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THE HOUSE ARMED
SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**STATEMENT OF
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UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
BEFORE
THE READINESS SUBCOMMITTEE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
MARCH 3, 2005**

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Introduction

Chairman Hefley, Congressman Ortiz, distinguished Members of the Committee; it is my privilege to report to you on the state of readiness of your Marine Corps. Your Marines remain committed to war fighting excellence, and the support of the Congress and the American people has been indispensable to our successes in the Global War on Terror and today, your expeditionary force in readiness is fully engaged supporting the Global War on Terror. This war will not be won easily or quickly, yet your Marine Corps is committed for the duration. Supporting the Global War on Terror and sustaining our readiness, while ensuring our forces have the equipment necessary to respond to whatever future challenges may follow is at the core of our readiness strategy. On behalf of all Marines and their families, I thank each of you for your continued support and commitment to the readiness of your Marine Corps.

Recent Operations and Current Status of Forces

Our emphasis on readiness has enabled your Marines to fully engage across the spectrum of military capabilities in prosecuting the Global War on Terror. Our core competencies enable the Marine Corps to form and deploy rapidly an agile force capable of fighting the prolonged fight against an adaptive enemy. Our scalable, combined arms teams are task organized ground and aviation forces with adaptive logistics that create the speed, flexibility, and agility to respond to emerging crises.

Since September 11, 2001 our operations have exemplified our Nation's ability to project military forces into remote, isolated, and land locked locations, previously viewed as safe havens for terrorist activities. The Marine Corps' role as the Nation's premier expeditionary force-in-readiness, combined with our forward deployed posture, enabled us to serve a prominent role in each of these joint operations. The readiness of our forces and the quality of our training enabled our Marines to thrive in the chaotic, unstable, and unpredictable environments our adversaries seek to exploit.

Operation ENDURING FREEDOM demonstrated the speed and flexibility of our force projection capability when we task organized two forward-deployed Marine Expeditionary Units into Task Force 58 and projected major conventional combat power 350 miles into Afghanistan. Operation IRAQI FREEDOM I showcased the agility of our force projection capabilities when a combat ready Marine Expeditionary Force of over 70,000 Marines and Sailors deployed and arrived in less than 60 days and attacked more than 500 miles from their off-load areas in

Kuwait, rendering ten Iraqi divisions combat ineffective, seizing half of Baghdad and additional key areas to the north.

During this past year, we redeployed 25,000 Marines from I Marine Expeditionary Force to the Al Anbar Province in Iraq. The value of their readiness, the quality of their training, and commitment to warfighting excellence enabled them to lead the Multi-National-Force-West, which is responsible for providing stability and security throughout the Province. Our pre-deployment training program shifted its focus to the evolving threat and placed special emphasis on cultural and language capabilities. More recently, I Marine Expeditionary Force was reinforced by three Marine Expeditionary Units to execute multiple security, urban combat, counter-insurgency, aviation command and control, and force protection missions.

Our contribution in Afghanistan this past spring increased from an infantry battalion with helicopter support to a regimental headquarters and a combined arms Marine Expeditionary Unit. This Marine force was a major element of the combined joint task force assigned to counter an anticipated Taliban "Spring Offensive." The success of our force greatly assisted in setting the conditions for the Afghan national elections later in the year and the establishment of a democratically elected government. This contribution continues with an infantry battalion, elements of two helicopter squadrons, and training teams that provide stability for this new, fledgling democracy.

Our forces provide global stability during conflict, humanitarian, and peacetime operations. During the last year, significant contributions included concurrent support to the Horn of Africa, the Pacific, support to the evacuation of non-combatants from Liberia, peace operations in Haiti, and Tsunami relief in South Asia.

Today as we rotate Marine forces in Iraq, we expect to maintain approximately 23,000 Marines and Sailors, with the Marine Corps reserve forces providing about 3,000 of these personnel, into 2006. Your support ensures our near-term capability and readiness remain strong and our training and equipment remain matched to the evolving threat.

The entire Marine Corps is supporting the Global War on Terror and the demand on our force is high. In the past two years, we have gone from a deployment rotation of one -to- three (6 months out / 18 months back) to our current one-to-one ratio (7 months out / 7 months back) for our infantry battalions, many of our aviation squadrons, and other, high demand capabilities. Our operating forces are either deployed or training to deploy. Despite this high operational

tempo, the Marine Corps is on track to meet its annual recruiting and retention goals in quantity and quality. The Fiscal Year 2005 Authorization Act that provided authorization to increase our end-strength by 3,000 Marines will assist in reducing demands on Marines by filling our battalions to their designed strengths. We are currently assessing whether a further increase of personnel beyond 178,000 will be required to meet long-term contributions to the Global War on Terror.

At the completion of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM-I, we reconstituted our contribution from our Maritime Prepositioning Force Program (11 of 16 ships) in Kuwait, with equipment in theater that was able to shoot, move, and communicate and with equipment from our prepositioned stocks in Norway. In addition, we were restoring our equipment to like new condition as each ship rotated through our Blount Island facility in order to update its maintenance and material condition. In the middle of our reconstitution efforts, we off-loaded maritime prepositioned squadron two (MPSRON-2) to support Operation IRAQI FREEDOM-II, in order to sustain the current readiness of our ground combat forces in Iraq, and absorb our combat losses. We have put extensive wear and tear on these assets and we believe that at some future point we will need to replace the equipment because restoring it like new condition will not be cost effective. As we rotate forces and equipment out of theater, we are actively assessing the material condition of the equipment to determine the feasibility of restoration to near new condition. As of March 2005, 2 of our 3 maritime prepositioned squadrons are fully reconstituted and in support of their respective regional combatant commanders. We have requested \$250M via the Fiscal Year 2005 Supplemental to replace preposition equipment. Your continued support will be essential in order to reconstitute our prepositioned stocks.

Sustaining our readiness will require full funding of the Presidential Budget request and the Fiscal Year 2005 Supplemental submission. We have sustained significant increases in wear and tear on materiel – in addition to combat losses – which are a considerable monetary challenge. The baseline Fiscal Year 2006 budget request when coupled with our Fiscal Year 2005 Supplemental request will support our key readiness requirements, which include training, essential warfighting and force protection equipment, and the incremental costs of the Global War on Terror for the current fiscal year. This funding is critical to our sustained readiness.

Marines

The individual Marine is the most effective weapon system in our arsenal. Our ranks are comprised of magnificent young men and women that represent a cross section of our society. Knowing yourself and seeking self-improvement has always been a Marine Corps leadership principle. It is a leadership principle we strive to instill in our Marines of every rank. We believe that educating our Marines is the best way to increase the flexibility and agility of our force. Further, our Marines must be able to think critically and stay one step ahead of the enemy despite the uncertain operating environment, as their lives and the lives of their fellow Marines depends on it.

The Marine Corps greatly appreciates the congressional end strength increase to 178,000. Our first priority for this increase is to enhance the manning of our infantry units to help ease the stress on these heavily committed units. We will also create dedicated foreign military training units and add to our recruiting force, our trainers, and other support for the operating forces in order to reduce the tempo of operations on Marines and their families.

Following a comprehensive review last year of our total force structure to better meet the needs of the 21st century and long-term Global War on Terror, we began implementing force structure realignment initiatives with the majority achieving initial operational capability in Fiscal Year 2006 and full operational capability by Fiscal Year 2008. These initiatives are end strength and structure neutral but will require additional equipment, facilities, and operations and maintenance resources to implement. Structure changes include the establishment of two additional infantry battalions, three light armored reconnaissance companies, three reconnaissance companies, two force reconnaissance platoons, and an additional Air-Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO) for the active component. Our existing explosive ordnance disposal, intelligence, aviation support, civil affairs, and command and control assets will receive additional augmentation. The reserve component's structure initiatives will increase the capability of Marine Forces Reserve to respond to the Global War on Terror and includes the establishment of an intelligence support battalion, a security/anti-terrorism battalion, and two additional light armored reconnaissance companies. Civil affairs and command and control units will receive additional augmentation, and some reserve units will be converted into Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) Detachments – allowing more timely access to these Marine

reservists to support contingency operations – in order to improve the effectiveness of their contribution.

We continue to pursue sensible military to civilian conversions in order to increase the number of Marines in the operating force. We are on course to achieve 1,671 conversions in Fiscal Year 2005.

Recruiting is essential to maintaining our high state of readiness and to replenishing our force. In Fiscal Year 2004, the Marine Corps recruited 100 percent of its active component goal of 30,608 Marines, with 97.7 percent being Tier I High School graduates. The Marine Corps Reserve also achieved 100 percent of its recruiting goals with the accession of 6,165 Non-Prior Service Marines and 2,083 prior-service Marines. Officer accessions, in both the active and reserve components, achieved their goals, but reserve officer numbers are always challenging as our primary accession source is officers leaving active duty. We are experiencing a growing need for increased advertising and retention tools, which are partially addressed in the supplemental.

Our primary concern with increased personnel and operational tempo is the long-term impact on the career force, especially the officers and staff non-commissioned officers who have between 8 and 12 years of service. Our end-strength increase, implementation of our force structure initiatives, and Military to Civilian conversions are expected to partially mitigate any potential negative effects this high tempo may have on the individual Marine and our force.

We have achieved 100 percent of our enlisted retention goals for both first term and career (second reenlistment and beyond) active duty reenlistments. Selected Reserve enlisted retention for Fiscal Year 2004 was slightly above our historical norm. In Fiscal Year 2005, we are again off to a strong start in all categories but we will continue to monitor this area closely. The Selective Reenlistment Bonus remains a powerful tool that will play an even more important role in the retention of some of the Corps' critical skill shortages, such as intelligence, data communications experts, and air command and control technicians. These reenlisted Noncommissioned and Staff Noncommissioned Officers will be essential to the continued manning and training of our operational units.

Overall, we continue to achieve our goals for officer retention. We are retaining experienced and high quality officers. Our aggregate officer retention rate matched its historical

average of 91.0 percent during Fiscal Year 2004. Reserve officer retention of 75 percent is slightly below the historical norm of 77 percent.

The dedication of our Marine Reserves remains high and is attributed in large part to our policy of definitive activation and use in meaningful missions. Since September 11th, 2001, we have activated in excess of 95 percent of our selected Marine Corps Reserve units, the majority of whom served in either Iraq or Afghanistan. We are closely monitoring post-mobilization retention in order to assess any potential long-term negative impact from recent activations. As we build on the lessons of the recent past and begin to implement adjustments to the structure of our reserve forces, we will ensure that these changes are made with full recognition that the Marine Corps Reserve is a vital part of our total force and when deactivated return to hundreds of communities across the nation.

Our Marine For Life program provides support for 27,000 Marines transitioning from active service back to the civilian community each year. Sponsorship includes assistance with employment, education, housing, childcare, veterans' benefits, and other support services needed for a smooth transition. To provide this support, the Marine For Life program taps into a network of former Marines and Marine-friendly businesses, organizations, and individuals willing to lend a hand to a Marine who has served honorably. Assistance from career retention specialists and transitional recruiters helps get the word out to transitioning Marines. Leveraging the organizational network and strengths of the Marine for Life program, we are currently implementing an Injured Support program to assist injured Marines, Sailors serving with Marines, and their families by providing continuity of support to our most seriously injured through their transition.

Quality of Life

Taking care of Marines and their families is essential to the operational readiness of the Corps. As an expeditionary force, we are accustomed to frequent deployments, yet the current environment contains elements of personal danger and family risk that must be addressed with appropriate and timely support. We monitor the welfare of the community and adjust our programs to ensure our Marines and their families receive the necessary assistance to sustain them throughout the deployment cycle. In this regard, the establishment of Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) as the consolidated structure comprised of previous organizations of Family Services, Morale, Welfare and Recreation Programs, Voluntary Off Duty Education,

and Exchange operations has positioned us to leverage and direct efficiently and effectively all community services assets to help Marines and their families meet the challenges associated with our lifestyle and current operational tempo.

We understand that risk factors can be exacerbated by the current operational tempo and we, therefore, offer a variety of proactive counseling services to address individual and unit readiness concerns. We also fully understand that Marines and their families are not immune from societal risks such as suicide, domestic violence, or sexual assault. To that end we have developed a series of pre-deployment, in-theater, and post deployment awareness briefs, Return and Reunion and other support services to mitigate combat or separation stressors.

We recognize family readiness as integral to unit readiness. To help our families through the separation and stress of deployment, respite and extended childcare services have been enhanced by Congress in supplemental appropriations. Information and referral services are offered via different access points such as unit/command websites, hotlines and Military One Source. Thank you for your continued support of the programs and services so critical to the readiness of our Corps, to include provisions of supplemental appropriations; all of which directly contribute to quality of life for your Marines and their families.

Training

The training at our recruit depots continues to deliver basic trained Marines, imbued with the core values and warrior ethos necessary to ensure their rapid integration into our operational units. In particular, our fundamental tenet, "Every Marine a Rifleman," has proven its worth time and again. All Marines, regardless of military occupational specialty, have executed the tasks of basic riflemen, from establishing security to patrolling their areas of responsibility. In a conflict where nearly every convoy is a combat patrol, the fact that all Marines are taught basic combat and infantry skills at the Schools of Infantry has ensured their survival and mission accomplishment in an environment where traditional lines between the front and the rear are blurred.

While we adjust to the current operational environment, we also keep our eye on the future. We are undertaking initiatives to strengthen the training and education of our Marines. In the joint arena, we are supporting Department of Defense efforts to create a flexible and dynamic Joint National Training Capability, and we are making large infrastructure investments at our Combat Training Center at Twentynine Palms, California. We are in the process of

building a number of urban warfare training facilities on this base that will allow us to conduct battalion and company-sized urban warfare training, further enhancing the combat ability of Marine units. As part of this training we continue to incorporate lessons learned from the Global War on Terror.

Where needed, we have adjusted the curricula at our formal schools to ensure that Marines are trained using the latest lessons learned. Our enemies are constantly adapting, and we must ensure that our training reflects the modifications to our tactics, techniques, and procedures that are necessary to counter these changes. Our schools maintain close communication with our operating forces through the review of after-action reports, lessons-learned data, surveys, and personal interviews with returning Marines. Military Occupational Specialty schools are also adjusting their curricula to ensure that we adapt our focus from fighting a conventional force to dealing with the challenges posed by irregular forces. We are weaving cultural training throughout the training continuum to reinforce the understanding of the operational importance of culture and to help Marines interact more effectively with civilian populations.

To focus our training efforts, all deploying Marine units rotate through a standardized training package. Building on home station training in basic urban skills, ground units deploy to the Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Center at Twentynine Palms, California, for in-depth training in convoy operations, fire support, and small-unit coordinated assaults against defended positions. Following that, the units move to March Air Reserve Base at Riverside, California, for a graduate-level training exercise in urban operations, including stability and support operations. In addition, ground units scheduled to deploy to Afghanistan train at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center at Bridgeport, California. Here they focus on gaining the skills necessary to operate in the demanding high-altitude environment found in Afghanistan. Our Marine Corps aviation units participate in a standardized training package, Desert Talon, in Yuma, Arizona. All of these training events are solidly grounded on lessons learned from our operating forces. With your support, all of these efforts will ensure your Marine Corps retains the ability to respond and contribute whenever and wherever the Nation calls.

Equipment

Mission requirements and the distance to our depot capabilities required an amount of equipment in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM that is greater than the amount of equipment normally associated with the deployed units. Prepositioned stocks were used to source a large amount of this equipment requirement and they have ensured the sustained readiness of our deployed ground units. Yet, our current home station equipment accounts necessitate a redistribution of equipment across the operational forces in order to meet pre-deployment training requirements and sustain the readiness of our units preparing for future contingencies. Our high usage rates in a harsh operating environment, coupled with the added weight of armor and unavoidable delays of scheduled maintenance due to combat, are degrading our equipment at an accelerated rate. Our supplemental request is based on our best assessment of what is required to address essential wartime readiness tasks, with consideration for what is already in our peacetime operating budget to maintain readiness. Our baseline budget and supplemental request are intrinsically linked. We will need your continued support in order to recapitalize and reconstitute our prepositioned stocks.

Our legacy aircraft are performing their assigned missions and are holding up well. The CH-46 has been flown and utilized in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM at 250 percent of its peacetime usage rate. Maintaining the readiness of our aviation assets presents a considerable challenge. Due to the lack of an active production line or available replacement platforms for the CH-46, H-1, CH-53, we are managing these assets until the next generation replacement aircraft become available. There are risks associated with this strategy, and we are managing those risks through a variety of approaches. We are requesting funding to take five CH-53 aircraft out of the bone yard and refurbish them to replace five aircraft destroyed during operations in support of the Global War on Terror. We are also investigating whether we can accelerate developmental funding for the heavy lift replacement. Our Fiscal Year 2005 supplemental request also includes funds for non-recurring engineering that will allow us to initiate construction of new UH-1Y's without having to remove any existing aircraft from our inventory.

We are sustaining our readiness in theater through integration of spare parts and private contractor support and the creation of a limited aircraft depot maintenance capability. We are also coordinating closely with the Army to leverage their in theater ground intermediate

maintenance capability and establishing a pool of ground equipment to expedite the replacement of damaged major end items.

In order to adapt to an evolving threat, we initiated a process to provide a way for the leaders and members of our operating forces to identify and forward new requirements for weapons and equipment up the chain of command for rapid review and approval –most in under 90 days. Upon approval by the Marine Corps Requirements Oversight Council, the Marine Corps and the Department of the Navy realigned funds as necessary and within permitted reprogramming thresholds. When required by reprogramming authority rules, we have forwarded requests that exceed the established reprogramming thresholds to the Congress for approval. The sources for these reprogramming actions have been our investment account assets. In many cases, the funding was made available by our decision to accept risk and defer the full execution of otherwise approved programs in order to address immediate warfighting needs. Through this process we have provided more than 120 identified requirements for essential warfighting equipment to the operational commanders. Some examples are:

- Vehicle hardening:
 - Purchased factory produced and field expedient armor for nearly 5,000 vehicles
 - Fielded 37 export model M1114 up-armored High Mobility Multi-purpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWV)
 - Will procure and field 498 M1114s up-armored HMMWVs
 - Producing the Marine Armor Kit (MAK) for HMMWVs and the Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement (MTVR), the Marine Armor System (MAS) for the Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement (installation for both systems will be operationally driven and is planned to begin between Feb and May 05).
- Numerous types of weapons sights
 - Advanced Combat Optic Gunsights (ACOG)
 - Thermal Weapons Sights
- Family of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) equipment including unmanned robotics and blast suits
- Counter Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Jammers
- Hardened Engineer Vehicles – Cougar and Buffalo systems being acquired from the U.S. Army

- Radios: Personal Role Radios, PRC-148, PRC-117F, and Tropo Satellite Support Radios
- Unit Operations Centers
- Night Vision Devices
- Individual body armor
- Backscatter X-Ray machines

The impact of these reprogramming actions has deferred deliveries or caused delays in the execution of other approved procurement programs. This is true across the Department of the Navy, as the Navy too has assisted with funding these initiatives through reprogrammings of their budget to support our operational requirements. The funding required to buy back some of these critical capabilities is included in our Fiscal Year 2005 supplemental request.

Our equipment replacement strategies support our long-term commitment and considerations for new item modernization or transformation opportunities whenever possible. Use of the Marine Corps depot maintenance capability has been optimized using our organic depots, other service depots, and commercial sources – in that order. For our depots, we have requested \$319 million in Fiscal Year 2005, which includes the baseline programmed appropriation of \$114 million, an approved Congressional increase of \$43 million, and our request for an additional \$162 million in supplemental funding.

The Chief of Naval Operations has an established funding goal for aircraft depot maintenance that will provide 100% of the primary authorized aircraft allowance for deployed squadrons and 90% for non-deployed squadrons.

Our legacy Marine Aviation Command Control Systems are experiencing some supportability problems and there are no open production lines. The three major subsystems of the Marine Air Traffic Control and Landing Systems are a critical high demand low density asset. These subsystems (TPS-73 area surveillance radar, TPN-22 precision approach radar, and TSQ-131COMINT collection subsystem) are old, beyond planned service life, and experiencing diminished manufactured spares issues. We used previous supplemental funding to push depot restoration of these systems as an interim measure. We are procuring a new system (ASPARCS AN/TPN-31) under an existing Army contract to satisfy the requirement to replace these major subsystems. Expected delivery of the first system is in Fiscal Year 2006.

Infrastructure

We continue to make wise use of our resources in operating and maintaining our infrastructure. We are balancing new construction with demolition of inadequate or unsafe facilities, using sustainment metrics in maintaining the structures we have, reducing energy consumption, and applying better business practices. Long term planning is also being conducted to ensure our installations evolve and transition in step with our operating forces. The end state of these on-going efforts is support for combat ready Marines and their families.

We are transforming our bases from singularly managed and resourced entities to ones strategically managed in geographic regions. Our goal is to position our installations to be more effective and consistent providers of support to the warfighter and will use the Marine Corps Business Enterprise and other initiatives to do so. Our regions will reach initial operational capability during Fiscal Year 2005 and full operational capability during Fiscal Year 2006.

Implementation of our approved force structure review initiatives requires facilities construction to support infantry, reconnaissance and intelligence units in the active component as well as reconnaissance, anti-terrorism, and intelligence units in the reserves. Your support for the construction of facilities needed to support the standup of these units is appreciated.

Last year's Defense Authorization Act amended the Endangered Species Act to allow the Secretary of the Interior to accept Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans as suitable substitutes for critical habitat designation. We are using this legislation to protect and enhance populations of these species while continuing to conduct essential training. We are participating in conservation forums with land conservators, city and county planners, and open land advocates in communities where our training ranges are located. One of the goals is to preserve open space and endangered species habitat in those areas as well as deter potentially incompatible development near our installations. These projects are ongoing at most of our installations.

Safety

Effective safety programs are vital to force protection and operational readiness. Our leaders understand the importance of leadership, education, and accountability in the effort to reduce mishaps and accidents. As a result of actions taken and programs implemented, Fiscal Year 2004 mishap fatalities were driven downward from the previous fiscal year. Operational mishap fatalities during the same period were also significantly reduced. Although Aviation mishaps trended upward during Fiscal Year 2004, Marine Aviation is working myriad initiatives

to improve our aviation safety performance and we are on track for a significant improvement this fiscal year. Our leadership is energized at every level. From the Executive Safety Board's leadership initiatives, to the introduction of mentorship programs at the unit level and driver's improvement in recruit training, we are actively involved in the effort to safeguard our most precious assets – our Marines and Sailors.

Modernization and Transformation

As we look into the future, the requirements for Naval forces to maintain presence, engage allies and potential coalition partners, build understanding and operational relationships, relentlessly pursue terrorist organizations, and project sustainable forces ashore for a wide variety of operations will increase. While we continue to focus our efforts on sustaining the current requirements for Global War on Terror, we must not sacrifice our modernization and transformation initiatives in the process. Our modernization and transformation accounts can no longer bear the unfunded costs associated with sustaining the Global War on Terror, which is why the Administration is requesting funds in the Fiscal Year 2005 Supplemental to begin addressing the recapitalization of our forces. Our modernization and transformation initiatives must plan for the procurement of replacement equipment that will enable our Corps to be ready for future conflicts and contingencies.

Our transformation initiatives will enable us to project and sustain a force, using the sea as maneuver space, capable of conducting operations across the spectrum from humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to forcible entry. A combination of amphibious ships to include the Landing Helicopter Assault (Replacement) (LHA (R)), sustained by Joint High Speed Vessels, connectors and maritime prepositioning ships (Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) (MPF(F) as its core) will provide the capability to conduct reception, sustainment, on-ward movement and integration of scalable, deployable combat forces while operating from the sea. We envision a force capable of operating for a sustained time period, removed from any threats ashore, without placing additional stress on a host nation's limited resources or devastating the local economy upon its departure.

To project the force ashore from the safety of such a sea base to the objective area will require the integration of the future capabilities of the Short Take Off Vertical Landing Joint Strike Fighter (STOVL JSF), MV-22 Osprey which replaces the CH-46 and CH-53D, the Heavy Lift Replacement (HLR) slated to replace the CH-53E, the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle, and

the KC-130J. All provide improvements in speed and range to enhance our expeditionary maneuver warfare capability. The movement ashore will be supported by the DD(X) Land Attack Destroyer and the LPD-17 with their much needed and improved naval surface firepower and force projection capabilities.

Once ashore, our Marine Air Ground Task Force will be able to exploit the capabilities of Vertical Unmanned Air Vehicles (VUAV) that replace the Pioneer UAV and improvements in ground direct fires that include the M777A1 lightweight howitzer, the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), and the Expeditionary Fire Support System (EFSS). All will improve the survivability and lethality of our future MAGTFs in support of the Joint Force Commander. The force will be sustained through Logistics Modernization that increases the lethality of the MAGTF by providing increased accuracy, reliability, and responsiveness of logistics information. Your support for our transformation and modernization initiatives will provide our forces the speed, flexibility, agility, and reach required to perform our and is greatly appreciated.

Conclusion

The readiness of our Corps remains dependant on our ability to continue to attract and enlist young men and women dedicated to the preservation of freedom and to service to our great Nation. We must not take them for granted. We must continue to inspire, train, and equip them for success. Our Fiscal year budget 2006 and our Fiscal Year 2005 supplemental request work together to address our essential operational and maintenance requirements to sustain our readiness, while providing opportunity for investment in the future of our Corps. On behalf of all Marines and their families we greatly appreciate the unwavering support of Congress in the sustainment and readiness of the Marine Corps.