

Office of the Commandant of the Marine Corps

IDGA Amphibious Operations Summit

**Remarks by
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I'm going to begin with the Secretary of Defense's priorities. He's been in office now for five weeks. The service chiefs meet with him regularly and it's enjoyable. And he began early on and listed his priorities, so I'm going to start with those. I'm going to talk to you about how those priorities, how what the Marine Corps' mission statement is and where we're headed and how we fit very well with that. And I'm more than willing to adjust anything in the Marine Corps mission to get it aligned with the Secretary of Defense's and our Nation's priorities. But I want to show you how complementary they are.

I became the commandant on October 22nd. The two or three months in running up to that I spent time with a small team of very bright Marines, and we crafted the way ahead for the Marine Corps over the next two decades. And we did that based on guidance from the Secretary of Defense – Secretary Gates. He talked to us about being this force that kind of focused on the middle part of the range of military operations. You're not – you're not – you're heavier than SOF, but you're not focused solely on heavy operations all the way on the right-hand side of the range of military operations. So we did. We built what's called a middleweight force.

And one of the things I wanted to do was precisely have my Marines be able to articulate what we do for the nation. If you had asked any Marine a year ago, say, OK, what do you do? What's the Marine Corps' mission and what do you do for our nation? They'd have gotten it about 85-percent correct because viscerally we know what we do. And we would have used terms and phrases familiar to many of you: expeditionary, forward deployed, tough, you know, used to – willing to sacrifice, willing to endure hardships, light force, highly mobile – we'd have used stuff like that.

But we wouldn't have been able to articulate – and, I mean, right down to the last, and what I consider to be final, piece of doctrine. And we need to be able to do that. We have to be able to do that, especially in declining-resource times when the nation is going to make a determination where it's going to spend its valuable resources. You have to look at the Marine Corps and say, is the juice worth the squeeze?

And so we designed this in my planning guidance and we've got a mission statement in there. And I'm going to show you how this matches what's in there as we pull it out – what the Marine Corps is going to do for our nation for the next two decades, and as it relates to the Secretary of Defense's guidance.

And then the next thing I'm going to do is I'm going to talk to you about the concept of the Marine Corps lane – how we nest with the other three services, the other three major services' domains, how we fit in there.

And then I'm going to transition to the purpose of this – of this conference, and that's amphibious. And we're going to all pretend that we're Catholics here, and we're going to pretend that we have just gone into the confessional and we're going to confess our sins and we're going to get the word "amphibious" out of the closet, and we're actually going to get it out and we're going to talk about it. And we're going to let it see the light of day here today, ladies and gentlemen.

And my goal, by the time I'm done, the end state – we deal in end states in war fighting – the end state is, you look at it and you go, you know, I understand it now. I mean, I understand why we talk about the value of amphibious forces. We've taken that term, and we put it in a closet and we use catchy other phrases that kind of are on the fringes of that like “expeditionary” and “highly mobile, forward deployed,” and we talk around it. And the reason we do that is because there's a cost for amphibiosity. And I get people coming to me – in fact, it's been in the press for the last year and a half, two years – there have been folks within the building, the Pentagon, that have said, we don't see another Inchon happening.

And then I – if I get half an opportunity to remind everybody – I'd say that, actually, it is a pretty poor example for you to use if you think you are trying to poke at the value of amphibious forces. Because ladies and gentlemen, Inchon was a turning point of the Korean War. We landed on the backside of the North Korean Army and liberated Seoul. And then we backloaded off that ship – and came around to Wonsan and landed at Wonsan and then marched all the way up to meet those 27 Chinese divisions. And you know the rest of this story.

So, quite honestly, Inchon probably is one of the greatest examples of maneuver warfare and amphibiosity and the value of being able to deposit forces there. We could do the same thing today. We could land on both coasts of North Korea today. We can land at Wonsan; we can land up on the west coast. Should something happen, we have those capabilities today.

So we're going to talk about amphibiosity and we're going to talk about what it really means to our nation, the value added. The end state, I hope you'll agree me, is that the juice is worth the squeeze.

So, next slide (**see slide 2**).

Take a look at the Secretary of Defense's priorities – he's got nine priorities. I've highlighted those in yellow. This may be the first time many of you have seen them. The ones in yellow are the ones that absolutely match right almost verbatim with that mission statement that I described to you at the beginning of my talk:

- Defeat al-Qaeda;

- Win the war in Afghanistan and Iraq – my number-one priority in the Commandant's Planning Guidance, number one – I've only got four, but number one is to – is to do everything I can to help the Marines be successful in Afghanistan. That's my number one. I'll spend any dollar, I'll take any portion of manpower, all of my equipment to make sure that we support our Marines in Afghanistan so that they will be successful;

- Ensure Iran and North Korea do not advance a nuclear weapons programs;

- Enhance the departmental cyberwarfare capabilities. The Marine Corps, in our force structure review, is increasing cyber by 160 percent – 160 percent. That's significant;

- Preserve ability to project U.S. power and influence around the world. OK, you should be getting nervous here now because that actually talks about forward-deployed forces and that actually talks about maybe this thing about amphibious forces and the value of that – project power and influence around the world;

- Maintain a strong nuclear deterrent while advancing arms controls;

- Strengthen the important security cooperation partnerships that we have around the world. That's a lot of what we do, protect troops and their families and get the budget right.

Down at the lower right hand corner, this is not the mission statement, but this is – these are – these are lifts out of that mission statement that we wrote and I published in my planning guidance: America's expeditionary force-in-readiness is a balanced air-ground-logistics team. We are forward-deployed and forward-engaged – a little bit tough to do right now because quite honestly, our numbers of amphibious ships are down, and our requirement and focus is in the Central Command theater of operations. So we don't have a lot of excess right now, but that's where we're going and that's where we need to be. It matches precisely with this whole idea of win the war in Afghanistan, preserve the ability to be able to project and influence power.

We create options and decision space for our nation's leader. That is – that is a critical component of what the Marines Corps does because we respond rapidly and because we are America's crisis response force. And we respond to today's crisis... Today – not tomorrow, not a week from now, but if there's a crisis today and the president says – ladies and gentlemen, this is not bravado. I mean, I can give you example after example of how, within 12 hours, we have responded and put infantry battalions on airplanes to fly them into Souda Bay, Crete, to match up with – link up with the USS Kearsarge just about four months ago off the coast of Libya so we would have a ground combat element – within 12 hours of notification, 20 hours of that, they were airborne, flying into Souda Bay, Crete.

So we do respond to today's crisis. And in doing so, we allow our national leaders to back up a little bit and say, OK, now, what's the right thing to do? It's not always clear what the next best step is. When I talked to the war colleges, this spring – and I was up at Army War College at Carlisle and I was talking to all these bright young lieutenant colonels, and they said, “hey, Sir, you're a member of the Joint Chiefs. How come you didn't move faster on Libya?” You know, these were lieutenant colonels, and they've got the school solution. And I said, well, you know, lad, it's not always easy – when you're dealing with international operations and significant things like, what does our nation do with Libya? What do we – do we contribute or do we not? It's not always clear what the next step is. The Marine Corps, because they pulled the ships up off the coast, because we had a presence of Marines there, bought time for our national leaders to be able to say, OK, and then make a determination that they wanted to participate in no-fly operations.

We are a middleweight force. We do focus in the middle. We have the capability to go all the way to the right. We've proven that a number of times. We did a pretty fair job in the Anbar province with 70,000 Marines. And we left under a victory flag in Iraq, quite honestly.

We are arguably pretty heavily engaged right now in the Helmand province in the southern part of Afghanistan. So we can go to the right-hand side of the range of military operations if our president says to do so. But we're designing a middleweight force to be able to respond to the president's direction.

Next slide (**see slide 3**).

So how does this fit? You know, trying to describe this to my Marines, I said, look – and I've talked to all the service chiefs – I said, look. The Air Force has a domain. It's air, it's in space, and they've got – and I realize that they have – they have cyber and they have special ops – I got that. But when you think the United States Air Force, you think of air and space. When you think about the United States Army, you think about ground. And again, they have special ops, they have cyber and they have intel and all that. But you think about ground forces. And when you think about the Navy, you think about the water, both above it and below it. It's just natural.

So you think about the Marine Corps, and you go, OK, well – and the classic thing is, well, you're a duplication, you are redundant and we can't afford redundancy. And also, you can't – not afford the redundancy that the Marine Corps brings.

We are 7.8 percent of the Department of Defense's budget. That's it. For those of you that are Navy aficionados, you're thinking, well, he's not including blue in support of green – au contraire: 7.8 percent of the total DOD budget – includes airplanes, the ships, the docks, the corpsmen, the chaplains, everybody – of the entire Department of Defense budget. Pretty small amount of that to have a crisis response force.

We have a lane we operate out of. And I sat with the other service chiefs and I said, look. I'm not trying to poach into your domain. I'm not trying to take your mission sets away from you. We've got the greatest land army on the face of the earth today under the command of Marty Dempsey – absolutely the best. And when they take the battlefield, they're going to dominate and they're going to win. You know they are. And they're not going to come home until they do. We've got the greatest United States Navy. It may be smaller than we want it to be, but it's enormously capable. And we've got the greatest United States Air Force. And when I sit with General Schwartz and we talk airplanes and we talk mutual support, all of those capabilities, we've got the best Air Force in the world, bar none.

So I'm not poaching in their domains. But our mission set is best described as a lane. And we transit all three of those domains to be able to be our nation's crisis response force.

It is a highly expeditionary force at a high state of readiness. There's a cost to having a force at a high state of readiness. We don't believe in tiered readiness. We think, if the nation calls and they say – and the president says or the Secretary of Defense says, OK, put a battalion of Marines on the USS Kearsarge, and as it pulls through the Red Sea and up to the Suez and off the coast of Libya, we think that if I went back to the president and said, you know, bad news. The battalion is only – I'm going to – it's going to take me about a month to get them ready to go because I want to have to cobble together the equipment from across the Marines Corps, I'm

going to have to train them and I'm going to have to get them through those mission sets. But give me about two or three weeks, Mr. President, and I'll have that force ready to go for you. We think that that we'd be irrelevant to the President. The President has got to have a capability to be able to deploy somebody now.

When that earthquake with the tsunami hit, none of us had any idea what the nuclear reactors were going to happen at Sendai – we had no idea that that was going down – but when that earthquake hit followed by that – by that terrible tsunami up in northern Japan, with – that night, Marines from Okinawa from the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force got their planners together immediately, and without asking permission, without even being told what to do by the national command authority, flew eight helicopters and eight C-130s and 550 Marines and flew them north out of Okinawa all the way up, and hopscotched as close as they could to Tokyo and to position themselves.

And guess what? The next day, our government said, let's get the Marines in here. And they operated for 45 days. They were in and out of that nuclear plume, they were delivering food, they were delivering water, they were delivering kerosene, blankets, medical supplies; they were evacuating people that were stranded. They did that for 45 days.

I just got back from Okinawa, the Sergeant-Major and I. We sat with the squadron, we sat with the Marines that were up there that did it, and they responded to today's crisis today. If they'd have said, you know, that's – this is really terrible. Just give us about another 10 days and we'll be able to cobble together this force and we'll be able to go up to Sendai – our nation has got to have a capability to be able to respond today. That's what we do for our nation. We fit in that role. Amphibious is a part of it. But that's the lane. And we're not trying to poach on anybody else's.

OK. Next slide (**see slide 4**). We're going to transition now to the A-word – the amphibious part.

But I want to take you back in history just a little bit, and the importance of the world's oceans and man's transitions to amphibious forces. It's a little bit dark in here, but we go back here before Christ 250 years, and man began to understand the value of the oceans, the value of the waterways moving commerce. In some cases, they moved military forces. And you go all the way back – and you've read the same historical battles at sea. But all the way through, man began to understand and appreciate the trade, the value of the oceans and freedom of navigation, the ability to be able to maneuver on the world's oceans, all the way right up here to, really, 2011 – is where we are today.

Next slide (**see slide 5**).

I label this as over a thousand because this really is the transition to this term, amphibiousness – over a thousand amphibious operations in the last 20 years. So when we step back and people say, you know, we can't afford this, we can't afford to buy these capital ships, that's really what we're talking about.

Ships are expensive. Capital ships are no cheaper – and they’re actually more expensive – than just regular, standard freight-hauling ships or tankers and – because there’s security requirements.

That’s – when I say that, I’m talking about, you know, the ability to withstand damage of amphibious ships because you’re going to have Marines aboard there. It’s like any other naval vessel – there are standards that they’re built by.

So we say we can’t afford it. And I’m saying you can’t not – you can’t afford not to afford it. Over a thousand of these over the last 20 years.

Next slide (**see slide 6**).

Starts at 1990 and goes to 2010. And what – probably what you can’t read from the back are the numbers across the top. And these are – this is a metric of major amphibious operations that have taken place just in the last 20 years. And the numbers go all the way out to 12 out here, so these – the wider and longer the bar, the greater the number of amphibious operations took place that year. I’m not talking about training operations here; I’m not talking about theater security cooperation operations. I’m talking about combat operations. I’m talking about life-and-death kind of operations here, ladies and gentlemen.

And you see all the way down to 2010. What doesn’t show here is 2011. In 2011 we were still flying combat operations off of our amphibious ships – and we still are today – in – off the coast of Pakistan into Afghanistan.

We’re on patrol right now doing counterpiracy missions. We did the operation at Sendai, Japan this past spring that should – that we just got done talking about. So 2011 would be on there, and that bar would be moving to the right as we approach towards the end of the year. But take a look at that. This is the – this is the usage in the last 20 years.

Next slide (**see slide 7**).

At the strategic level, it’s all about the littorals. Let me walk through this – and, again, it’s a little bit hard for you to see back there. But let me talk about a couple of things. I know you recognize the globe. So let me talk about a couple things you may not see on here. There’s six major choke points. And I’ll point them out: (**see red bowties on slide 7**) one right here through the Panama canal; one passing through the mouth of the Mediterranean; one coming through the Suez; coming back down out of the Red Sea, the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb; and coming right up in here to the entrance into the Persian Gulf; and right over here, the Straits of Malacca.

The bulk of the world’s shipping passes through those six choke points. Ninety-five percent of the world’s commerce travels by ship. OK, think about that. I’m just not going to wish away the United States of America’s responsibility for global access. We’ve got six choke points that all parties to the world that have ships, and send things out on ships, and transit – the

23,000 ships that are underway on any given day of the year – they pass through – the majority of them pass through those six choke points carrying 95 percent of our world's commerce.

Forty-nine percent of the world's oil travels through those six choke points. Seventy-five percent of the population lives within 2,200 miles of the coastline. Seventeen of the world's 20 major cities have access to the oceans of the world. It just – 53 percent of the population lives within 12 miles of the sea. What I want to do here is just give you a sense for the importance of the oceans and the littorals and the access, and therefore the freedom of access and freedom of maneuver on our world's waterways. Seventy percent of our globe is covered in water.

Next slide (**see slide 8**).

The issue for me is access – the ability to maneuver, the ability to be able to take forces and have that commerce, have that shipping be able to move around the world, go through those checkpoints unfettered, shipping to be able to go down through the Gulf of Aden and down the Indian Ocean without fear of pirates. Do we think for a minute that the piracy matter is going to improve over the next decade before it starts declining? Does anybody in here think that the world is going to get nicer as it relates to piracy? Or do we think that, perhaps, there may be more problems portended in the future in the other parts around the world?

I'm not a not clairvoyant here. But my instincts based on the study of what I think the world's going to look like for the next two decades, I think piracy with us. And I think we're going to have to do something about it. We are doing some things about it right now. The international community is stepping up to this thing. But it will not get better; it will only get worse over the next decade. It's littoral – it's access.

So you take a look at what an amphibious force brings. First of all, an amphibious force is already paid for. It's not as if you say, we have a need and we're going to have to go to some ship company and we're going to have to build it to meet that need. It's not as if we have a crisis and we're going to have to go rent transportation, we're going to have to go to a commercial airliner and we're going to have to say, OK, give us about 200 of your Boeing 777s, and we're going to have to haul all these forces overseas and plant them in some country around the world. We already own it. The ships are bought; the Marines are paid for; the equipment's on board; we're highly trained; we're ready to go.

So those things have already been paid for. We step lightly on our allies' grounds, we step lightly on our enemies' grounds unless required to step more heavily. You think about that. There's no status of forces agreement that's required. You know, we're dealing – we deal, in the military, with status of forces agreements all the time. You want to operate, you – a country wants the United States military to come in and train their forces, spend time on the ground, and operate and help them train their police, help them train their military, help them train their special ops?

There's status of forces agreements that are required. If something happens to one of our servicemen or women, we want to be able to get them out of that country. We want to make sure that some rule that is – that is constitutionally correct for that nation that may run counter to our

instincts to protect our young men and women isn't used against us. So status of forces agreements aren't required – we're off the coast, we're available to respond today, and we step lightly on other nations.

Anybody in here think that the world over the next decade is going to welcome or be more willing to welcome a heavy U.S. footprint on their – within their borders? Anybody here think that that's going to happen? The answer is, no, it's going the opposite direction, ladies and gentlemen. They don't want us heavily invested on their land. They don't want us heavily invested in their country – within their borders. But we can use – they can use our capabilities and they can use our talents, and many of them want to. We do that – we bring that with amphibious forces.

Next slide (**see slide 9**).

What this shows just since the last four years and now going on to FY '12, which of course is not done – but the blue bar represents the demand. And the scale on the left is the number of ships that are required to satisfy that demand. These are by combatant commanders. This is not by somebody back here in the United States.

These are combatant commanders saying, I need an amphibious ship; I want to be off the coast of Africa; it needs to participate in the Africa partnership station operations. We want an amphibious ship to come over here. We want to bring the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit and have it come up to Sendai and off the coast with this four ships of the forward-deployed Naval forces. So the demand is in the blue; the sourcing is in the red. That should be no surprise to you.

I had lunch with General P.X. Kelley, the former Commandant of the Marine Corps. He's a mentor of mine and just an absolute great American. I ask him for a lot of advice – and you know, how was it when you were the Commandant and Ronald Reagan was the president, and Weinberger was the secretary of Defense? And it was just a different era.

And he said, you know – I want to remind you of something, General. When I was the Commandant we had 65 amphibious ships. How many do you have today? And I say, well, I don't have any; the United States Navy does. (Laughter.) How many do they have today? When we had lunch together, the Navy had 30 – or 29 today. He said, you're not doing very good there, Commandant. But my point in all this is that there's no decrease in the demand for – or by the combatant commands to say, come do this for me in my AOR; the only thing that – the only thing that's going down is our ability to source those.

Next slide (**see slide 10**).

OK. I already talked about the 100 engagements – 100 combat operations. And really, it's more than – it's – this is real-world kind of things. But of that thousand that I – when I threw that slide up to begin with, over 900 are exercises and engagements that have gone on. And these are just examples; some of them are ones that you're very familiar with. Right now what we've got here is that the numbers have begun decreasing. That's a function of our ability to be

able to source. That's not a function of the demand has gone down. It's a function of our ability to source them.

Next slide (**see slide 11**).

Covering the full range of military operations – these are examples of the 100 real-world amphibious operations just in the last 20 years. I found it interesting when we kind of mapped it out. It should be no surprise; a big chunk of these were right around the middle part of the Mediterranean. And you can imagine we're talking probably the Balkans, we're talking about operations in that area of the world. And then look at all the amphibious operations that have gone on in the last 20 years – real world – that have taken place in the Central Command AOR, and then right on up to Japan and also down in this area.

So a significant amount just in the last 20 years of not only peace operations, HA/DR, to include, by the way – I find it interesting, people talk about and always go back to the Inchon thing – and they go, you know, General Amos, you know, you don't need an amphibious tractor. And of course, everybody in this room knows that I support it. I went to the Secretary of the Navy and Secretary of Defense and recommended cancelling the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle. But I got a plan on the backside of this.

So the thing is, well, you don't really need one. Well, I tell you what, I've got pictures of the Ninth Ward – and I was down at Camp Lejeune at the time; I was a MEF commander then, which means I owned all the operational forces on the East Coast of the United States. And we've got amphibious tractors – our 40, then 30-year-old, now 40-year-old amphibious tractors – in the Ninth Ward – rescuing people just south on the other side of the Mississippi River during Katrina. It was the only vehicles that could get in there.

So here's these amphibious tractors floating around, pulling and rescuing people out of the vehicles. So not only did we do this stuff around the world, we did it in our own nation. We've got pictures of the amphibious ships and the LCACs and our amphibious tractors coming at them off the coast of Mississippi, and coming ashore across highway 10, which was completely blocked and it was all just nothing but a pile of – heap of garbage. And yet we had the ability to come offshore with bulldozers, seven-ton trucks, water, food and the ability – and medical supplies – to be able to rescue people. So not only does it go on around the world, but our amphibiousness benefits the United States of America.

Next slide (**see slide 12**).

This is a great picture, it's real world. This happened as a result of the non-combatant evacuation that we did in 2006 in Beirut. I have a slide; I'll put it up here in just a second. But here's a mom and her child. We evacuated 14,000 U.S. citizens out of Lebanon, ended up evacuating about another three (thousand) or 4,000 other citizens out of there – all with Marine – Naval amphibious ships.

25,000 Americans and partner nation citizens we have pulled out of countries when things began to unravel. And it happens every, single year. Just about 365 days a year we are

planning a non-combatant operation – a real-world one. Not a fake one, not a training one, but a real one where we go in – we pull offshore – we go in with our capabilities and we bring out Americans.

Now, imagine that's your wife, imagine that's your son, or your nephew. You can sit here and say, well, I don't know. But what if it's your son? What if it's your son and his family? And your grandchildren? You'd sure as heck want them out of – out of whatever country, country X, Y, Z. We bring that kind of capability on amphibious ships.

Next slide (**see slide 13**).

Here's the non-combatant evacuation, back and forth – over to Cyprus with 15,000 Americans, like I said, about another 3,000 of our friends – back and forth with our amphibious ships and our capabilities. It turned out to be a tremendous, and probably the largest, non-combatant evacuation we've done in this century.

Next slide (**see slide 14**).

Pakistan. This happened this past year – 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit was off the coast of Karachi off the coast of Pakistan. They were flying combat operations into Afghanistan in support of the – of the NATO command there. So they were doing all that. Meanwhile, the absolute century-largest flooding took place– it started up in the Upper Indus Valley and then came all the way down through the – really the tough part of Pakistan. It's a pretty dangerous area up there. You saw epic flooding, and you saw what happened as this huge bulge of water began to work its way all the way down Pakistan. And it was terrible.

So the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit took their heavy-lift helicopters and they flew easily 400 miles – and in some cases went all the way up 700 miles – to help the people of Pakistan. We launched the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit – by the way, each one of these, have three amphibious ships. The 15th is off the West Coast. We launched the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit a month early.

Now, you go, well, that's easy. Well, actually it's kind of challenging because what you've got is certifications, you've got training – all the things that ships and crews and everybody else has to be able to do. But we did it anyway. We did it – the Navy-Marine Corps team – launched it 30 days earlier, and they pulled off the coast of Pakistan.

So for a brief period of time we had six amphibious ships responding to two major operations. First, we've got about 20,000 Marine conducting combat operations in Afghanistan; the Army's got about 80,000 soldiers, and we've got our allies on the ground in there. We've got our U.K. brothers, we've got the Danes, we got the Italians, we got the Spanish, we got the Jordanians, and we got the Georgians. We're pretty committed; so is NATO.

And the second one, which consumed a lot of the – heavy-lift helicopters in the humanitarian aspect was, what do you do, how do you respond? And by the way, you got to respond today. You can't respond a week from now; that doesn't do you any good. So we did it

with those six ships' worth of equipment; we responded to that epic flooding. Turned out to be one of the hugest – one of the largest and, I think, most successful humanitarian assistance operations.

You don't get a lot of credit for it. It's in a part of the world, quite honestly, that we're struggling with right now, and you know that, internationally. We're going to have to have to come up with a solution on that as a country. But that didn't our nation's willingness to commit its forces to help, which is what we do as the United States of America.

(END)