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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
READINESS, AIR and LAND FORCES and SEAPOWER and EXPEDITIONARY
FORCES SUBCOMMITTEES
ON RESET**

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Introduction

Chairman Ortiz, Congressman 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 to you today about resetting the Marine Corps and the progress we have made in sustaining the capabilities that the Nation expects from its Marine Corps. Recently, the Secretary of Defense outlined a strategy to return the Department to a balanced force capable of prevailing in current conflicts while preparing for other contingencies.¹ Consistent with Secretary Gates' strategy, my statement will address 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. They are fully engaged and winning in combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan as part of a generational struggle against global extremism. 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 for the future security environment are critical to the Marine Corps' success as the "Nation's Force-in-Readiness."

Readiness challenges

The Marine Corps is meeting all OIF and OEF requirements. In the course of the last seven 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 are currently reporting 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.

¹ Gates, Robert M. "A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age." *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 88, No. 1, January / February 2009.

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 amphibious operations. These skills are critical to maintaining the Marine Corps' primacy in forcible entry 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 elsewhere in the world. The current security environment has clearly justified the tradeoffs we've made to support the Long War, but the uncertainty of the future makes it prudent to regain our capabilities to operate across the full range of military operations — to be that “balanced force” of which Secretary Gates speaks of.

Equipment Reset

Reset consists of actions taken to restore units to a required level of combat capability commensurate with the unit's future mission. It encompasses maintenance and supply activities that restore and enhance combat capability to equipment that has been damaged, destroyed, or worn out beyond economic repair due to combat operations, by repairing, rebuilding, or procuring replacement equipment. The goals of our reset program are 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 where justified. Over time, these initiatives will help to increase non-deployed unit readiness by enhancing home station equipment pools and pre-deployment unit training.

We expect to see reset requirements increase as a result of force reductions in Iraq and a growing presence in Afghanistan. To prepare for the reset of equipment redeployed from Iraq, we have created an OIF Reset Plan. The plan synchronizes Marine Corps efforts to ensure we effectively and responsibly reset equipment to support follow-on operations. Equipment being redeployed is inspected, sorted and redistributed in theater, or redeployed to CONUS to maintenance facilities. Assets returning to CONUS will then be repaired, if necessary, and distributed to fill shortfalls for established priorities. Equipment determined to be beyond economical repair will be disposed of and replacements procured. Our Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) budget request supports this effort.

Ground Equipment Reset

The reset of ground equipment returning from OIF will be challenging as we rebalance resources to support ongoing combat operations, re-arm, and reposition forces around the world. As we retrograde and redeploy from OIF, a significant number of principal end items (PEIs) must be reset in a timely manner to sustain continued operations, re-equip home station units and support strategic programs such as our Maritime Prepositioned Force (MPF). The reset of ground equipment returning from combat generally falls into four categories. They are: (1) procurement/replacement; (2) depot maintenance; (3) field maintenance and (4) no maintenance required. Each category involves separate logistics activities.

The initial assessment of equipment being redeployed takes place in theater by forward deployed elements of Marine Corps Logistic Command (MCLC) in Iraq. Using a triage methodology, we determine the type of reset action required and take appropriate measures based on that assessment. Some equipment that is determined to be beyond repair will be disposed of in theater. Equipment that can be economically repaired will be directed to an appropriate level maintenance facility, typically here in CONUS. Where necessary, the Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC) will procure replacements for equipment which is beyond economic repair or obsolete.

Equipment retrograded or redeployed from theater is inspected to determine if depot level repairs are required. The use of DoD core depot maintenance capabilities play a critical role in the reset of ground equipment. The goal of depot operations is to restore OIF equipment to full capability as quickly as possible. OIF ground equipment repaired at designated depot-level repair activities will normally undergo 100% overhaul/rebuild. However, IROAN (Inspect and Repair Only as Necessary) and SOAR (Selective Overhaul and Repair) programs are viable options when determined to be a more effective and efficient means to return equipment to full mission capability and back into the hands of Marines. In anticipation of depot surge requirements, MCLC has developed a long term depot maintenance and resource requirement plan to support the expected surge in depot activity.

Equipment requiring only field level maintenance will be shipped directly to operating forces. MCLC will provide a field maintenance capability, collocated with operational forces' home station to assist in resetting that equipment.

Some equipment redeploying from theater requires no repair and is ready for use immediately. That equipment will be directed to fill priority requirements as needed across the

Marine Corps. Since August 2008, we have retrograded 36,781 principal end items from theater back to CONUS for repair, redistribution, and replacement.

During combat operations, the Marine Corps has accumulated some equipment that is unique to OIF, and thus may not have a follow on use. In such cases, no maintenance action will be taken unless there is an immediate requirement in another campaign or theater of operations. MCLC will coordinate with MCSC to determine appropriate disposition instructions for this equipment. Equipment being disposed of will follow standard DoD disposal procedures via the most expeditious and economical means available.

Aviation Equipment Reset

Marine Corps Aviation has established a Retrograde Planning Cell (RPC) to direct actions needed to successfully return and account for all aviation materiel in support of OIF. The members of this cell will identify, prioritize and direct disposition of all critical aviation equipment. Aviation equipment and materiel will flow through MCLC as “steward” agents for movement in common logistic channels. High demand/low density aviation equipment and materiel will be retrograded or redeployed via Strategic Airlift. To date, over 3,700 out of the approximately 9,100 short tons of Aviation equipment has already been retrograded or redeployed. Remaining equipment continues to be prioritized and the retrograde timeline will be dictated based on mission requirements.

Marine Aviation’s holistic strategy for equipment reset, if fully funded, is to support current commitments while ensuring asset longevity for transition to new aircraft platforms under the current Marine Aviation Plan. Because Marine Aviation does not have active production lines for legacy aircraft in service, maintaining those aircraft in a high state of readiness is a must. The reset strategy includes pre-setting all equipment prior to deployment, performing in-theater sustainment on assets deployed greater than a year, the organizational level reset of equipment within six months upon return to the United States, and the completion of all scheduled Depot maintenance requirements on time. Fully funding the Department of Navy’s Aviation depot requirements requested in the FY10 baseline and supplemental (\$1.2 billion in the baseline + \$155 million in the FY10 Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO)) is a critical part of aviation’s strategy to ensure maximum aircraft availability and reliability.

Prepositioned Equipment Sources

The Marine Corps has relied heavily on equipment in its Prepositioning Programs comprised of: the Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF); the Marine Corps Prepositioning Program — Norway (MCPN); and In-Stores Equipment. Since 2002, we have drawn equipment from our strategic programs and stocks to support combat operations, growth of the Marine Corps' force structure, and other operational priorities. While the readiness of the strategic prepositioning programs continues to improve, equipment shortages in our strategic equipment pre-positioned stores have forced the Marine Corps to accept necessary risk in our ability to rapidly respond to world-wide contingency operations.

Our Maritime Prepositioning Squadrons (MPSRONs) will be reset with the most capable equipment possible. In recognition of the likely kind of operations we will face in the near term, we have begun loading select ships with capabilities that support Irregular Warfare operations, while still maintaining the ability to generate Marine Expeditionary Brigades (MEB) capable of conducting major combat operations.

We are currently in the process of replacing the aging, leased vessels in the Maritime Prepositioning Force with newer, larger, and more flexible government owned ships from the Military Sealift Command fleet. Two decades of equipment growth and recent armoring initiatives have strained the capability and capacity of our present fleet, a fleet that was designed to lift a Marine Force developed in the early 1980s. As we reset MPF, these changes are necessary to ensure we incorporate lessons learned from recent combat operations.

The Marine Corps Prepositioning Program — Norway (MCPN) was also used to source equipment in support of current operations in both Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom and to provide humanitarian assistance in the Republic of Georgia. We continue to reset MCPN in accordance with our operational priorities.

In-Stores Equipment refers to our pool of assets that serve 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. In-Stores equipment has been used heavily and leveraged to source increased equipment requirements in Iraq and will be used to support our transition to operations in Afghanistan. The supply rating, or amount of equipment we have on-hand vs. required, for In-Stores assets is degraded and listed at 34% availability. Such low levels of equipment within our in-stores equipment pools limit our ability to rapidly respond to unexpected contingencies and to replace damaged equipment in the operating forces.

Ground Equipment Readiness and Depot Maintenance

Our ground equipment depots play a critical role in our equipment readiness and MCLC continues to position itself to meet the repair requirements generated through a selected principle end item rotation program. More significantly, as our equipment retrogrades out of the Iraqi theater, our depots in Albany, Georgia and Barstow, California are well positioned through the use of hourly employees and contracted labor to increase capacity to meet the surge of retrograded equipment once it arrives at our transportation hub in Blount Island, Florida. As a result, our request for depot funding in FY10, including both baseline and OCO funds, is \$635 million (\$81 million baseline + \$554 million OCO). This funding is essential to accomplish our reset requirements. We expect this surge in capacity to be required beyond FY10.

Aviation Equipment Readiness and Depot Maintenance

Our aviation capability is a critical part of the MAGTF. Just like our ground forces, deployed Marine aviation units receive the priority for aircraft, repair parts, and mission essential subsystems such as forward looking infrared (FLIR) pods. Non-deployed forces, on the other hand, face significant challenges for available airframes and supply parts. Exacerbating the readiness challenges in our aviation fleet, most Marine aviation platforms are “legacy” platforms which are no longer in production, 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: the deserts of Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa. Our aircraft are flying at utilization rates far beyond those for which they were designed. We are nearly tripling the utilization rates of our workhorses - the F/A-18C and D; the KC-130 cargo and aerial refueling platform; our EA-6B electronic warfare aircraft; and even the new MV-22 Osprey. Increased utilization causes aircraft to structurally age faster than programmed. As our legacy aircraft are lost or damaged in combat, the Marine Corps is faced with a shortage of available aircraft for training and future employment. To maintain sufficient numbers of aircraft in deployed squadrons, non-deployed squadrons have taken cuts in aircraft and parts. With our current force structure, our aircraft requirement, termed Primary Aircraft Authorization (PAA) is short 248 aircraft across all Type/Model/Series. These shortfalls include all modifications, intermediate maintenance events, depot maintenance, transition/procurement aircraft, and aircraft damaged beyond repair.

Maintaining the readiness of aviation assets while training aircrew is an enormous effort and an ongoing readiness challenge. Our aviation Fleet Readiness Centers have been able to mitigate degradation of our aircraft materiel readiness through modifications, proactive inspections, and additional maintenance actions. These efforts successfully bolstered aircraft reliability, sustainability, and survivability. Nevertheless, additional requirements for depot-level maintenance on airframes, engines, weapons, and support equipment will continue well beyond the conclusion of hostilities. Aircraft undergoing depot-level repairs are not available for training or combat. We are simply running short of aircraft on our flight lines due to age, attrition, and wartime losses.

Receiving Equipment at Blount Island Command

The Marine Corps' acquisition of Blount Island in 2004 provided the Marine Corps the opportunity to realize the full potential of the installation and its logistics support facilities. We have already expanded the use of the installation from its traditional role as the "home of United States Marine Corps prepositioning forces" to serve as the logistics hub for all Marine Corps equipment returning from OIF/OEF. After arrival on Blount Island, the equipment is moved to either a depot, field maintenance facility, or directly to a home station for operational use. Additionally, Blount Island Command is also capable of conducting less than depot level maintenance and has most recently served as the deployment platform for Marine Corps equipment deploying to OEF utilizing the facility as the Seaport of Embarkation.

Blount Island will play a major role in Marine Corps equipment reset efforts. The most important facility requirements to support reset efforts at Blount Island include MILCON projects to improve existing operational capacity and maintenance operations. These construction projects are tied directly to the war effort and are consistent with projected volumes and throughput expected. Construction improvements include wash rack expansion, hardstand expansion, container staging space, warehousing, hazardous materiel handling, expansion and improvements to ship berthing and additional depth dredging in order to accommodate larger ships. These requirements were previously identified in the installation's long range facilities plan to improve the installation's efficiency in executing its preposition mission. However, these projects are needed sooner to support critical near term reset efforts.

Congressional Support for Marine Corps Reset Efforts

Congress has generously supported Marine Corps reset efforts by appropriating over \$14 billion thus far to ensure that Marines have the equipment and maintenance resources they need. We are committed to managing these resources wisely as we repair, reset and modernize our force. The procurement funds provided have allowed us to replace combat losses, upgrade existing combat systems, procure new systems, and expand the number and capabilities of our current systems; ensuring that individual Marines are better protected, better equipped, more effective, and better sustained.

The Marine Corps' current FY09 and FY10 (OCO) requests continue to support reset efforts by providing full funding for depot maintenance efforts in anticipation of OIF equipment retrograde. These requests will also fund the replacement of worn equipment for forward deployed Marines, i.e., additional expanded capacity vehicles (ECVs), medium tactical vehicle replacements, night vision equipment, and individual combat equipment. As our focus shifts to greater support for OEF, costs will continue to rise over time. Continued Congressional support of future funding requests will be necessary to improve equipment readiness levels across the Corps.

The Future of Reset

It is hard to predict what the Marine Corps reset costs are going to be because it is difficult to estimate the total cost of resetting our equipment returning from Iraq until that evolution is complete, and it is unknown how long the Marine Corps will be fighting in Afghanistan. As long as we are involved in combat operations in a harsh environment, we will need to reset our equipment. Based on what we know now, we estimate in the near term that we need an additional \$6 Billion in reset funding. This figure includes reset requirements included in our FY10 OCO request. As long as the war continues, our total costs for reset will continue to grow.

Impact of Pushing Reset, Reconstitution into the Baseline

We are mindful that the Corps cannot rely on supplemental appropriations for baseline operations. Even when we discount the cost of war incurred as a direct result of combat and combat support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, resource requirements have significantly increased. The recruitment, training and sustainment of our primary asset — the individual

Marine—are more costly. The equipment needed to succeed on the modern battlefield is both more expensive and more numerous. To sustain the capabilities that we have purchased with supplemental investments, we must ensure that our baseline maintenance accounts are properly resourced.

Reset costs have not been in the baseline budget because both Congress and OSD have generally agreed that war related costs should be a part of supplementals. As part of that trend, the clear majority of our depot maintenance request in FY10 is part of our FY10 OCO request. Because we are resetting equipment to support current and future combat needs, we're committed to fully funding our depot maintenance requirements to ensure that we reset and reconstitute the force as quickly as possible.

Unit Table of Equipment Review

Prompted by a changing security environment and hard lessons learned from seven years of combat, the Marine Corps recently completed an initial review of its Operating Force's ground equipment requirements. Recognizing that our unit Tables of Equipment (T/E) did not reflect the challenges and realities of the 21st century dispersed battlefield, the Commandant recently directed a comprehensive Marine Corps-wide MAGTF T/E review. The initial review is complete and the Approved Acquisition Objective (AAO) validation is underway. This review was synchronized with our modernization plans and programs, and provides enhanced mobility, lethality, sustainment, and command and control across the MAGTF.

While these new tables of equipment and AAOs provide for increased capabilities in many areas—particularly protected mobility, tactical level communications, and crew-served weapons—they also serve as the basis for future force development. We continually refine our requirements to exploit new technology and to continue to adopt new lessons learned. As a result, embedded in the revised AAOs are trends reflective of irregular warfare, such as requirements for increased capabilities in command and control, persistent ISR, as well as requirements to further enhance the organic ability of small units to perform a wide array of missions traditionally associated with higher echelon headquarters.

The MAGTF T/E review is also an integral part of the critical work being done to reset, Reconstitute, and revitalize the Marine Corps. The resultant T/Es reflect the capabilities required 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 are in

the process of conducting a detailed reconciliation of our new tables of equipment with our on322 hand equipment stocks, and the equipment that is currently programmed for procurement in future years. This will provide us a complete picture of our equipment shortfalls in all categories, including our actual unit table of equipment requirements, as well as our requirements for prepositioned stocks, training, war reserve, and rotational stocks to support our depot level maintenance programs. At the same time, we continually assess our procurement priorities to ensure that our resources are being applied wisely.

Critical Modernization Efforts

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 recently published 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.

As example, Marine Corps ground equipment modernization efforts include development of the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV), and the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV). Our goal is to provide the joint force an appropriate balance of survivability, mobility, payload, networking, transportability, and sustainability.

We are also modernizing the aircraft we fly, changing the way we think about aviation support to our ground forces, and changing our capabilities to conduct operations in any clime and place. To help meet the growing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance requirements of our operating forces, the Marine Corps will field three levels, or "tiers," of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS). Furthermore, we are committed to an "in-stride transition" from twelve type/model/series aircraft to six new aircraft. Programs such as the F-35B Joint Strike Fighter, the MV-22 Osprey, the CH-53K, and the H-i upgrades will vastly increase the Corps' aviation capability and ensure our warfighting advantage for decades to come. 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.

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 appropriately.

As your Marines continue to serve in combat, they need the sustained support of the American people and Congress to maintain their readiness, reset their equipment during an extended war, and modernize to face the challenges of the future.

On behalf of your Marines, I extend great appreciation for your faithful support to date, and thank you in advance for your ongoing efforts on behalf of 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 202,000 Active and 39,000 Reserve Force Marines remain ready, relevant, and capable as the “Nation’s Force-in-Readiness”..., and with your help, we will stay that way.