Colonel Tom Miller and Lieutenant Colonel "Bud" Baker became the first Americans to fly the British Harrier, they were immediately sold on the idea. They became two of the greatest advocates for the capability to be brought into the Marine Corps, resulting in Congress's complete support and funding for procurement of the AV-8 aircraft. A new chapter in Marine aviation was launched.

With a V/STOL jet in the Marine Corps, commanders could now co-locate the jets and the combat power that they represented with the Marine landing forces both at sea and at shore. This placed nearly the entire range of aviation capability in the hands of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force Commander. The advent of the tactical V/STOL attack aircraft was revolutionary for the Marine Corps. Now the commander has all the tools at his fingertips, and he no longer needs a 10,000-foot runway to fly off of.

Well, Colonel Tom Miller later became Lieutenant General Tom Miller, and he was the head of Marine aviation, all of aviation for the United States Marine Corps. Under his leadership, the Marine Corps held on to the Harrier capability, eventually transitioning it, taking the entire aircraft, remodeling it to the AV-8B configuration, the same configuration that's flying in Kandahar today.

In the early 1990s, the Marine Corps committed to fielding a fleet of tiltrotor aircraft. After Secretary of the Navy John Lehman saw a tiltrotor perform at the Paris Air Show in 1981, he lent his support, and a joint program was established. This joint program eventually led to the full-scale MV-22 Osprey that Marine Corps bought and we are currently reaping the benefits of right now in Afghanistan.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me close with an introduction of our latest addition, what I consider to be probably the highlight of our innovation in the aviation arsenal of the United States Marine Corps, and that's the F-35B Lightning II short take-off and vertical landing aircraft.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Marine Corps is in the process of transitioning from -- what we would call -- 13 different aircraft down to six. We made that decision in the middle of the 1990s. We're partially through the transition. The F-35B Lightning that you just saw on the screen will be probably the final installment of that transition as we move from our legacy aircrafts that were built in the '50s and '60s and '70s to the technology that has been introduced in the late 1990s and primarily in this part of the 21st Century. It's an exciting time to be a United States Marine.

We've waited a long time for this new technology to finally arrive, but I want to assure you of one thing: We buy it for only one purpose. We don't buy it for any of the flashy stuff. We buy it for that young man and woman that you saw at the very beginning of this. That's why we have it.

Can you imagine being in the position that those Marines were in, relying on Marine aviation to provide something as simple and basic as water or ammunition or the close air support that you saw when they took out that building that was full of Taliban?

Ladies and gentlemen, I may be the oldest living active duty Naval aviator, but I'm also the proudest. I want to thank you for spending your Thursday evening here with us, and thank you for letting me introduce the Marine Corps and our young 19-year-old PFCs and Lance Corporals. But more importantly, thank you for allowing me to introduce United State Marine Corps aviation. Thank you very much.

(END)