

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES

STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES
OF THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
ON
FISCAL YEAR 2007 MARINE CORPS TACTICAL AIR PROGRAMS
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Chairman Weldon, Congressman Abercrombie, distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you to discuss Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 Tactical Aircraft (TACAIR) Programs of the Marine Corps.

Since responding to 9/11 in Afghanistan four years ago, Marine Aviation has maintained an unprecedented performance in the current war, while sourcing normal operational deployment schedules. Over the past year alone, Marine TACAIR from both Active and Reserve Component aviation units have flown over 37,000 combat hours in Afghanistan and Iraq, while continuing to source routine deployment schedules to the Western Pacific and beyond. Such an extraordinary accomplishment is the result of the exceptional professionalism, resourcefulness, and commitment of our Marines. Whether I watch our Aviation Marines at Al Assad, in the skies over Kandahar, or in the Horn of Africa, I stand in awe. Without a doubt, Marines today are shouldering the heaviest operational tempo since Vietnam with the same distinction as those who have gone before.

AVIATION PROGRAMS

The FY 2007 Budget request balances continued recapitalization in Marine Aviation's transition modernization, while simultaneously upgrading and sustaining the legacy aircraft that are performing magnificently in current combat operations.

KC-130J

Marine Corps KC-130Js attained initial operational capability (IOC) in February 2005 within 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing. Six aircraft have been continuously deployed in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) since IOC and have provided the warfighter state of the art,

multi-mission, tactical aerial refueling, and fixed wing assault support assets that have exceeded expectations. This year's introduction of the in-flight refueling capable MV-22 significantly increases the tanking requirement of the KC-130J community. The FY 2007 Budget requests \$299M for procurement of four aircraft. The Marine Corps is currently in a multi-year procurement program with the Air Force to procure a total of 34 aircraft by the end of FY 2008.

AV-8B

The FY 2007 Budget requests \$13.9M RDT&E funds to support development of the Engine Life Management Plan (ELMP)/Accelerated Simulated Mission Endurance Testing, Tactical Moving Map Display, and the Readiness Management Plan (RMP). The FY 2007 Budget also requests \$20.5M procurement funding for procurement of Open Systems Core Avionics Requirement, TAV-8B Upgrade, ELMP upgrades, and the RMP, which addresses aircraft obsolescence and deficiency issues associated with sustaining the AV-8B until F-35B transition.

F/A-18 A+/C/D

The FY 2007 Budget request contains \$82.4M for the continuation of the systems upgrade programs for legacy F/A-18 platforms. Included in this request is the continued procurement of recently fielded systems such as Joint Helmet Mounted Cueing System, Multi-Function Information Distribution System, and Digital Communications System. The Marine Corps continues to upgrade 61 Lot 7-9 F/A-18A to Lot 17 F/A-18C aircraft capability with digital communications and tactical data link. The Marine Corps is upgrading the current capabilities of the F/A-18C/D with digital communications, tactical data link and tactical

reconnaissance systems. This upgrade ensures that our F/A-18s remain viable and relevant in support of Department of the Navy (DoN) Tactical Air Integration and Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare. We are also employing the LITENING targeting pod on the F/A-18D aircraft in OIF. When combined with data link hardware and the Rover Ground Station, the LITENING pod provides real time video to ground forces engaged with the enemy, adding a new dimension to precision fires. The FY 2007 Budget request also includes procurement of Center Barrel Replacements to extend the service life of F/A-18A+/C/Ds seven years to meet fleet inventory requirements until 2022.

EA-6B

The FY 2007 Budget requests \$49M for RDT&E and procurement for continuing EA-6B upgrades and readiness improvements, which increase the operational availability of this low density high demand aircraft and reduce operating costs. This includes installation of four Improved Capability (ICAP) III aircraft systems and four Multifunction Information Distribution System (MIDS) kits, which will provide dramatically improved emitter identification and location information as well as Link-16 connectivity to share the information. The aging EA-6B has been in ever-increasing demand as Department of Defense's only tactical radar jamming aircraft that also engages in communications jamming and information operations. EA-6B operational tempo has continued at extremely high levels during the past year. The Marine Corps' long range plan retires the EA-6B by 2015. Marine Aviation is currently examining alternatives to accomplish the future airborne electronic mission, to include the capabilities of the F-35B and Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS).

F-35B

The F-35B Short Takeoff and Vertical Landing (STOVL) Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) is critical for attaining our vision of an all-STOVL fleet within the Marine Corps. The FY 2007 Budget request contains \$2.0B for continuation of System Development and Demonstration (SDD) on the JSF and \$245M in aircraft procurement for long lead requirements for the initial lot of DoN low rate initial production aircraft. Another major program milestone was reached in February when the first conventional takeoff (CTOL) variant rolled off the assembly line. It is critical that the Marine Corps maintains a 2012 F-35B IOC as we manage our aging AV-8B and F/A-18 aircraft inventories.

The Marine Corps has clearly expressed our requirements for the F-35B in the Operational Requirements Document originally signed on 13 March 2000. In December 2005, DoD cancelled the JSF F136 engine program, deleting funding effective FY 2007. The Marine Corps supports the .the Department's decision.

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS)

The Pioneer UAS continues to be the backbone of the Marine Corps' Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance capability, flying over 13,000 hours since 2003 (ten times the peacetime rate). We have requested \$7.1M to refresh the technology of obsolete system components until a suitable replacement can be fielded. We are conducting an analysis of alternatives to evaluate the capabilities of existing vehicles, and their potential to meet the requirements articulated in the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) approved VUAS Initial Capabilities Document.

WEAPONS PROGRAMS

Since 2003, Marine TACAIR have employed 1,368 Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs), 3,831 Guided Bomb Units, and 257 Maverick missiles in support of training and during combat operations. The FY 2007 Budget supports precision-guided munition (PGM) programs that continue to support combat operations.

Dual-Mode Direct Attack Weapons

Based on an Urgent Needs Statement and feedback from the Combatant Commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan, the DoN determined that improved responsiveness and flexibility was required for close air support (CAS) missions in support of Marine and Army ground forces. To address these shortcomings, the Department leveraged congressionally directed funding in the research of dual-mode laser-guided weapons and successfully developed and integrated Global Positioning System and laser guided technologies into a single direct-attack weapon. This capability will be integrated on Marine Corps F/A-18A+/C/D and AV-8B aircraft to reduce the number of sorties needed to destroy intended targets, while providing the warfighter with increased flexibility in adverse weather against all classes of targets. The FY 2007 Budget requests \$23M to modify 2,272 single-mode Laser Guided Bombs (LGB) into Dual-Mode LGB Weapons. Further, with FY 2006 congressional language, the Navy will also conduct non-recurring efforts and testing of a non-developmental laser kit for the JDAM.

Joint Common Missile (JCM)

The Marine Corps has expended 1,092 Hellfire and 889 TOW missiles in support of ground forces engaged in combat since 2003. The JCM Program was initiated to develop a replacement

missile for those PGMs, but was terminated in Program Budget Decision (PBD)-753. A JROC Memorandum called for a RDT&E effort, beginning in FY 2007, to mitigate JROC-validated capability gaps JCM was to fill, by developing the next generation Air-to-Ground CAS weapon for fixed-wing, rotary-wing, and UAV aircraft. This alternative JCM program (Hellfire Product Improvement Program) is critical to Marine Aviation, as a replacement for our aging stockpiles of TOW, Hellfire and Laser Maverick families of weapons.

AVIATION SAFETY

The Marine Corps is committed to the continued reduction of our aviation safety mishap rate. We do not accept the loss of Marines or aircraft during any type of flight operations, particularly during training. In FY 2005, the Commandant of the Marine Corps directed 21 operational safety initiatives to address day-to-day flight and ground operations. One of the key initiatives is the establishment and implementation of the Aviation Training System Program (ATSP). The goal of the ATSP is risk reduction during individual and unit training by the development of a standardized end-to-end training continuum from new accessions through senior combat flight leadership designations. The ATSP will integrate all officer and enlisted training and operational safety programs and standardize our training curriculums, training (simulation) devices, and evaluation processes. The Marine Corps current FY 2006 Class A flight mishap rate is 1.79 per 100,000 flight hours with our FY 2006 goal of 1.62 per the Secretary of Defense's 50 percent mishap rate reduction mandate.

SUMMARY

The Marine Corps has a heritage of fighting battles and winning wars on the sea, on the ground, and in the air. We do so while supporting routine deployment cycles and transforming the force. Today is no different. My pride in the accomplishments of Marine Aviation past and present is only exceeded by my confidence that we are poised to meet our future challenges. We are committed to a long war; Marine Corps TACAIR transitions from legacy KC-130F/R, AV-8B, and F/A-18A+/C/D must stay on schedule to support our future warfighting commitments. Thank you for your consideration.