

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY
THE SENATE ARMED
SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**STATEMENT OF
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COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
BEFORE THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
JUNE 30, 2005**

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Chairman Warner, Senator Levin, distinguished members of the Committee; it is my honor to provide you an update on the activities and the state of readiness of your Marine Corps since I last appeared before you in February. Today, over 27,000 of your Marines – regular and reserve, of all military occupational specialties – are deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere in the Central Command area of operation. Many are directly engaged in combat operations. The Marine Corps is a learning organization, and we continue, in close coordination with our joint and coalition partners, to develop new means to ensure that our Marines – our most lethal weapons and our Corps’ most precious assets – are properly trained, equipped and organized to succeed in the face of an intelligent and adapting enemy. Along with our focus on effectively fighting the current fight, we continue to prepare to ensure our forces can rapidly respond to new threats and future contingencies. I would again like to thank you for your sustained fiscal and moral support of your Marines and their families.

I. CURRENT OPERATIONS

Your Marines are fully engaged around the world in prosecuting the Global War on Terror. As I highlighted to the committee in February, the Marine Corps’ commitment to readiness – as measured by our personnel, training, equipment, doctrine, and organization honed over many years – has repeatedly proven its value in the wide spectrum of operations that we have been called on to execute since September 11, 2001. The importance of our Nation’s ability to project power and conduct military operations over long distances for extended periods as part of a joint force has been revalidated a number of times. The Marine Corps’ role as the Nation’s premier expeditionary force-in-readiness, combined with our forward deployed posture, has enabled us to rapidly and effectively contribute to these joint operations. Our scalable, combined arms teams, seamlessly integrating our robust ground and aviation forces with adaptive logistics, create speed, flexibility, and agility to effectively respond to each unique emerging situation. The high state of training and quality of your Marines along with our warrior ethos – highlighted by our creed that every Marine is a rifleman – allows Marines to thrive in the chaotic, unstable, and unpredictable environments that have always characterized warfare and that our very adaptable enemies methodically attempt to exploit.

The Marine Corps has been a key participant in several operations since the attack on our homeland. When the combatant commander needed to get ground forces into Afghanistan in late

2001, our flexibility allowed us to quickly join two Marine Expeditionary Units into Task Force 58. We then projected this force from the sea more than 350 miles inland to secure the airfield at Camp Rhino followed by the Kandahar airfield. Then, twelve months later, we projected 70,000 Marines, complete with their equipment and sustainment – a combat ready Marine Expeditionary Force – into Kuwait in less than 60 days. Once unleashed, this Marine Air Ground Task Force attacked over 500 miles inland, destroying parts of eight Iraqi Divisions, and taking portions of Baghdad – all in less than 30 days. After returning home, the Marine Corps was notified in October that we were going back in with a force of 30,000 in four months. Concurrently, with preparing forces for this deployment as a stability and security force involved in insurgency operations, we conducted an evacuation of noncombatants in Liberia, and deployed to Haiti within 24-36 hours. We have also provided significant forces to support continuing operation in Afghanistan that assisted in establishing a secure and stable government. As the lead for the Multi-National-Force-West, responsible for stability and security in the Al Anbar Province in Iraq, we formed a seamless combined/joint force that crushed the insurgents in the complex urban environment of Fallujah in less than 3 weeks. In addition to these examples of our expeditionary culture and our readiness, 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit trained and deployed with a focus on Iraq was headed to the Middle East aboard ship when the tsunami struck in the Indian Ocean littoral. They quickly reoriented to humanitarian assistance operating in India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. These operations all highlight the value of our naval readiness and requirement for amphibious shipping and forward deployed forces ready to respond across the spectrum of conflict.

Since February 2005, the II Marine Expeditionary Force has completed a relief in place and transition of authority with the I Marine Expeditionary Force and is currently executing multiple security, urban combat, nation building and counter-insurgency and force protection missions with great confidence and skill, in the face of an adaptable and dangerous enemy in the heart of the Sunni Triangle. Marines are fully engaged in the training and establishment of the Iraqi Armed Forces. Highly motivated and professionally adept Marines are currently training, supporting, and operating with the new Iraqi Army. We continue to aggressively match our training and equipment to the changing threat. Finally, in the Central Command area of operation, the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) is supporting Multi-National Division-South East in Iraq, providing anti-terrorism training to the Kingdom of Saudi

Arabia, and conducting bi-lateral training with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. We expect our commitment to Operation IRAQI FREEDOM to remain at about 23,000 Marines and Sailors into 2006, with the Marine Corps Reserve Forces providing about 4,000 of these Marines.

In Afghanistan, your Marine Corps continues to support Operation ENDURING FREEDOM with an Infantry Battalion, an EA-6B squadron, and two Embedded Training Teams with the Afghan National Army. In the coming months, the Marine Corps will expand its participation in the training of the Afghan National Army as well as the training and development of the Afghan National Police. These Marine forces are a major element of the Combined Joint Task Force assigned to defeat the remaining elements of the Taliban, Al Qaeda, and Al Qaeda affiliated organizations, “operationalize” and deploy the new Afghan Army, solidify and “professionalize” the Afghan National Police, and set the conditions for a successful National Assembly Election in September of this year.

In addition to these operations, our concurrent support to other regions including the Horn of Africa, the Pacific, and the Republic of Georgia exhibit the flexibility and effectiveness of your Marines in prosecuting the Global War on Terror and solidifying relationships with foreign governments. All of these demonstrate our continued resolve to be the world's foremost expeditionary warfighting organization – always interoperable with joint, coalition, and interagency partners – creating stability in an unstable world with the world's finest warriors – United States Marines.

Since February, over 31,000 Marines have remained deployed around the globe fighting our nation’s battles and winning the Global War on Terror. The entire Marine Corps is supporting this sustained effort and no forces have been fenced. This means that many Marine units in the operating forces are either deployed or training to relieve deployed units. In an effort to sustain and regenerate Marine forces for service in Iraq, and in response to lessons learned, the Marine Corps has trained and deployed a sizable number of provisional units – including cross-training artillery, tank and engineer units in security, military police, transportation, civil affairs, and foreign military training missions.

The Marine Corps continues to provide well trained Marines and units to meet our operational commitments worldwide, and our overall readiness in the Iraq and Afghanistan theaters remains high. This has come at a cost though. Current operational tempo has had an impact on unit readiness. Since the beginning of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, overall unit

readiness for battalion and squadron-sized units has dropped by 14 percent. Our readiness priority remains support and sustainment of our forward deployed forces at the immediate expense of those units that have rotated out of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. As a consequence, the readiness of the force not deployed has decreased. With your continued support in resetting and reconstituting our forces, we will continue to meet our forces for sustained operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and improve our readiness for any additional contingencies in the future.

II. PERSONNEL RETENTION AND RECRUITING

Despite the high operational tempo, the morale and commitment of your Marines remain high. We continue to work aggressively to reduce this high tempo and still meet the requirements of the Combatant Commanders.

End Strength. The current end strength of 178,000 has allowed the Marine Corps to increase manning in our infantry units; create a dedicated Foreign Military Training Unit; add additional recruiters; and increase training infrastructure and other support to our operating forces. Coupled with initiatives implemented as part of the recent force structure review and our military to civilian conversions, we will place many more Marines in our operating forces to reduce the tempo of operations on Marines and separation from their families.

Retention. Strong retention is a complex function of leadership opportunities, sense of purpose, operations tempo, compensation, quality of life, and educational opportunities. We are currently meeting or exceeding our regular and reserve retention goals.

Enlisted Retention. We are a young force. Maintaining a continuous flow of quality new accessions is of fundamental importance to well-balanced readiness. Over 22,000 of our active duty enlisted Marines are still teenagers, and 106,000 are serving on their first enlistment. We are currently ahead of our plan in meeting our Fiscal Year 2005 career retention goal. For first term reenlistments, we are at 98 percent of this goal with full confidence of making or exceeding mission by 1 October 2005. Of particular note is that our infantry military occupational specialties are running well ahead of last year, and we have a 98 percent first term skill match. Although the Selective Reenlistment Bonus represents just one-half of one percent of our military personnel budget, it remains a powerful retention tool, and we take pride in our prudent stewardship of this resource. Current Selected Marine Corps Reserve enlisted retention remains above historical averages.

Officer Retention. Overall, we continue to achieve our goals for officer retention. We are retaining experienced and high quality officers, and both regular and reserve officer retention rates are above historical averages.

Recruiting. A successful retention effort is but one part of ensuring there is a properly trained Marine in the right place at the right time. Successful recruiting is essential to replenishing the force and maintaining a high state of readiness. Fiscal Year 2005 is proving to be the most difficult recruiting year we have had in 10 years. Eight months into the Fiscal Year 2005 recruiting year, we have shipped 102.5 percent of our Fiscal Year 2005 active component goal with 95.2 percent being Tier I High School graduates. The Marine Corps Reserve has also achieved its Fiscal Year 2005 8-month recruiting goal, shipping 100 percent of its non-prior service goal and accessing 107 percent of its goal for prior-service Marines. Officer accessions, in both the active and reserve components, will also achieve their goals.

In enlisted contracting for next year, we are slightly behind where we had planned to be at the end of May. We have achieved 97 percent of our 8-month contracting goal, but we are optimistic we will reach 100 percent by 1 October 2005. We believe the recruiting “marketplace” will become even more challenging in Fiscal Year 2006. Your continued support for a strong enlistment bonus and advertising programs will be essential to meet this challenge.

Marine Corps Reserve. The morale and patriotic spirit of the Marine Reserves, their families, and their employers remains extraordinarily high. The Marine Corps Reserve continues to be fully ready and capable of rapid activation and deployment to augment and reinforce the active component of the Marine Corps as required. To date over 31,000 Reserve Marines have served on active duty in the Global War On Terror. Currently, approximately 10,000 reserve Marines are on active duty with approximately 8,500 in cohesive reserve ground, aviation and combat support units and almost 1,500 serving as individual augments in both Marine and Joint commands.

Marine For Life – Injured Support. Integral to our warrior ethos is our pride in taking care of our own. Leveraging the organizational network and strengths of the Marine for Life program, we have implemented an Injured Support program to assist our wounded Marines, our Sailors serving with Marines, and their families. Initial operational capability for this program was achieved on 15 June 2005. The Marine Corps is committed to effecting long-term measures to advocate for, inform, and guide our wounded and their families. Strong command interest is

and will continue to be a key element of this goal and our programs. Resources available to assist include our interactive web site (www.m4l.usmc.mil). Further, we have assigned two officers to the Department of Veterans Affairs' Seamless Transition Office to liaison and develop cooperative solutions to complex problems between both organizations.

Deployment Support to Warriors. Deployment support programs and services for Marines and their families are essential to mission and readiness. From lessons learned, we have developed increasingly integrated capabilities that provide a continuum of care throughout the deployment cycle. Commanders and support service providers team up for maximum visibility and impact to ensure all are aware, engaged, and capable of establishing reasonable expectations and to successfully sustain the deployment.

Pre-deployment support involves Marines and their families and helps them to prepare for the emotional, financial and logistical realities of deployment. Briefs are provided that feature information on resources to assist them in problem resolution, preventive actions to provide for smooth household operation while the Marine is deployed, overview of the operational and personal security concerns, and information on communication flow to and from the unit.

To deal with individual and readiness concerns in theater, the Marine Corps employs proactive counseling services. We carefully observe our Marines for signs, symptoms, and risks of untreated combat stress and provide ready and accessible resources for counseling or treatment as necessary. We have embedded through our Operational Stress Control and Readiness Program (OSCAR) mental health professionals at battalion aid stations to keep Marines with low-level problems at their assigned duties and allow those with more severe conditions to immediately receive appropriate treatment.

Before Marines depart theater, we have the first scheduled decompression period for military chaplains to provide our Warrior Transition Brief, which consists of various sessions developed to help Marines positively transition back into their family life and communities. Through our Warrior Reintegration Program we help Marines return to non-combat environments and home station communities. In this phase of support, units conduct a second decompression period and are briefed on standards of conduct, safety, alcohol and substance abuse, sexual harassment, suicide prevention, stress and anger management, and financial management. Our families also receive return and reunion information and support to ensure

successful homecomings. These are but samples of our wide-ranging support of our deployment support continuum of care.

III. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Ensuring our Marines are properly trained for the challenges they are likely to face is also one of our most important tasks. Deploying Marine units rotate through standardized pre-deployment training packages. Building on home station training in basic urban skills, ground units deploy to the Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Center at Twentynine Palms, California, for in-depth training in convoy operations, fire support, and small-unit coordinated assaults against defended positions, followed by a graduate-level training exercise in urban operations, including stability and support operations. In addition, ground units scheduled to deploy to Afghanistan train at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center at Bridgeport, California. Here they focus on gaining the skills necessary to operate in demanding high-altitude environments similar to what they will experience in Afghanistan. Marine Corps aviation units continue to participate in standardized pre-deployment training in Yuma, Arizona.

The Marine Corps continuously incorporates lessons learned from the Global War on Terror into all our training. Our schools are using lessons learned to improve pre-deployment and in-theater training. Because Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) generate the highest number of combat casualties, we have aggressively established robust training programs to counter this threat. This training continues through pre-deployment training and into the theater of operation. The training focuses on the integration of tactics, techniques, and procedures as well as technologies. Lessons learned are quickly incorporated into training packages.

Recognizing the importance of cultural training as a force multiplier, we have established a Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning. This center will focus all of our efforts and ensure Marines are equipped with the requisite, regional, culture, and language expertise to enable them to operate successfully in any region of the world.

Because close combat will never be void of casualties, we place great emphasis on adapting changes to our first-aid training to ensure that Marines can respond to the type of injuries they are most likely to face. We have improved our training in this area continually over the last few years, and we are now completing final improvements on a uniform Combat Life Saver program that will standardize enhanced first-aid skills of the average Marine. This effort

has ensured a greater density of personnel available to provide advanced life-saving techniques to injured Marines in the highly dispersed operational environment that we face.

IV. EQUIPMENT AND MATERIEL READINESS STATUS AND INITIATIVES

Support and sustainment of our forward deployed forces remains our number one equipment and materiel readiness priority. Currently, the Marine Corps has 27 percent of our operating forces deployed in support of the Global War on Terror utilizing 30 percent of our ground equipment and 15 percent of our aviation assets. As the Marine continues to engage in sustained combat operations, deployed forces in the field forces remain fully combat ready. This has not been without challenges that we are addressing in both the near and mid-terms to ensure that our high state of readiness is preserved. Challenges for continual reconstitution of the force to meet current operational requirements and contingencies include the accelerated wear on equipment due to both the harsh environment and the increased wartime demands, combat and other losses, and an overall need for greater density of equipment in our all units based on lessons learned.

Readiness Status. Equipment readiness for deployed forces remains high, with 100 percent equipment supply readiness and average materiel readiness of 95 percent for ground equipment and 76 percent for aviation units. However, continued ground combat operations are starting to take a toll on equipment availability and unit readiness ratings. The corresponding ground equipment readiness rates for units in the United States average 81 percent. The average readiness rate for aviation units remaining in garrison is currently 72 percent. We address our response to this issue in the Reconstitution and Ground Equipment Density and Mid-Term Readiness paragraphs below.

Theater Readiness Initiatives. The Marine Corps has initiated several on-going initiatives to improve support to deployed forces and ensure they remain at a high level of readiness, including (1) establishment of a Forward In Stores (FIS) equipment pool in theater to reduce customer wait time; (2) outsourcing of preventative maintenance to reduce the burden on our mechanics and allow them to focus on corrective maintenance; (3) creation of a limited aircraft depot maintenance capability; (4) establishment of a robust equipment rotation plan; and (5) expanded partnering efforts with the Army to leverage capabilities already established in

theater for maintenance on 25 different weapon systems. These actions will reduce the overall logistics footprint and the demand on the intra theater lift/distribution requirements.

Reconstitution and Ground Equipment Density. Over 5,300 major pieces of equipment have been either destroyed or degraded to the point that they must be rebuilt resulting in a corresponding increase in maintenance work. As example of the effect of the harsh desert environment and the increased usage on our equipment, HMMWVs which have an estimated useful life of 13 years, need to be replaced after two years of operating in Iraq. This accelerated wear and tear requires increased maintenance actions and greater non-availability of assets. In addition, the Marine Corps has deployed forces to Iraq and Afghanistan with the equipment necessary for the warfighter to carry out the mission. This has resulted in expanded equipment density lists for these units beyond what they are normally equipped and what we had planned and procured for them, particularly with respect to communications and electronics gear, motor transport support, and crew-served weapons. Consequently, non-deployed units, from whom we have filled out our deployed units, are experiencing shortages. We have validated that sustained operations over a widely dispersed geographic area require more materiel than we had anticipated. Based on these lessons learned and a rigorous assessment, we intend to equip all of our units with expanded equipment density lists, both to train as we intend to fight and to be ready for current and future operations.

We have taken the following actions to sustain operations and ensure readiness of our deployed units in theater and those training to replace them: (1) we are cross-leveling and redistributing assets across the Marine Corps to ensure that all gear is effectively allocated, (2) we are employing our war reserve and pre-positioned stocks including those in Norway and aboard our Maritime Prepositioning Ships, and (3) we are utilizing assets in our training equipment allowances. Through the recently approved Fiscal Year 2005 Supplemental funding, we are currently initiating procurement of materiel and stocks to reset the force that will also assist in improving the readiness of our non-deployed units. We will fully utilize future funding initiatives to ensure constant reconstitution of our forces for sustained operations and our readiness for future contingencies, including expanding the equipment density of all our units based on lessons learned.

Additional critical elements of our near-term readiness efforts in meeting operational requirements include:

Armor. Since the beginning of this conflict and as the threat against our forces has evolved, improvements in armor to protect our Marines and Sailors have been an imperative in our readiness efforts. Our goal has been, and remains, to provide the best level of protection possible to 100 percent of in-theater vehicles. Our efforts have evolved through various “generations” based primarily on lessons learned in theater and a more robust and sophisticated technology base at home.

Vehicle Armor History. Before I Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) relieved the 82nd Airborne in the Al Anbar province in March 2004, the Marine Corps provided first generation armor components for 100 percent of the deploying force’s 3,049 vehicles within 10 weeks of receipt of tasking. This “Level 3” armor protection consisted of commercial-off-the-shelf combination of appliqué panels, 3/16” “L” shaped steel doors, and ballistic blankets.

In response to a thinking, adaptive enemy that increased the lethality of Improvised Explosive Devices, we sought a more robust armoring solution for our HMMWVs and other tactical vehicles. We began fielding of “zonal” armor to upgrade all armor kits to a second generation consisting of the depot built 3/8” rolled homogeneous armor. In all, more than 4,100 vehicles have been equipped with upgraded “Level 2” 3/8” armored L shaped doors, flanks, underbody, tailgates, rear cab plates, ballistic glass, and gunner shields. Additionally in a joint effort with the Army, the Marine Corps received a Multi-National Corps-Iraq distribution of 200 Add-on Armor kits and 529 up-armored HMMWV (M1114/M1116) from theater level assets, in addition to the 37 export model up-armored HMMWVs received earlier.

As the threat continued to evolve and change, particularly with respect to IEDs, which became increasingly sophisticated and more powerful, it became clear that additional improvements to the “zonal” armor were necessary. For non-M1114 variant HMMWVs, this 3rd generation armor consists of integrated kits, known as Marine Armor Kits (MAK). The MAK system is a modular, bolt-on system that can be installed by Marines at the unit level. MAK systems offer significantly improved protection against the most prevalent threats. Because the MAK is kit armor, it is classified as “Level 2” armor, however, it should be noted that it provides

considerably greater protection than the second generation “zonal” armor, particularly when improved underbody armor is included.

Vehicle Armor Installation. Currently, installation of MAK systems on HMMWVs is occurring at Camp Al Taqaddum, Iraq. As of 19 June 2005, we have completed installation on 699 HMMWVs out of 1695 we have scheduled; the requirement will be completed by December 2005. Similarly, for our MTVR 7-ton trucks, we have developed what is known as the MTVR Armor System, or MAS. We have commenced the installation process for 900 MTVRs, but are not nearly as far along. The MTVR, with its current suite of armor, however, is very well suited for the current IED threat. Finally, we have just initiated a buy of ballistic glass inserts for use on vehicles that have passengers not entirely encased in armor. This initiative will also include eventual installation of ballistic glass deflective plates for turret gunners that are currently in the design and test stage.

Future Armor Requirements. The Marine Corps is conducting an expeditionary armored force capability needs assessment as well as developing a ground mobility integration plan to ensure the future Marine Air-Ground Task Force is able to perform mounted armored combat operations across the spectrum of military operations. We will continue to assess our armored vehicle requirements for those forces in theater and the entire Marine Corps.

IED Countermeasures. Vehicle armor is only one of the aspects of countering this continually evolving, lethal threat; electronic countermeasures are another. We cannot address this topic to any degree of depth in an unclassified document, but we are constantly looking for innovations that will jam, detect, or pre-detonate these devices as they continue to evolve. We are also fully integrated into the Joint IED Task Force’s efforts, and are engaged with them at every level. We are prepared to speak in closed session on this topic.

The Office of Naval Research has established a parallel, but longer term effort, titled the “Manhattan Project,” into basic research to address the challenge presented by IEDs. This effort significantly expands understanding into the underlying basic phenomenology involved in the ability to detect, defeat, and destroy IEDs at range and speed. This includes explosives, triggering devices, and the kill chain associated with the IED threat. Long-term basic and applied research will be conducted to address the foundations of current and future IED problems. The “Manhattan Project” provides a sustained multi-disciplinary investment in basic

research. It is a deliberate effort that engages the entire academic and scientific research community as well.

Extremity Body Armor. Over the past few months, the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab and Systems Command have been working with the Naval Research Lab to develop the next generation of body armor. Casualty data and feedback from medical personnel show that as much as 70% of shrapnel wounds are from small fragments traveling at sub-sonic speeds. We believe this information may lead to much lighter body armor. The biggest challenge with developing an effective body armor system in a desert environment is the heat. We are experimenting with different materials that can be worn under the armor that allow for better ventilation and cooling.

Cupola Protective Ensemble (CPE). In conjunction with the Joint IED Task Force, the Marine Corps is conducting an operational assessment of the Cupola Protective Ensemble (CPE). This bomb suit is modified for wear by turret gunners, who are more exposed to shrapnel and blast from IEDs and require additional protection. The suit is worn over the existing OTV and SAPI plates and weighs about 40 pounds. It comes with a vest that incorporates cooled water pumped through it from a chiller that runs off vehicle power.

Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Efforts. In June 2004, the Navy conducted an out-of-cycle SBIR effort to seek innovative solutions from small businesses to address the threats presented by IEDs, RPGs, and Rocket/Mortars. The goal of this effort was to find “out-of-the-box” technologies for rapid development and deployment into theater. ONR funded eleven proposals as SBIR Phase I efforts. Two of the eleven IED Phase I efforts have been awarded additional funds for Phase II efforts. ONR is in the process of conducting technical reviews of the remaining efforts for additional Phase II funding.

Meeting Urgent Operational Requirements. A critical factor for both Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM in ensuring our Marines were as adequately equipped as possible is the Urgent Universal Needs Statement (UUNS) process that we initiated in 2002. This process has provided a way for the leaders and members of our operating forces to identify and forward new requirements for weapons and gear up the chain of command for quick review and approval – most in less than 90 days. Upon approval by the Marine Corps Requirements Oversight Council, the Marine Corps and the Department of the Navy have realigned funds as necessary within permitted reprogramming thresholds. When required by

reprogramming authority rules, we have forwarded requests that exceed the established reprogramming thresholds to the Congress for approval. The sources for these internal reprogramming actions have been our investment accounts. In many cases, the funding was made available by our decision to accept risk and defer the full execution of otherwise approved programs in order to address immediate warfighting needs. Through this process we have acquired more than 200,000 pieces of essential warfighting equipment that have been provided to the operational commanders. Some examples are:

- Vehicle hardening initiatives and IED Jammers noted in the armor section above.
- Numerous types of weapons sights
 - Advanced Combat Optic Gunsights (ACOG)
 - Thermal Weapons Sights
- Family of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) equipment including unmanned robotics and blast suits
- Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) – Dragon Eye and Scan Eagle
- Hardened Engineer Vehicles – 13 Cougar vehicles delivered with 14 pending
- Radios: Personal Role Radios, PRC-148, PRC-117F, and Tropo Satellite Support Radios
- Unit Operations Centers
- Night Vision Devices
- Dust abatement chemicals and sprayer systems
- Backscatter X-Ray machines
- Blue Force Tracker

As noted, reprogrammings deferred deliveries or delayed the execution of other approved procurement programs. Affected Marine Corps programs include personal gear and weaponry, vehicles, command and control systems, communications, and tactical computers. Marine Corps initiatives within the Navy budget affected by reprogramming included ships, naval weapons systems and aircraft replacements/ modifications that Marines man or that directly support us.

V. MID-TERM READINESS

In addition, key acquisition programs will ensure our readiness in the mid-term, including:

MV-22 Osprey. Although event driven, we expect the MV-22 Operational Evaluation to finish late summer. The program is scheduled for a Full Rate Production decision this September. This aircraft will start to replace the 40-year-old CH-46 starting in FY-07. In addition to increasing the safety of air-transported forces, it will significantly increase our operational and tactical flexibility and adaptability. We thank the Congress for its strong support of this critical capability. We ask for your continued support to ensure that production is maintained at an efficient and cost-effective rate to ensure the standup of MV-22 squadrons without lapse in readiness and the tactical mobility of our forces.

Heavy Lift Replacement (HLR). As the MV-22 completes development and begins to be fielded, the replacement for our aging CH-53E aircraft is our next aviation acquisition priority. The lift capacity of our CH-53E helicopters has been diminishing with age, while the cost of maintaining them continues to climb. By 2011, we will be forced to start an expensive process of inducting our CH-53E helicopters into our depots for major repairs. A heavy lift capability is the linchpin for future joint naval operations, Seabasing, and expeditionary warfare. The process needs to start now if we are to have a suitable replacement and maintain our essential heavy lift capability. This replacement will provide required capabilities, not resident in any other platform, to insert and sustain a credible sea-based force. The HLR will transport 27,000 pounds to distances of 110 nautical miles, the equivalent of two armored High Mobility Multi-purpose Wheeled Vehicles per sortie or three independent sustainment loads. This reliable, cost-effective heavy lift replacement for the CH-53E will address critical challenges in maintainability, reliability, and affordability found in present-day operations supporting the Global War on Terror.

H-1 (AH-1Z/UH-1Y). The H-1 Upgrade Program is a key modernization effort designed to resolve existing safety deficiencies and enhance operational effectiveness of both the AH-1W and the UH-1N. Additionally, the commonality gained between the AH-1Z and UH-1Y (84 percent) will significantly reduce life-cycle costs and logistical footprint, while increasing the maintainability and deployability of both aircraft. In March 2005, the program entered low-rate initial production (LRIP) II. Due to aircraft attrition in operations supporting the Global War on Terror, funding was approved for a 'build-new' strategy for the UH-1Y in April 2005 and is currently being pursued for the AH-1Z, in order to prevent inventory shortfalls. Operational test and evaluation is planned to begin in October 2005.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let me emphasize that your Marines are fully dedicated to whatever is required to protect this Nation. We will continue to ensure that we are an agile force, adapting and shaping ourselves to enhance our capabilities to win the Global War on Terror and respond to the 21st Century environment. The Marine Corps fully understands that our greatest contribution to the Nation is our high-level of readiness – across the spectrum of conflict. With your continued support, we will ensure that your Marines, our equipment, our training, and our organization remain ready for any potential contingency. Marines and their families greatly appreciate the unwavering support of Congress and the solid backing of the American people that is critical to maintaining our high level of success.