

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

**SURFACE NAVY ASSOCIATION SYMPOSIUM**

**REMARKS BY  
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It's great to join you today at your annual Surface Navy Association conference...

Due to our strong, 235 year partnership with the U.S. Navy and the central role that amphibious vessels play in our operations, the Marine Corps considers itself a proud partner with you ... the surface warfare community.

Over the past decade, the Marine Corps has reaffirmed its signature role as ***America's Expeditionary Force in Readiness***. Think about what America was preoccupied with 10 years ago today...January 13, 2001. We were maintaining a predisposition towards Europe, having fought wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Yugoslavia just a few years before. Our preoccupation in South West Asia focused principally on containing Sadaam Hussein through enforcement of the southern and northern no-fly zones. Naval and Marine deployments were, for all intents and purposes,...NORMAL. Then September 11<sup>th</sup> came...and the world changed.

Weeks after 9/11, Task Force 58, under the capable direction of now CENTCOM Commander General Jim Mattis, rapidly aggregated two Marine Expeditionary Units of 4,400 combat-ready Marines, and launched from 6 amphibious ships north into Afghanistan. These forces secured three critical lodgments — Forward Operating Base (FOB) Rhino, Qandahar Airfield and the American Embassy in Kabul — as important...they provided decision space for our National leaders, and facilitated the introduction of follow-on forces. Their efforts maintained pressure on the Taliban and Al Qaeda, enabled special operation forces and interagency operations, and facilitated the prosecution and subsequent processing of high value targets.

February 2003 saw the delivery of a large portion of the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing's 350+ airplanes via six large deck amphibious ships to the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations...all in support of the 70K' Marines from I MEF who would cross the border into Iraq and begin Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In September of 2005, Marines and Sailors aboard the *Iwo Jima* sped to the Gulf of Mexico in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina's devastation. They sailed directly up the Mississippi River, docking alongside the piers of downtown New Orleans near the French Quarter and immediately provided humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to thousands of our fellow Americans. Their continuous rescue and humanitarian operations, aided considerably by our amphibious assault vehicles, were able to reach places where none others could go; their medical/surgical services saved countless lives affected by the horrific floods of this apocalyptic storm. The *Iwo Jima* served as a command node for all federal, state and local disaster recovery operations and as the region's only fully functioning air field for rotary wing operations. And of course, it provided thousands of National Guardsmen and relief workers with berthing, messing and freshwater so that they could conduct their own relief services throughout the Crescent City. Concurrent with the crisis operation in New Orleans, the Navy-Marine Corps team aboard the amphibious assault ship *Bataan*, provided recovery efforts to those affected by Katrina in the state of Mississippi. LCACs were used to shuttle Marine engineering equipment such as bull dozers, front end loaders, 7 ton trucks...and of course food and water to the impassable gulf coast state.

Come with me to spring of last year where 5,000 Marines and 3,000 Sailors boarded seven amphibious ships and sailed to the aid of our southern neighbor Haiti, to provide badly-needed earthquake relief. For 45 days, these Marines and Sailors transited back and forth from amphibious platforms in the Caribbean to provide security, deliver aid, evacuate and care for the afflicted. Their efforts also enabled joint, interagency and non-governmental organization operations.

Likewise this past fall, the 15th MEU responded to our [partner] Pakistan, beleaguered by its own record floods. The *Pelelieu* Amphibious Ready Group conducted humanitarian assistance/disaster response missions on the ground, which included flying over 400 miles deep into the recesses of Pakistan to provide transportation assets and evacuation resources to those trapped and cut off from vital medical care, food and water. In the midst of this operation, the 15<sup>th</sup> MEU and the Amphibious Ready Group dispatched the *Dubuque* westward to join CTF-151 to escort vessels through the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor in the Gulf of Aden. In doing so, its raid force, supported by Navy small boat personnel, recaptured the hijacked ship *Magellan Star* from Somali pirates, liberating its 11 man crew. And...while all of this was going on in Pakistan and off the coast of Yemen, the 15th MEU's Harriers were flying combat patrols into Afghanistan in support of the Joint Force Commander.

Off of North Carolina, the 26th MEU departed the United States 30 days ahead of schedule to join the Pakistani HA/DR operation and to respond to National tasking in the region.

In the SOUTHCOM AOR, 500 Marines and Sailors from Camp Lejeune formed a Special Purpose MAGTF (SPMAGTF) onboard USS Iwo Jima to conduct Operation CONTINUING PROMISE-2010. During this single-ship deployment of four months to eight Latin American and Caribbean nations, the SPMAGTF conducted partner capacity building missions with partner forces and also provided air, ground and logistics support for embarked medical and dental teams comprised of joint military personnel, international and non-governmental organizations and relief workers, who collectively provided scores of clinics to thousands of local people. During their return voyage in the fall of 2010, this SPMAGTF changed course to Haiti to assist with assessing damage from Hurricane Tomas. Rounding out last year's operational highlights at sea, the 31st MEU conducted initial HA/DR support in the Philippines following Super Typhoon Megi.

While all of this was going on, the Marine Corps increased our Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) footprint in Afghanistan from 10K' to 20K' ...where Marines and Sailors, joined with their Afghan brothers, are prosecuting full spectrum combat operations against a determined enemy. By the end of this month, these forces will be joined by an additional 1,400 Marines and Sailors from the 26th MEU who will be on the ground to help consolidate gains we are making in the Helmand Province.

The Marine Corps is America's Expeditionary Force in Readiness—a balanced air-ground-logistics team. We are forward-deployed and forward-engaged—shaping, training, deterring and responding to all manner of crises and contingencies. We create options and decision space for our Nation's leaders. Alert and ready, we respond to today's crisis, with today's force...TODAY. Teaming with other services, allies and interagency partners, we enable and participate in joint and combined operations of any magnitude. Responsive and scalable, we operate independent of local infrastructure. A middleweight force, we are light enough to get there quickly, but heavy enough to carry the day upon arrival. We operate throughout the spectrum of threats—irregular, hybrid, or conventional—or the shady areas where they overlap. Marines are ready to respond whenever the Nation calls...wherever the President may direct.

These vignettes validate what I see as the mission of the Marine Corps: **a balanced air ground logistics team that is forward deployed and forward engaged: shaping, training, deterring and responding to all manner of crises and contingencies.**

In every location I just mentioned — Pakistan, Haiti, the Caribbean, the Gulf Coast, South America, Gulf of Aden, Philippines, and Afghanistan — Marine Corps forces were either engaging with our allies, conducting full spectrum COIN operations, enabling the Joint Force and Interagency/NGO elements, providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, deterring aggression or contributing to assured access. I refer to our Marine Corps of today as a 'middleweight force'...a term I first introduced in my planning guidance that I issued shortly after becoming the Commandant. We fill the void in our nation's defense for an agile force that is comfortable operating at the high and low ends of the threat spectrum or the more likely ambiguous areas in between.

To Marines, the notion of 'expeditionary' is a state of mind that drives the way we organize our forces, train, and procure equipment. We are our nation's crisis response force. By definition this necessitates a high state of unit readiness and an ability to sustain ourselves logistically. Crisis response is incompatible with tiered readiness. You're either ready to respond to today's crisis...with today's force...TODAY...or you're late...and risk being irrelevant.

Factoring all aspects of our role in the Nation's defense, the United States Marine Corps affords the following three strategic advantages:

- We provide a versatile 'middleweight' ability to respond across the range of military operations (ROMO).
- We provide an inherent agility that buys time for national leaders.
- We bring an enabling and partnering capability to joint and combined operations of any magnitude.

Amphibious ships provide the multi-capable platforms that are the cornerstone of America's ability to respond to the range of crises that impact our National interests. I think of them as the Swiss Army knife of power projection. They are not task organized for one type of mission, but rather are flexible and suited to many. This inherent flexibility and utility is not widely understood or appreciated, as evidenced by the frequent — and erroneous — assumption that “forcible entry” capabilities alone define the requirement for amphibious ships. In fact, history indicates that the most frequent employment of amphibious forces is for situations of steady state engagement and crisis response.

Since 9/11 U.S. amphibious forces have responded to crises and contingencies at least fifty times, a response rate more than double that of the Cold War.

As we look to the future, the Marine Corps is committed to the spiral development of the America Class LHA (R). Along with the Navy, we anticipate delivery of LHA-6 in FY14 and contract award for LHA-7 in late FY11. Both these platforms are maximized for aviation, and I believe it is *essential* that a well-deck be reintroduced into future development of this class of ships at the earliest opportunity.

In the complex future security environment, the execution of amphibious operations requires the use of the sea as maneuver space. A new amphibious vehicle enables the rapid and seamless projection of ready-to-fight Marine units from sea to land in permissive, uncertain, and hostile environments. Once on land, a properly configured modern amphibious vehicle provides a range of options for the Marine rifle squad.

Despite the best efforts of all involved, the EFV program has become too onerous. Thus, I recommended to the Secretary of Defense to cancel it. As he affirmed last week, the cancellation of the EFV is by no means a rejection of the Marine Corps amphibious assault mission. I remain committed to develop and field an effective, survivable and affordable new amphibious vehicle...sooner rather than later!

In the interim, we will upgrade a portion of our existing amphibious vehicle fleet with new engines, electronics, and armaments to ensure that we are able to conduct ship-to-shore missions until the next generation of systems is brought on line.

The F-35B STOVL JSF remains vital to our doctrine of conducting expeditionary operations. The capability inherent in a Short Take-Off and Vertical Landing jet facilitates our doctrinal form of maneuver warfare and our need for close air support in the many austere conditions and locations where we will likely operate in the future. When evaluating runways around the globe, there are 10 times as many 3,000-foot runways capable of handling the STOVL JSF variant as there are 8,000-foot runways required for conventional fighter aircraft. The Marine Corps maintains the organic ability to build an expeditionary 3,000-foot runway in a matter of days in support of STOVL missions conducted in uncertain, non-permissive or remote environments, which are the places where we expect to be employed.

In light of the decision announced last week relative to the STOVL JSF, the Marine Corps is committed to working closely with industry during the next two years to get this platform back on track in terms of performance, cost and schedule. I am absolutely confident that this can be done. With a fully-fielded fleet of F35Bs, the Nation will maintain 22 capital ships—11 carrier and 11 amphibious assault—with 5<sup>th</sup> generation strike assets aboard.

Now that we talked about some of the key programs we view as important to our amphibious mission, let me address some measures we are taking on our part to better optimize ourselves internally for future expeditionary operations. We have recently concluded a comprehensive force structure review effort...aimed at optimizing our ability to fulfill our responsibilities as America's Expeditionary Force in Readiness in a post-OEF world. The results of that study will become public sometime in early spring.

Another main effort is a concept called "*Lightening the MAGTF*." This means reducing the size, weight and energy expenditure of our forces from the individual rifleman to wholesale components of the MAGTF. Over the past decade of operations, we have become tethered to equipment sets resulting from the emergence of new threats, perhaps most notably the improvised explosive device. We have also become overly accustomed to what I like to characterize as a "culture of plenty," which has resulted in the acquisition of resources that, in some cases, are incompatible with the ethos of an agile, expeditionary force. We are currently developing a plan for reducing the size and weight of MEUs and Marine Expeditionary Brigades so that they can begin to fit within likely lift constraints. I intend for this effort to begin this year in earnest and be fully registered in the next two budget cycles.

Lastly, the Marine Corps is leading the development of expeditionary energy solutions for the DoD and the Navy — reducing energy demand in our platforms and systems, increasing the use of renewable energy, and instilling an ethos of energy and water efficiency in every Marine.

As you can see, the title *America's Expeditionary Force in Readiness* entails Marines who on a daily basis are forward-deployed and engaged, working closely with our joint and allied partners. When crises or contingencies arise, these same Marines will respond — locally, regionally, or globally if necessary — to accomplish whatever mission the Nation asks. Key to our expeditionary relevance lies in our strategic partnership with the United States Navy. Central to this partnership are sufficient numbers of amphibious ships operated by highly-skilled, uniformed sailors and surface warfare officers, who are knowledgeable of the complex ballet entailed in supporting Marines engaged ashore, amidst any threat envelope.

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