

Not public until released by the
House Armed Services Committee

**STATEMENT OF
GENERAL JOSEPH F. DUNFORD
ASSISTANT COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS
BEFORE THE
READINESS SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
ON
TOTAL FORCE READINESS
26 JULY 2011**

Not public until released by the
House Armed Services Committee

The Marine Corps is America's Expeditionary Force in Readiness.

This short sentence captures the essential task levied by the Congress to be “the most ready when the Nation is...least ready.” The importance of this task has proven to be timeless and requires a Marine Corps adept at providing forward deployed, forward engaged forces that are optimized for crisis response and assured access but capable of accomplishing a broad range of missions. That is what your Corps of Marines provides for the Nation today. With the continued support of Congress, that is exactly what we will provide for the Nation in the future.

The ready posture of your Navy-Marine Corps Team sends a clear message to both our allies and potential foes. It provides time, space, and options to national leadership in times of crisis. We have a significant impact at the beginning of international disturbances as we bolster diplomatic efforts with credible force. We can respond with prompt, decisive action to a wide range of challenges.

“Being ready when the nation is least ready” is particularly important in these uncertain and dynamic times. We have entered a period of austerity in which this Nation will have to make difficult choices and carefully manage risks to our national interests. Maintaining a part of the joint force at a very high state of readiness — particularly a part of the force that can operate independent of foreign basing — is the kind of insurance policy the nation will need for the unpredictable future. The Marine Corps has historically provided that insurance policy for well less than ten percent of the Total Obligation Authority of the Department of Defense.

While the first priority of your Corps is to provide the best trained and equipped units for the current fight in Afghanistan, we are also focused on the future. Recently we conducted an in-depth review of our mission and force structure. In this analysis, we challenged ourselves to deliver the optimum mix of capabilities our Nation will need in the post-Afghanistan security environment while maintaining our culture of frugality. We have crafted a strategically mobile, “middleweight” force optimized for forward-presence and rapid crisis response. We will be light enough to leverage the flexibility and capacity of amphibious ships and other forms of lift, yet heavy enough to accomplish the mission when we get there.

We will be organized, manned, trained, and equipped in a manner that reflects the requirements of an expeditionary force in readiness. Our analysis indicates that we can meet the projected requirements of Combatant Commanders with a future force of 186,800 Active Marines and 39,600 in the Reserve Component. That force will have the right balance of

capabilities and capacities and support the sourcing of combined arms Marine Air-Ground-Logistics Teams. We will continue to recruit a high quality force and our manning will support the need to respond to today's crisis, with today's force, today – enlisted billets will be filled to 99 percent of the requirement established by our tables of organization and officer billets will be filled to no less than 95 percent of the requirement.

As we develop and maintain the force of the future, we will be informed by 10 years of wartime experience. Our comprehensive predeployment training initiatives have been critical to the success of our Marines in Iraq and Afghanistan. The investments we have made in combined arms live fire opportunities, immersive training, and flight hour programs have enabled our Marines to accomplish the mission and saved lives. Our investment in education has proven to be equally important – particularly for our non-commissioned officers and junior officers. We will continue to seek levels of operations and maintenance funding that will support challenging, realistic training, quality education, and high readiness across the operating forces. There is no tiered readiness in an expeditionary force in readiness. It is the 'bench' at home station that provides the depth and responsiveness for the unexpected.

Equipment readiness is also a critical element of overall Marine Corps readiness. The last decade of combat operations has taken a heavy toll on our equipment. Congress has been extremely helpful in keeping our equipment readiness up for the deploying units, but for those at home in their training and dwell-time, we are seeing growing shortfalls as time goes on. As we move beyond Afghanistan, we will need continued support to reset our equipment and restore the readiness of our units at home station. We will also need support in modernizing our equipment as we seek to reconstitute the Corps for tomorrow's challenges.

Finally, our overall readiness to perform assigned missions is closely related to the readiness of our Navy partners; particularly within the Amphibious Ready Groups. The Navy and Marine Corps perform as a team when it comes to forward presence, engagement, deterrence, and crisis response. We can have all the readiness we need in our Marine units, but if we cannot position our capabilities where and when required and project that power ashore in a timely manner, then we lack the relevance needed to meet the challenge at hand. The readiness of the amphibious force is a critical requirement for the nation's force in readiness.

Current and Recent Operations

The pace of current operations for the Marine Corps remains high, with approximately 30,000 Marines – representing 25 percent of its operating forces end strength – forward-deployed across the globe. Current operations encompass deliberate, well-planned deployments such as Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF), the Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs), Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) events as well as crisis response operations, such as Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR in Libya.

Marine Corps pre-deployment training programs ensure combat formations, as well as the individual Marine, consistently deploy as the best-trained and most ready force to meet operational requirements. Deploying and deployed units report high levels of readiness and are trained, resourced, and ready for their assigned missions, which include:

- The OEF MAGTF – approximately 20,000 Marines and Sailors in Afghanistan
- One forward-based Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) assigned to USPACOM for crisis and contingency response
- One forward-deployed MEU in the Gulf of Aden postured as the USCENTCOM theater reserve to support crisis response as required
- A forward-deployed command element in Bahrain allocated for planning and command and control of Marine forces in USCENTCOM
- TSC and military-to-military engagement events and exercises with partner nations in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, the Asia-Pacific region and North and South America, totaling 149 events in 2010 and 71 events thus far in 2011
- Two squadrons of Marine Corps F/A-18 fighter aircraft aboard U.S. Navy forward-deployed aircraft carriers

Marine Corps units recently deployed for unplanned requirements and/or crisis response also report high levels of readiness for their assigned missions. Examples include:

- The commitment of a seventh infantry battalion in Afghanistan at the request of the Commander, USCENTCOM from January 2011 to present
- A forward-deployed MEU in the Mediterranean Sea in support of USAFRICOM's Libya operations from April to July 2011
- A MEU and other elements of III MEF based in Okinawa deployed to mainland Japan in response to the tsunami and resulting nuclear crisis, specifically

providing humanitarian assistance to the Japanese people and evacuating approximately 8,000 U.S. citizens from March to May 2011

- Deployment of 130-specially-trained personnel from the Marine Corps' Chemical Biological Incident Response Force to assist the government of Japan's consequence management efforts in the wake of the nuclear incident from March to May 2011
- Humanitarian and disaster relief missions in Haiti from January to April 2010, in Pakistan from August to November 2010, and in the Philippines from September to October 2009 and again in October 2010
- Reinforcement of U.S. embassies in Niger (February 2010), Kyrgyzstan (April 2010), Bahrain (from September 2010 to June 2011), Egypt (January to May 2011), and Yemen (from May 2011 to present) to assist and protect U.S. diplomatic personnel
- Planning and advisory support to the Republic of Korea during the Yeonpeong Island crisis in November 2010
- Maritime security operations to ensure freedom of navigation along sea lines of communication, to include the recapture of the Merchant Vessel *Magellan Star* and the rescue of its crew from Somali pirates on 9 September 2010

With all the Marine Corps has done and continues to do, the Marine Corps provides exceptional value to the Nation. For 8.5 percent of the annual Defense budget, the Marine Corps provides approximately 31 percent of the ground operating forces, 12 percent of the fixed wing tactical aircraft, and 19 percent of the attack helicopters in the Joint Force. The Marine Corps' 1:9 ratio of officers to enlisted personnel is the lowest of all the services. The Marine Corps' 1:6 ratio of civilian employee to supported Marine is also the lowest of all the services.

Current Readiness Assessment

Today's Marines are highly trained and combat proven across the range of military operations. Marine units in Afghanistan operate in a rapidly evolving, highly complex environment against a very adaptive, resourceful enemy. Depending upon the population density of a given area, infantry battalions are responsible for anywhere from 50 square miles of urban and rural terrain to upwards of 500 square miles. Within this battlespace, Marine units work to

defeat the insurgency along multiple lines of operation, which include security, governance, rule of law, and economic development. These multiple, mutually supporting lines of operation, and the distributed nature of the conflict, are what have required the Marine Corps to augment forward-deployed units with additional equipment and personnel from non-deployed forces and strategic programs.

Current readiness of the force must be viewed from two perspectives: the ability to meet/sustain known operations and rotational requirements, and the ability to respond to crises and contingencies with the non-deployed force. The Marine Corps' effort to prepare and deploy units against known requirements at a high level of readiness has been successful. The Marine Corps can sustain its current requirements on an enduring basis; however, high readiness of the deployed force comes at the expense of the non-deployed force. Non-deployed units are in a constant cycle of post-deployment dwell and subsequent training for their next deployment. Sustainment of current operations has reduced the aggregate readiness of the non-deployed force. This translates to increased risk in the timely execution of unexpected crises or large-scale contingencies, since the degraded non-deployed force would respond to any emergent crisis or contingency operation.

For the past several years, operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have required the Marine Corps to operate primarily in a land-based environment.¹ High operational tempo and the necessary sustained focus on irregular warfare, stability operations, and counterinsurgency in Iraq and now Afghanistan, have degraded the Marine Corps' fundamental core competency – its amphibious expertise. Outside the regular training and deployment cycles of the Marine Expeditionary Units, training opportunities for amphibious operations have been limited due to supporting operations in OEF and the limited availability of amphibious ships. Accordingly, training shortfalls in amphibious and prepositioning operations affect the Marine Corps' ability to respond to other operational plans, contingencies, and activities.

The Marine Corps is very concerned that the Navy's amphibious fleet is beginning to show signs of strain. The only three-ship Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) in the PACOM area of operations recently deployed without one of its amphibious assault ships, the USS DENVER,

¹ This is nothing new; the Marine Corps does what the Nation needs, when the Nation needs it. Excerpt from the 82nd Congress, 1st Session, Report No. 666, *Strength of the Marine Corps*, 1952: "...throughout American history the Marine Corps has repeatedly served time and again with the Army throughout the process of land wars and today is once again engaged in the same function."

which will be in unscheduled maintenance for the next few months. A recent engineering casualty to another ship in the same ARG, the USS ESSEX, took this ARG off-line – further degrading the MEU’s crisis response capability.² The Marine Corps’ ability to fulfill the intent of Congress is directly tied to the readiness of the Amphibious Fleet.

Despite the amphibious training challenges facing the Marine Corps due to sustaining current operations in Afghanistan and the limited availability of amphibious ships, the Navy-Marine Corps team has taken steps in the last 24 months to address training shortfalls in amphibious operations. We conducted one major Marine Expeditionary Brigade-level exercise on the East Coast and another on the West Coast, Exercise BOLD ALLIGATOR 11 and Exercise DAWN BLITZ 11, respectively. The Marine Corps also conducted several amphibious exercises in the Pacific region, to include Exercise COBRA GOLD in Thailand. Participating partner nations included Thailand, Singapore, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Malaysia. This exercise improved partner nation interoperability and capacity to conduct joint and multinational operations in support of crisis response. A critical event culminating in a successful Exercise COBRA GOLD was Exercise FREEDOM BANNER. This was a maritime prepositioning force (MPF) exercise during which equipment and supplies were offloaded from two MPF ships in support of follow-on Exercise COBRA GOLD.

Readiness Concerns

The Marine Corps’ top readiness concerns are: (1) its ability to simultaneously sustain current operations in Afghanistan and to respond, rapidly, with a cohesive force to an additional large-scale contingency; and (2) the reset and reconstitution of the force, post-conflict. With regard to the first issue, contingency response, readiness shortfalls for non-deployed units have been the price of sustained combat operations. The second concern is related to the first in that the long-term participation in conflict has significantly undermined the readiness of the force.

Top Concern #1: Readiness of the non-deployed force to support crisis and contingency response.

The critical readiness shortfalls for the non-deployed force are personnel and equipment.

² The USS ESSEX is a Landing Helicopter Dock (LHD) amphibious assault ship.

- **Personnel:** Units in dwell are heavily leveraged, in terms of leadership and expertise, to meet ongoing operational commitments. Although the operating forces possess experienced leaders, trainers, and planners, a significant number are not available due to sourcing service individual augments, joint individual augments, and Afghan partner mentor teams. While these Marine leaders, planners, and trainers are enhancing the capabilities of Afghan security forces and performing needed functions in forward-deployed joint and Marine headquarters, their extended absence leaves some non-deployed units short of key personnel needed to lead and train Marines. Approximately 35 percent of non-deployed units report key personnel shortfalls.

- **Equipment:** Non-deployed units and strategic programs, such as our pre-positioning programs, have been used to source equipment needs for forward-deployed and deploying units. Reduced equipment sets available to units in dwell present training challenges and an increased risk to providing timely response to major contingencies. Approximately 68 percent of non-deployed units report degraded readiness in the areas of capabilities and/or resources.³ Resource shortfalls manifest themselves as capability gaps in individual unit and collective core competencies. The largest contributing factor to unit capability gaps is equipment; approximately sixty-three percent of non-deployed forces report mission essential equipment shortfalls. The reasons for degraded equipment readiness are as follows:

- The strategic shift from Iraq to Afghanistan required the Marine Corps to hold equipment in theater, and identify serviceable assets for movement to OEF – equipment the Marine Corps has been unable to reset and return to non-deployed units.
- The difficult operating environment and distributed nature of the battlespace in Regional Command Southwest are degrading the normal expected service limits of some principle end items, dramatically increasing the frequency of preventive maintenance actions. In some cases, the expected service life of equipment has decreased by up to one-half.⁴ Marine Corps legacy aircraft supporting operational missions are consuming service life at a rate up to three times faster than scheduled.

³ This number is based on DRRS-MC data reflecting units at home station which have a readiness level of C3/4/5,. Those readiness levels are attributed to a shortfall in equipment or personnel. The maintenance readiness of materiel is quite high, averaging in the high 90's. These statistics are consistent with what is reflected in Service readiness reporting.

⁴ Source: Field Supply and Maintenance Analysis Office Analysis of I MEF (Fwd) Units in Afghanistan, 29 Aug 10

Averaged across the fleet, the Marine Corps is consuming aircraft service life at a rate 1.85 times faster than planned. The result is compressed timelines between re-work events and earlier retirement of aircraft than originally programmed. The majority of Marine Corps legacy platforms are nearing the end of their service lives, and most production lines are closed. New aircraft with low average ages and robust service life projections are the future of Marine aviation and its support of Marine Corps and joint operations.

- The equipment life expectancy issues mentioned above, as well as battle damage and wear, have necessitated the establishment of a robust forward-in-stores capability and a major equipment rotation program to support deployed forces. This further strains the equipment available to non-deployed forces.
- Since the non-deployed force is augmenting forward deployed units with additional equipment and personnel, many non-deployed units are not ready for combat operations. If some of these "not ready" units were required for another major contingency or operation, the Marine Corps would globally source and organize them into fully capable units prior to their deployment, likely increasing the time required to task organize for a contingency. This is the incurred risk that the Marine Corps has assumed - risk that affects successful execution of unexpected crises or contingencies with minimal loss of life and materiel.

Top Concern #2: Reset and reconstitution of the force.

Reset is a maintenance and logistics strategy that involves repair and reconditioning of equipment operated in combat or replacement for combat losses. Reconstitution involves actions beyond reset that modernize combat capability to meet current and future requirements. Reconstitution includes personnel, equipment and training. Force reconstitution spans activities from normal sustainment (rearm, refuel, recover/dwell, repair, and replace) through reorganization and regeneration of units for redeployment. An example of reconstitution would be an infantry battalion that has returned from Afghanistan and after a sufficient period of recovery, is manned to its table of organization; equipped to its future, modernized table of equipment; and has completed all training required for it to accomplish the core combat mission

for which it was designed. The reconstituted battalion is now ready for redeployment because it has been manned, trained, and equipped to a high level of readiness.

Reset funding will: support the depot-level maintenance of OEF equipment; procurement of vehicles, major weapons systems, and engineering equipment lost in combat; and replenishment of ammunition stores. Reset costs will increase the longer the current conflict endures and will require a multi-year support effort beyond the conclusion of combat operations. The Marine Corps anticipates a post conflict reset liability appropriately resolved principally with Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funding. Ensuring the Marine Corps has what it needs to reset and reconstitute for the future is the most pressing concern affecting long-term readiness.

Future Readiness

The 21st Century battlefield will be characterized by distributed and disaggregated operations at sea and ashore. Such operations will require greater equipment density at the small unit level in the areas of command and control systems, survivable vehicles, and crew-served weapons. This requirement will invariably lead to higher equipment costs. Overall equipment costs will also grow due to the increased expense of modern equipment on a “by item” basis. While the increasing cost of equipment is a disturbing trend, senior leaders are decisively engaged in an effort to control the cost of modernization.

The Commandant has directed that the Marine Corps will reconstitute to a “middleweight force,” ideally positioned between special operations and heavy forces, and able to rapidly shift across the range of military operations. This construct will enable the Marine Corps to operate throughout the spectrum of threats – irregular, hybrid, and conventional – or the areas where they overlap. The Marine Corps is currently in the midst of a comprehensive reconstitution planning effort to fulfill the Commandant’s vision.

Lessons learned from a lengthy period of combat operations resulted in adjustments to the Marine Corps’ tables of equipment, especially for communications, vehicles, and crew-served weapons. The Marine Corps has learned that the modern battlefield often involves significant distances between units—substantially more distance than was required in more traditional conflict. The Marine Corps’ tables of equipment were based on that older model of conflict, and in many cases, were often ill-suited or inadequate for the dispersed battlefield. The

experience of modern warfare led the Marine Corps to assess and adjust, both in the method of fighting, but also in the way the forces were equipped. Modern conflict led to other advances as well. For example, the cost of clothing and personal equipment for a Marine was \$1,200 in 2000. In 2010, that cost increased to approximately \$7,000 as we incorporated technological advances in individual weapons, uniforms, and protective equipment.

The Marine Corps estimates it will cost approximately \$12.5⁵ billion to reset its equipment and reconstitute the force following OEF. This will provide the necessary resources to fund the reset of equipment; implementation of the Marine Corps' force structure review; and cover the cost of reconstituting the force with a modernized table of equipment resulting from changes in Marine Corps doctrine, organization, and training. The Marine Corps began to address its reset and reconstitution shortfall by requesting \$2.5 billion in FY12 OCO funding to support ongoing operations and an additional \$253 million in its FY12 baseline budget for equipment procurement.

In closing, the Marine Corps is the United States' force in readiness. It has been mandated by Congress to be “the most ready when the Nation is...least ready.”⁶ It is not intended to be a second land army. Its primary mission is to train, organize, and equip landing forces for amphibious operations and subsequent combat operations ashore and provide a balanced ground-air task force capable of suppressing and containing international disturbances short of large scale war.⁷ Additionally, the Marine Corps has been tasked “within the Department of the Navy, to develop concepts, doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures and organize, train, equip, and provide forces, normally employed as combined arms air ground task forces, to serve as an expeditionary force-in-readiness... .”⁸

These Congressional and DoD mandates exist because the lessons this nation learned from our unpreparedness in the beginning stages of the Korean War. These lessons of

⁵ This figure reflects \$2.5 B for reset in FY12 and \$5 B for end of OEF unresolved reset liability, as well as \$5 B in reconstitution costs. The sum of these estimated costs is \$12.5 B.

⁶ U.S. Congress, *U.S. Code Congressional and Administrative News: Legislative History Commentaries*, 82nd Congress, 2nd Session, vol 2 (Brooklyn, NY: Edward Thompson Co., 1953), 1763

⁷U.S. Department of Defense, *Functions of the Department of Defense and Its Major Components*, DoD Directive 5100.1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 1 August 2002), 18

⁸U.S. Department of Defense, *Functions of the Department of defense and Its Major Components*, Department of defense 5100.01, 21 December 2010), 31-32

unpreparedness were written in the blood of American service members. We risk the loss of the very capabilities gleaned from those lessons if funding to the Navy-Marine Corps Team is cut too deeply. The Marine Corps has worked diligently throughout our Force Structure Review to analyze what is required to provide the nation with an expeditionary force in readiness that can project power from the sea. An end strength of 186,800 Marines, modernization of our tactical aviation assets, resetting our equipment sets to match required readiness levels, and enough capability and capacity from Navy amphibious ships is required to accomplish the mission. Proportionate cuts across the Department of Defense and the Services have a disproportionate effect on the Marine Corps due to our smaller size, and the fact that the preponderance of our force—more so than any other Service—is in our operating forces; those very forces that provide the nation its capability to respond immediately to crises. The 82nd Congress recognized this critical point when it categorically rejected the idea of a "percentage" relationship between the strength of the Marine Corps and that of other services as "the very antithesis of the concept of Marine readiness."⁹ Alongside our Navy counterparts, we provide 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 every day of the year. In an increasingly dangerous and uncertain world, this Nation must provide for the protection it needs. The Navy-Marine Corps Team is the first-level investment in that protection because we are always on station and on watch.

⁹ 82nd Congress, 1st Session, Report No. 666, *Strength of the Marine Corps*, 1952: "The committee considers it very necessary to point out that the most significant weakness inherent in a percentage relationship of Marine Corps strength to naval strength is that such a relationship unavoidably produced the lowest Marine Corps strength at the very time when a Marine force in readiness is most needed. The need for Marines as a ready force is paramount when the Nation is largely demobilized...the Nation's ground shock troops must be most ready when the Nation is generally least ready. Accordingly, the committee has concluded that the percentage relationship insisted upon by the Department of Defense is the very antithesis of the concept of Marine readiness. The committee has rejected it accordingly."