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THE HOUSE ARMED
SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**STATEMENT OF
GENERAL MICHAEL W. HAGEE
COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 17, 2004**

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Chairman Hunter, Congressman Skelton, distinguished members of the Committee; it is my privilege to report on your Marine Corps and its participation as part of the coalition force in operations in support of the Global War on Terror. Your Marines are an expeditionary force-in-readiness who fight as an integrated air-ground-logistics team with in which every Marine is a rifleman. Nothing can better demonstrate these core values and their significant capabilities than Marine actions over the last year in Iraq, Afghanistan, Horn of Africa, and Haiti to name but a few. Congress's sustained public and legislative commitment to Marines and other service-members have been indispensable to our morale and successes. On behalf of all Marines and their families, I thank this Committee for your continued support.

However, make no mistake, today we are at war. We should also not make the mistake of thinking this war will end in a year or two, or that eventual success in Iraq and Afghanistan will be the last battles in our campaign against terror. We are here to discuss and answer your questions on the demand on the force. As we do, we must remember there is a human cost that cannot be measured in dollars – it is the sacrifice of our young men and women in uniform. In the last approximately 10 days we have lost 46 Marines killed in action with another 354 wounded just in Fullajah. A month ago we averaged 23 Marines and sailors a day being treated at Bethesda. Today there are 103 Marines and sailors receiving care there. When I talk with these courageous young Americans and their families, they continue to strongly support our actions in the Global War on Terror. They firmly believe we have an important mission. They also believe they are well equipped, well led, well trained and have the backing of the American people. I am uplifted every time I talk with them

As mentioned, over this past year the Marine Corps has been actively engaged in the Global War on Terror in Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, and in Iraq. We have accomplished this while retaining our readiness and flexibility to conduct short-notice operations like the February deployment to Haiti within 24-36 hours. Critical to our ability to respond to emerging contingencies is our high level of readiness, our full expeditionary capability and our speed, flexibility and adaptability resulting from our robust training and education systems.

In Afghanistan this past spring we provided, on short-notice, a regimental headquarters, an infantry battalion and a combined arms Marine Expeditionary Unit. From March until July this Marine force was a major portion of the combined joint task force “spring offensive” to help

in setting the conditions for the successful election that has greatly advanced the process of establishing a secure and stable government in Afghanistan.

Since February of this year, the Marine Corps has had the lead of the Multi-National-Force-West for stability and security in the Al Anbar Province in Iraq. As you are aware, the I Marine Expeditionary Force along with two US Army Brigades and 5 Iraqi infantry battalions has recently taken control of Fallujah. This morning the commander of the I Marine Expeditionary Force, LtGen John Sattler, informed me that despite the casualties and very difficult fighting, his force was extremely confident and its morale was high. The Marines, soldiers, sailors, airman and Iraqi Security Forces have displayed bravery and courage along with warfighting acumen in conducting this demanding and dangerous operation.

The Marine Corps is performing well because of the outstanding courage, dedication, and commitment of individual Marines regardless of where they are assigned for duty. They realize the danger to the nation, their vital role, and the magnitude of their responsibilities. However, the demand on the force has increased exponentially. This demand is especially telling in the strain on our Marines, their families, and on our equipment and materiel stocks.

We are an expeditionary force accustomed to deployments. However, in the past two years we have gone from a deployment rotation of three-to-one (6 months out / 18 months back) to our current one-to-one ratio (7 months out / 7 months back). This means that if you are in the operating forces you are either deployed or getting ready to relieve a unit that is deployed. We have met our mission requirements with a Total Force approach. Since 9-11, we have activated in excess of 95% of our Selected Marine Corps Reserve units. Most have served in either Iraq or Afghanistan. Despite this high operations tempo, the Marine Corps continues to meet its recruiting and retention goals in quantity and quality. Although we met these goals last year, the individual recruiter had to spend a great deal more time with each candidate and his or her parents. We see this trend continuing. Similarly, our career retention specialist had to spend more time with individual Marines in order to ensure we met our reenlistment goals. We need your help to ensure we maintain a strong advertising budget and selective reenlistment bonus program. Morale and commitment are high. We cannot lose these dedicated young Americans.

While the details of FY05 supplemental request are still being worked, I can provide some broad indicators. The demanding wear and tear on materiel – in addition to combat losses – is a significant concern. During 3/11's deployment to Iraq this year, an artillery battalion that

we transformed to a provisional security battalion, the commanding officer reported his 150 tactical vehicles drove over 825,000 miles in 7 months conducting over 700 convoy security missions. This usage equates to over 13 years of wear under “normal” conditions. Currently, 30% of Marine Corps ground equipment and 25% of our aviation inventory is deployed in theater and experiencing significant use in one of the harshest climates on the planet. The additional cost to support our combat operations, intermediate and depot level repairs, combat losses, and rehabilitation and sustainment is approximately \$10 billion. These funds will go a long way to sustain the fighting force while recovering from accumulated demands on the force.

To help ourselves, we have recently completed an extensive review of our force structure and made some important decisions to better prepare us to meet the Global War on Terror requirements and to address rotational stress within the force. I would also like to especially thank you for the additional forces provided in the FY05 authorization bill. We intend to use this increase of 3,000 personnel to man our infantry battalions at 100% and address other internal shortfalls. We are currently assessing whether we will need an additional increase of personnel to meet long-term commitments in the Global War on Terror. We are working aggressively with DoD and the Department of Veterans Affairs on initiatives in support of our Marines and their families, particularly to address the long-term needs of our seriously injured Marines. I can assure you that if we find legislative changes are required, I will expeditiously report them to you.

Adequate funding without dipping into our base accounts will allow us to continue to improve our force for future challenges and still allow us to continue the process of transformation. Operations over these past few years, including those we are currently conducting in western Iraq, have dramatically highlighted that our focus on readiness to fight across the spectrum of conflict, our expeditionary mindset, and our combined arms philosophy are on the mark. The ability to fully fund our modernization and transformation accounts will ensure that these critical capabilities will be ready for the future challenges. Seabasing – through a robust amphibious, maritime prepositioning force of the future, as well as other critical naval capabilities – will greatly increase our national capability to respond.

In conclusion, let me emphasize that Marines fully understand that our greatest contribution to the Nation is our high-level of readiness for combat operations across the full spectrum of conflict. We will continue to ensure that our Marines, their equipment, their

training, and our organization are prepared for any potential contingency today and in the future. Marines and their families greatly appreciate Congress's support in achieving our high level of success and your efforts to assist us in sustaining our rich legacy – which inspires Marines and instills a fierce determination to overcome seemingly impossible challenges. Thank you, Mr. Chairman; I look forward to your questions.