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House Armed Services Committee

STATEMENT OF

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ASSISTANT COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

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2010 ACMC Statement to the House Armed Services Committee (HASC)
Subcommittee on Readiness

Introduction

Chairman Ortiz, Ranking Member Forbes, and distinguished members of the committee, on behalf of your Marine Corps, I want to thank you for your generous support and for the opportunity to speak with you today about the readiness of the United States Marines. My statement will address our efforts to create a balanced force capable of prevailing in current conflicts while preparing for other contingencies, the readiness challenges facing Marines today, and the critical steps needed to reset and reconstitute our Corps for today's complex challenges and tomorrow's uncertain security environment.

Despite high operational tempo, your Marines are resilient, motivated, and performing superbly in missions around the globe. This sustained effort and performance does not come without costs – to the institution, to our equipment, to our strategic programs, and most importantly, to our Marines and their families. Continued Congressional investment in our Marines and families, resetting and modernizing our equipment, and training Marine Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs) for the future security environment are critical to the Marine Corps' success as the "Nation's Force in Readiness."

Readiness Assessment

The pace of operations for your Marines remains high, with over 27,000 Marines forward-deployed across the globe. In the U.S. Central Command area of operations, there are over 17,000 Marines deployed in support of Operations IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM. As you know, our mission in Iraq is now complete. After seven years of intense combat and nation building operations, the Marine Corps returned the Anbar Province to the leadership of Iraq. With exception of some Training Team members, our last piece of equipment and our last Marine departed Iraq this past week. In the course of the last eight years, your Marine Corps has been battle-tested, combat-hardened, and has accumulated tremendous experience in irregular warfare and counter-insurgency operations. Forward deployed units are manned, trained, and equipped to accomplish their assigned missions, and these units are reporting the highest levels of readiness for those missions. However, resources are limited, and non-deployed units incur the costs of ensuring deployed and next-to-deploy units have sufficient personnel, equipment, and training. As a result, our non-deployed forces continue to report

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degraded readiness levels. This degraded state of readiness within our non-deployed forces presents risk in our ability to rapidly respond to other unexpected contingencies.

Because our equipment, personnel, and training priorities are focused on counter-insurgency operations, we have experienced degradation in some of our traditional, full spectrum, core competencies such as integrated combined arms operations and large-scale seaborne operations. These skills are critical to maintaining the Marine Corps' primacy in theater access operations that enable follow-on joint forces. The OIF/OEF demand for units has also limited our ability to fully meet Combatant Commander requests for theater engagement activities. The current security environment has clearly justified the tradeoffs we have made to support Overseas Contingency Operations, but the uncertainty of the future makes it prudent to regain our capabilities to operate across the full range of military operations.

In addressing the challenges facing the Marine Corps, I have structured my statement along the lines of our key readiness concerns – equipment, personnel, military construction, training, amphibious shipbuilding, and caring for our warriors and their families. I will discuss the positive steps and proactive initiatives we are undertaking, with your support, to reset, modernize, and reconstitute the Marine Corps for an uncertain future. Finally, I will conclude with some of our ongoing initiatives and programs that address the care and welfare of our Marines and their families.

Equipment Readiness

Ensuring that our Marines are equipped with the most modern and reliable combat gear is a necessity. However, the requirement to fully resource deployed forces, often in excess of our tables of equipment, has reduced the availability of materiel essential to outfit and train our non-deployed units. Approximately 21.5% of all Marine Corps ground equipment and 38% of our aviation assets are deployed overseas. Most of this equipment is not rotating out of theater at the conclusion of each force rotation; it remains in combat, to be used by the relieving unit. As of 1 Mar 2010, Marine Corps Logistics Command folded its flag, redeployed, and the final 21 trucks headed for Kuwait; we have completed the responsible drawdown from Iraq, our mission there is complete. While we reorient our effort to OEF operations, we have been transitioning a significant amount of equipment to Afghanistan. We continue to face significant home station equipment readiness challenges.

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Ground Equipment Readiness After eight years of sustained combat operations, our deployed equipment has been subject to significant wear and tear, harsh environmental conditions, and increased operating hours and mileage. Additionally, the weight associated with armor plating further increases the wear on our deployed vehicle fleet and accelerates the need for repair and replacement of these assets. Despite these challenges and higher utilization on already aging equipment, our young Marines are keeping this equipment mission-ready every single day. The high equipment maintenance readiness rates throughout the Marine Corps are a testament to their dedication and hard work.

The policy to retain equipment in theater as forces rotate in and out was accompanied by increased in-theater maintenance presence. This infusion of maintenance support has paid great dividends, with deployed ground equipment maintenance readiness above 90%. However, the Marine Corps is experiencing challenges with the supply availability of a number of critical equipment items at home stations. Supply readiness rates (On-hand vs Required) have decreased for home station units, while we work to meet the demand of deployed forces and those next-to-deploy. Shortages of critical equipment limit home station units' ability to prepare and train to their full core competencies and present additional risk in availability of equipment necessary to respond swiftly to unexpected contingencies.

The sourcing of equipment for the Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) in Afghanistan over the past year, and the transition to a much larger Marine Expeditionary Force Forward (MEF(Fwd)), illustrates our equipment availability challenge. Equipment assets were pulled from across the entire Marine Corps to accomplish this task. To ensure the MEF(Fwd) is provided the newest and most capable equipment, over 34% of their equipment came via new procurement provided by Marine Corps Systems Command. Approximately 42% of the equipment came from within the Central Command area of operations, including items made available from units retrograding from Iraq; and about 4% of the required assets were sourced from our Logistics Command Maritime Prepositioning Ships Program and the Marine Corps Prepositioning Program in Norway. Although a concerted effort was made to minimize the impact on home station unit readiness, 20% of the equipment for I MEF(Fwd) needed to be drawn from our non-deployed operating forces. The net effect has been degradation in readiness at home station. For instance, the overall supply rating of Marine Corps units in Afghanistan is near 100 percent, while the supply rating of units at home station is less than 60 percent.

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Ground equipment age continues to be a top readiness challenge as well. As equipment ages, more time, money, and effort are expended repairing it. Ultimately, the answer to achieving sustained improvements in ground equipment readiness is to improve logistics processes and to modernize with highly reliable and maintainable equipment. The Corps is achieving efficiencies by improving supply-chain processes, adopting best practices, and leveraging proven technological advances to facilitate responsive and reliable support to the Operating Forces.

Aviation Equipment Our aviation capability is a critical part of the MAGTF. Just like our ground force units, deployed Marine aviation units receive priority for aircraft, repair parts, and mission essential subsystems such as forward-looking infrared (FLIR) pods. Non-deployed forces, therefore, face significant challenges for available airframes and supply parts. Exacerbating the readiness challenges in our aviation fleet, most Marine aircraft are older, or are “legacy” platforms no longer in production, thus placing an even greater strain on our logistics chain and maintenance systems.

Our Marine Corps aviation platforms are supporting ground forces in some of the world’s harshest environments: Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, and aboard ships around the world. While operating in these demanding areas, our aircraft are often doubling –sometimes, nearly tripling – the utilization rates for which they were designed.

Maintaining the readiness of aviation assets while training aircrew is a large effort, and one which Marine Corps aviation is meeting through a careful and ongoing program of mitigation, bridging legacy platforms to new aircraft. We are replacing our assault support and tactical aviation airframes through programs of record, which will provide the MAGTF with dependable and tactically dominant capabilities for decades to come. The key to our steady improvement of Marine Corps aircraft flexibility is maintaining the “ramp rates” at which we purchase these improved airframes.

Fleet Readiness Centers have been able to mitigate the strain on our aircraft materiel readiness through modifications, proactive inspections, and additional maintenance actions. These efforts successfully bolstered aircraft reliability, sustainability, and survivability. We expect requirements for depot-level maintenance on airframes, engines, weapons, and support equipment will continue well beyond the conclusion of hostilities.

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Pre-positioning Equipment and Stores Marine Corps Prepositioning Programs are comprised of the Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF), with three Maritime Prepositioning Ships Squadrons (MPSRONs), and the Marine Corps Prepositioning Program – Norway (MCCP-N). Since 2002, we have drawn equipment from our strategic programs and stocks to support combat operations, Operation UNIFIED RESPONSE, growth of the Marine Corps, and other operational priorities. While the readiness of the strategic prepositioning programs continues to improve, equipment shortages in our strategic equipment prepositioned stores have forced the Marine Corps to accept necessary risk in our ability to rapidly respond to worldwide contingency operations. With Congress' support, our end item shortfalls in the MPF and MCCP-N programs will be reset, in accordance with operational priorities, as equipment becomes available.

In-Stores Equipment In-stores equipment refers to our pool of assets that serves as a source of equipment to replace damaged or destroyed equipment in the operating forces, and potentially fill shortfalls in the Active and Reserve Components. This equipment was used heavily to meet equipment requirements in Iraq, and it continues to support our forces in Afghanistan. The availability, or supply rating, for in-stores assets has been degraded over the past years and limits our ability to rapidly respond to unexpected contingencies and to replace damaged equipment in the operating forces.

Equipment Initiatives To counter the readiness impact of damaged, destroyed or worn out equipment, the Marine Corps initiated a program to reset and modernize our force. The goal of our reset and modernization programs is to sustain the current fight by repairing or replacing worn out or damaged/destroyed equipment while enhancing our support to the warfighter by reconstituting our force with newer, more capable equipment. Over time, these initiatives will help to increase non-deployed unit readiness by enhancing home station equipment pools and pre-deployment unit training requirements.

Equipment Reset Reset consists of actions taken to restore units to a desired level of combat capability commensurate with a unit's assigned mission. It encompasses maintenance and supply activities that restore and enhance combat capability to equipment that has been damaged, rendered obsolete, or worn out beyond economical repair due to combat operations by repairing, rebuilding, or procuring replacement equipment. In light of the continued high tempo of operations in the CENTCOM AOR, and the delay in reset actions due to the diversion of equipment to Afghanistan, we estimate the cost of reset for the Marine Corps to be **\$8 billion** (\$3

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billion requested in the FY11 OCO and an additional \$5 billion reset liability upon termination of the conflict).

To prepare for the reset of equipment redeployed from Iraq, we created an OIF Reset Plan. The plan synchronizes Marine Corps reset efforts to ensure we effectively and efficiently reset equipment to support follow-on operations. Equipment being redeployed is inspected, sorted and redistributed in theater, or redeployed to CONUS to maintenance facilities. This equipment will then be repaired and distributed to fill shortfalls for established priorities. Equipment determined to be beyond economical repair will be disposed of and replacements procured.

Modernization As the Nation's expeditionary force in readiness, the Marine Corps is required to prepare for the unexpected. We are making progress in repairing and resetting existing equipment, but this effort must be augmented with continued investment to modernize our capabilities. Equipment modernization plans are a high priority within our Corps. Our Commandant's *Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025* will help guide our modernization efforts as we continue to be the agile and expeditionary force for the Nation.

Ground Modernization Prompted by a changing security environment and hard lessons learned from eight years of combat, the Marine Corps completed a review of its Operating Force's ground equipment requirements. Recognizing that our unit tables of equipment (T/Es) did not accurately reflect the challenges and realities of the 21st century dispersed battlefield, the Corps revised T/Es for our operating units. This revision was synchronized with our modernization plans and programs, and provides enhanced mobility, lethality, sustainment, and command and control across the MAGTF. The new equipment requirements reflect the capabilities necessary, not only for the Corps' current mission, but for its future employment across the range of military operations, against a variety of threats, and in diverse terrain and conditions. We estimate the cost associated with our revised tables of equipment to be \$5 billion.

Aviation Modernization We are modernizing the aircraft we fly, even as we continue our long-range plan to replace our entire operational aircraft fleet with new or rebuilt airframes; changing the way we think about aviation support to our ground forces; and improving our capabilities to conduct operations in any clime and place. We are committed to an "in-stride transition" from twelve legacy type/model/series aircraft to six new aircraft, including the F-35B

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Joint Strike Fighter, the MV-22 Osprey, the KC-130J, the CH-53K, and upgrades to our H-1 series helicopters. To help meet the growing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance requirements of our operating forces, the Marine Corps is fielding three groups of unmanned aircraft systems. It is critical that these programs stay on track, and on timeline, with full funding support, due to the declining service life of our legacy tactical aviation platforms. These improvements will increase the Corps' aviation capability and MAGTF flexibility, and ensure our continued warfighting advantage.

Personnel Readiness

The Marine Corps is meeting all Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF), and Operation UNIFIED RESPONSE requirements. The demand and associated operational tempo for Marines will remain high as we provide requested forces to Afghanistan. Meeting this global demand resulted in short deployment-to-dwell ratios for many units, with some deployed for as many months as they spend at home. Some of our low-density/high-demand units such as Intelligence, Communications, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, and certain aviation units, remain at about a 1:1 dwell ratio, with only moderate relief in sight for the near future. Insufficient dwell time negatively impacts our total force readiness because it leaves inadequate time to conduct full spectrum training and reconnect with families.

Another readiness detractor has been the need to task combat arms units, such as artillery, air defense, and mechanized maneuver to perform "in-lieu-of" (ILO) missions such as security, civil affairs, and military policing. Shortages of those skill sets created the need for ILO missions to meet the requirements for counter-insurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although these mission assignments are necessary, they have degraded our readiness because these combat units are unable to train to and maintain proficiency in their primary skill sets.

Additionally, the Marine Corps is tasked to fill a variety of assignments for forward-deployed staffs, training teams, and joint/coalition assignments that exceed our normal manning structures. The manning requirements for these uncompensated Individual Augments (IAs), Training Teams (TTs) and Joint Manning Documents (JMDs) seek seasoned officers and staff non-commissioned officers because of their leadership, experience, and training. We understand that these augmentees and staff personnel are critical to continued success in Iraq and Afghanistan, but their extended absence has degraded home station readiness, full spectrum

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training, and unit cohesion. This has become most evident in our field grade ranks. In addition to the IA, TT, and JMD billets, emerging requirements associated with activation of USCYBERCOM, the AF-PAK Hands program, AFRICOM, and increased SOCOM support have compounded the demand for Marine majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels who would otherwise be assigned to key leadership positions in the operating force.

Personnel Initiatives In order to better meet the needs of a nation at war, the Corps has grown to its authorized active duty end strength of 202,000 (202K) Marines. This increase in manpower will ultimately result in a Marine Corps with three balanced Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEFs), and will help mitigate many of our operational tempo challenges described in the previous section. A balanced Marine Corps will provide combatant commanders with fully manned, trained, and equipped Marine Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs) that are multi-capable, responsive, and expeditionary. Additionally, our current end strength growth will increase our capacity to deploy forces in response to contingencies and to participate in exercises and operations with our international partners in support of the Nation's broader security objectives. It will also allow more time at home for our Marines to be with their families, to recover from long deployments, regain proficiency in core skills, and prepare for their next mission.

Thanks to the continued support of Congress, we have increased our infantry, reconnaissance, intelligence, combat engineer, unmanned aircraft, military police, civil affairs, and explosives ordnance disposal communities. Most of these units have already deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, mitigating the need for additional ILO missions. We have realized improvements in dwell time for a number of stressed communities. Although the plan is progressing well, the growth in end strength will not result in an immediate improvement in reported readiness, because it takes time to train and mature our newly recruited Marines and units.

Military Construction

In conjunction with the Marine Corps' growth, military construction is critical to supporting and sustaining the new force structure and maintaining the individual readiness and quality of life for our Marines. Thanks to your support, we recently expanded our construction efforts and established a program that will provide adequate bachelor housing for our entire force

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by 2014. Since the announcement of the Commandant's Barracks Initiative in fiscal year 2008, Congress has funded approximately 19,700 barracks spaces for our Marines. We ask for your continued support of this program to meet our 2014 goal. Concurrent with our new construction efforts is our commitment for the repair and maintenance of existing barracks to improve morale and quality of life.

Training Marines to Fight

In preparing Marines to fight in "any clime and place," the perennial challenge to our Corps is to attain the proper balance between core warfighting capabilities and those unique to current operations. Decreased unit dwell times and shortages of equipment in our non-deployed forces translate to a limited ability to conduct training on tasks critical to our core competencies, such as integrated combined arms, large force maneuver, and amphibious operations. Short dwell times between deployments and the need for many units to perform "in lieu of missions" have resulted in a singular focus on counter-insurgency training. Our Marines continue to be well trained for current operations through a challenging pre-deployment training program that prepares them for all aspects of irregular warfare.

Pre-deployment Training Program We have continued to improve our demanding, realistic and adaptive pre-deployment training program in order to properly prepare our operating forces for the rigors and challenges they face in OEF. The Pre-deployment Training Program (PTP) contains standards-based, skill progression training which is evaluated by commanders and assessed by our Training and Education Command at the final Mission Rehearsal Exercise. The PTP includes counter-insurgency combat skills, training in joint/coalition operations, working with our interagency partners, and increasing operational language sets and cultural skills. Unit after-action reports and unit surveys conducted by the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) are shared Corps-wide and have influenced training changes to keep PTP relevant. For example, the Afghanistan Pre-Deployment Training Program, while similar in many facets to the PTP for Iraq, includes mountain warfare training, an increased emphasis on MAGTF combined arms training, and a focus on partnering and mentoring of host nation security forces.

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While our PTP focuses on preparing Marine units for their next deployment, we are further enhancing our education and training programs to respond to ongoing changes in the security environment. Through the efforts of the MAGTF Training Command and organizations such as Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One, Marine Corps Tactics and Operations Group, the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning, the Security Cooperation Education and Training Center, Marine Corps Advisor Training Group, and the Marine Corps University, we are providing holistic training and education for our Marines across the range of military operations. Based on a continuous lessons learned feedback process, supported by the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL), we are building Enhanced MAGTF Operations capability which will make all of our MAGTFs more lethal, agile, and survivable.

Preparing for Future Conflict As challenging as it is to prepare Marines for the current fight, our forces must adapt to the ever-changing character and conduct of warfare to remain relevant. To meet the complex challenges in the emerging security environment, we are improving training and education for the fog, friction and uncertainty of the 21st century battlefield. We are focusing efforts on our small unit leaders—the “strategic non-commissioned officers” and junior officers—who will operate more frequently in a decentralized manner and assume greater responsibility in operations against hybrid threats.

To better prepare our Marine Air Ground Task Force to operate across the spectrum of conflict, we are developing an improved training and exercise program. When implemented, this program will increase our ability to maintain proficiency in core warfighting capabilities, such as combined arms maneuver and amphibious operations, while continuing to meet current commitments. Three important training concept exercises being developed are the Combined Arms Live Fire Exercise (CALFEX), the Marine Air Ground Task Force Large Scale Exercise (MAGTF-LSE), and a joint Navy-Marine Corps initiative titled Bold Alligator. The CALFEX will be a live-fire training exercise aimed at developing combined arms maneuver capabilities from individual Marine to regimental-sized units. It will incorporate lessons learned from today’s conflicts, while training adaptable and flexible MAGTFs for the future. The MAGTF-LSE will be a scenario-based, service-level training exercise, scalable from Marine Expeditionary Brigade to Marine Expeditionary Force levels. It will develop the Marine Air Ground Task Force’s capability to conduct amphibious power projection and sustained

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operations ashore in a combined, joint, whole-of-government environment. Lastly, Bold Alligator is specifically designed to re-energize the Navy/Marine Corps' understanding of the intricacies of amphibious operations. The initial audience is Expeditionary Strike Group 2 (ESG2) and the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) who will participate in a number of planning seminars and simulated exercises in preparation for the fleet exercise scheduled in FY11. We envision that the Bold Alligator series will continue indefinitely and progress to include a wider range of participants.

Amphibious Shipbuilding

Amphibious warships provide distributed forward presence to support a wide range of missions from theater security cooperation and humanitarian assistance to conventional deterrence to assuring access for the Joint Force. In support of day-to-day Combatant Commander demands and in major combat operations, the number of amphibious ships in the Department of the Navy's inventory is critically important. As discussed in the fiscal year 2011 Shipbuilding Report to Congress, the Navy is reviewing options to increase the assault echelon to reflect a minimum of 33 amphibious ships to support assured access operations conducted by the assault echelons of 2.0 Marine Expeditionary Brigades (MEBs). The Navy and Marine Corps have determined a minimum of 33 ships represents the limit of acceptable risk in meeting the 38-ship amphibious force requirement.

Caring for our Warriors and Families

A critical part of our overall readiness is maintaining our solemn responsibility to take care of our Marines and their families. While Marines never waver in the ideals of service to Country and Corps, the needs of our Marines and their families are constantly evolving. With more than 45 percent of our Marines married, we believe that investment in our families is critical to the long-term health of our institution. Marines have reasonable expectations regarding housing, schools, and family support. It is incumbent upon us, with the generous support of Congress, to support them in these key areas. Marines make an enduring commitment to the Corps when they earn the title, Marine. The Corps, in turn, makes an enduring commitment to every Marine and his or her family.

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Personnel and Family Readiness Programs Taking care of Marines and their families remains one of our highest priorities. With your help, we initiated a myriad of personnel and family readiness program reforms during fiscal years 2008 and 2009 with supplemental appropriations. As a result of extensive program assessments and evaluations, we have built these programs into our baseline, and our baseline budget in fiscal years 2010 and 2011 is \$399 million per year. Key accomplishments through our transition phase include:

- Establishment of over 400 full-time Family Readiness Officer (FRO) positions at the unit level to provide direct support to the unit commander and families.
- Development of an inventory of Lifeskills training courses supported by full-time Marine Corps Family Team Building trainers.
- Transformation of the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) to ensure enrolled family members have access to a continuum of care, while providing the sponsor every opportunity for a successful career. The Marine Corps EFMP has been recognized as a premier, full-service program to be used as a template for other services. Since 2007, sponsor enrollment has increased by 40 percent.
- Direct attention to suicide prevention. The loss of any Marine through suicide is a tragedy. With 52 suicides confirmed or suspected in 2009, the Marine Corps recorded its highest suicide rate since the start of OEF/OIF. We are taking proactive action, focusing on the important role of leaders of all ranks in addressing this issue.
- Enhancing Combat and Operational Stress Control capabilities to further assist leaders with prevention, rapid identification and early treatment of combat and operational stress. Through the Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) program, we are embedding mental health professionals in deploying operational units to directly support all active and reserve ground combat elements. This will be achieved over the next three years through the realignment of existing Navy structure supporting the operating forces, and by increasing the Navy mental health provider inventory. The OSCAR capability is also being extended down to infantry battalions and companies by providing additional training to OSCAR Extenders (existing medical providers, corpsmen, chaplains, and religious program specialists) to make the OSCAR expertise more immediately available to Marines. In addition, we are

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training senior and junior Marines to function as OSCAR Mentors. In this capacity, they will actively engage Marines who evidence stress reactions, liaison with OSCAR Extenders, and advocate for fellow Marines regarding stress problems. OSCAR Mentors will also greatly decrease the stigma associated with stress reactions, and help Marines take care of their own.

As we move forward, we are continuing to assess the efficacy of our programs and to empower Marines and their families to improve family readiness and maintain a positive quality of life. These initiatives and others demonstrate the commitment of the Marine Corps to our families, and highlight the connection between family readiness and mission readiness. We are grateful to Congress for your unwavering support of these important programs.

Improving Care for Our Wounded Warriors The Marine Corps is proud of the positive and meaningful accomplishments of the Wounded Warrior Regiment in providing comprehensive recovery and transition support to our wounded, ill, and injured Marines and Sailors and their families. The Regiment provides all active and reserve Marines with non-medical care without regard to the origin of the Marine's condition. Whether the road to recovery keeps Wounded Warriors in the Marine Corps or helps them transition to civilian life, the Regiment continues to develop programs that focus on Wounded Warriors' abilities and facilitates their recovery.

The Regiment's Recovery Care Coordinators serve as the primary point of contact for wounded, ill and injured Marines and their families. These coordinators help Marines meet individual goals for recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration. They also work with families and family caregivers to ensure they have the necessary information, care and support during these difficult times.

The Sergeant Merlin German Wounded Warrior Call Center, a Department of Defense Best Practice recipient, receives calls from active duty members, veterans and families seeking assistance in matters of Wounded Warrior care and transition. The call center also conducts important outreach calls to monitor injury recovery and distribute information on new programs offered by the Regiment, the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs and other entities. Augmented by a staff of psychological health professionals, the call center also

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provides critical assistance to those seeking help for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury.

Our Wounded Warrior Employment Cell, manned by Marines and representatives of the Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs, identifies and coordinates with employers and job training programs to help Wounded Warriors obtain positions in which they are most likely to succeed and enjoy fulfilling careers.

The Marine Corps' commitment to our wounded, ill, and injured is steadfast. We are grateful for the support and leadership of Congress on their behalf. I would like to extend my personal thanks to you and all Members of Congress for your visits to our wounded, ill, and injured Marines and Sailors and their families in the hospitals and other facilities where they are being treated.

Conclusion

This Nation has high expectations of her Corps—and Marines know that. Your Marines are answering the call around the globe while performing with distinction in the face of great danger and hardships. The Corps provides the Nation unrivaled speed, agility, and flexibility for deterring war and responding to crises; our ability to seize the initiative and dominate our adversaries across the range of military operations requires the right people, the right equipment, and sufficient time to train and prepare.

As Marines continue to serve in combat, we must provide them all the resources required to complete the tasks we have given them. Now, more than ever, they need the sustained support of the American people and Congress to maintain readiness, reset the force during an extended war, modernize to face the challenges of the future, and fulfill the commitments made to Marines, Sailors, and their families.

On behalf of your Marines, I offer our sincere appreciation for your faithful support and thank you in advance for your ongoing efforts to support our brave warriors. The Corps understands the value of each dollar provided by the American taxpayer, and will continue to provide maximum return for every dollar spent. Today over 202,100 Active and 39,600 Reserve Force Marines remain ready and capable as the "Nation's Force in Readiness"... and with your continued support, we will stay that way.