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ON CHALLENGING BEACHHEADS: AFGHANISTAN, WASHINGTON, AND BEYOND

A DISCUSSION WITH GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS, COMMANDANT OF THE U.S. MARINE CORPS

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P R O C E E D I N G S

DR. O'HANLON: Well, good morning, everyone. It's a big, big treat and pleasure for me today to welcome the Marine Corps Commandant, General James Amos, to Brookings. I'm Mike O'Hanlon of the Foreign Policy and 21st Century Defense Initiative Program. Peter Singer and I would like to welcome you all.

We have an opportunity to hear from the Commandant on a number of issues that I know this crowd needs no briefing on their importance: everything from the status of Marine Corps modernization efforts, to the status of the war in Afghanistan, to how various budget exercises may be going at the Pentagon, to the extent we can talk about those today.

But I want to begin just briefly with a word of appreciation for the General. I was very fortunate to be with him and his team in Afghanistan recently, watching him and his outgoing Sergeant Major Carlton Kent interact with their Marines, and I can tell you it was an inspirational experience to watch how these two applauded, supported and boosted the morale of their Marines. And I know it went in both directions, because they gave you inspiration. They were incredible to watch in the field, and so I just wanted to make that brief observation, General. But really I wanted just to welcome you to Brookings and look forward to the conversation and maybe ask everyone else to join me in a round of applause, as well. (Applause)

And, of course, there are some big issues, but if you don't mind, we could start with Afghanistan, and I could just ask you to give your assessment of how you see things going based on the trip, based on all the things you're following here in Washington and learning about and so forth.

GENERAL AMOS: Thanks, Mike. We had a great trip. We were on the ground for about five days, did our best, in the Helmand Province, a little bit out west, in

Nimruz, but we did our best to try to see as many of the 20,000 Marines and sailors as we possibly could.

This is my almost fourth year of going in and out of Afghanistan. I've watched it change over those four years. I've watched areas that were extremely dangerous and under heavy Taliban control to places where you and I got out now and didn't have body armor on and went out shaking hands with folks out in town, so I've watched it change. You know, our piece of responsibility is in the Helmand and then out west of that in Nimruz. My sense, Mike, is that there is reason for optimism. I use that term because I try to avoid the winning or losing, which folks want to gravitate to, and I reference that on just things I've seen -- you know, the district governors—ala mayors in America—district governors, courageous men stepping up and rebuilding their towns and setting up marketplaces and getting children in school, I look at it -- I just talked to some folks this morning about children going to school and little girls going to school.

I mean this is a nation that didn't value education for their girls, and yet they've gone in and out of schools now, and you see those beautiful young Afghan children, the girls, you know, all with their splendid dress on and going to school.

So I'm encouraged by that, I'm encouraged by the markets that have opened up, and probably even more so just the leadership that you and I saw in everything from the provincial governor, Governor Mangal, all the way down to those district governors that we've seen. So I think, you know, we've talked about the Taliban spring and the spring offensive. The Taliban, if they do return -- and they will with certain numbers -- are going to see a completely different helmet than when they left last fall, so I am encouraged. I think there's reason for encouragement. I like Dave Petraeus' comments about it's fragile and reversible, I mean I think that's realistic.

But I am encouraged, and I'll tell you that I'm convinced that we've got

the right formula in taking care of the people, helping set of the governments, the local governments and moving along those lines.

DR. O'HANLON: Let me ask, if you don't mind, about how your Marines are doing. And they're working very hard. I just mentioned that I had the great -- good fortune and pleasure of seeing how they rallied to the effort to what you're asking of them, to what we're all asking of them as a nation, and it's inspiring, but it's also got to be tough.

Of course, your own experience in combat was largely in Iraq, and that was now getting to be I think eight years ago when you first went in, and so we've been at this war for a decade, as Carlton Kent inspiringly reminded Marines whenever talked to them in the field, and talked about how they had now created their own legacy, that they're as great Marine warriors as any previous generation. But it's got to be tough on people. It's, you know, it's incredible how often -- when you asked folks in the field, how many of you are on your second or third deployment, and almost everyone raised their hand in the one town meeting you did, I remember you posing that question. How are your Marines holding up? How much longer can we ask this of them? Are there any measures we need to take now to adjust the burden we're placing on them, because it's potentially getting to be too much?

GENERAL AMOS: I think we've got two communities, Mike, we've got the community of the young active -- and I can just speak for the Marines, I can't speak for the other services before us. Now, we're always pulsing, okay, how's morale, how's -- I mean what's reality?

You know, we get -- sometimes the more senior you get, you get accused of, well, you're not in touch with what's really happening out there down at the youngster level, and I don't think that's, number one, the case.

So we have the active duty young Marine, and in some cases the active duty old Marine, but the young Marines, and then we have their families, so we really have two different communities that we pay very, very close attention to. The war-fighting piece, the counter insurgency piece, we're, you know, that's separate. But let me talk about the young Marines first. It's almost counterintuitive, and you saw that with the -- the morale is extremely high. And I'm always hesitant to say that in public because people look and they go, you don't -- General, you're not plugged in. Actually, I think I am and I think Carlton Kent is and I think our commanders are and I think are generals are and our colonels.

Morale is very, very high, and it defies, in some cases, just the normal way we think about the things. The kids like doing what they're doing.

A good example is, you know, we just pulled a battalion out of the northern part -- northeastern part of Afghanistan. They rotated home here just about a month and a half ago. And they fought all through the fall, from about October until about March, up in an area called Sangin. And it was really a dangerous area for the Helmand Province, and they had a lot of casualties, both wounded and Marines that we lost. And yet you could be with these kids, we were there at Christmastime with them -- and we just missed them, you know, when you and I got there -- and their morale was off the page. And you're wondering, well, how can that be? It's just -- I think it's who we recruit, it's how we train them, and the expectation of the legacy that Sergeant Major Kent talks about.

Most of the Marines are on their second -- at least their second or third. You'd be surprised the numbers that are on their fifth and sixth and seventh deployments. Their morale is high. They like doing what they're doing.

Not every Marine comes in and says, I like it so much, I want to reenlist, but I will tell you our reenlistment rates are off the page. All the things that I look at is

kind of the measures of how we're doing. If you want to be a Marine today, and you walk into a recruiter's office in Macon, Georgia, or someplace across our great country, it'll be seven months -- you sign the papers, it'll be seven months before we can send you to boot camp.

And the other thing that's kind of a litmus test is that these young men that come in, it's really men and women come in, and they want to be in the infantry, and yet the infantry is kind of the currency of this war. That's that young 18-, 19-, 20-year-old young man, in some cases, young women, and they are the currency. So morale is high, and they're willing to return with their brothers and sisters again and again.

The other thing piece of this is that they feel good about it. You know, we often don't see that they feel good about it written in the papers back home, but they feel good about doing what they're doing. I mean they feel like they're making a difference. They feel like when they're in a village and they watch the market come to life, and they watch the children go to -- they feel good about that.

The second community, of course, is the family. And I'll tell you, we spend a lot of money and put a lot of effort, not that money is a measure of family happiness, but we recognize as the family goes, so goes the Marine.

And we've got, I think, certainly leading family programs, things that we're doing, great concern, all the way from Bonnie and I, all the way down, our families, trying to take care of them and provide them with information, trying to care for them, trying to take care of their needs, understanding the psychological strain on families as their husband or their loved one or their spouse goes through their second or third or fourth deployment. So I think I personally feel the strain on the families more than I do on the Marines.

DR. O'HANLON: Let me just follow up on one policy question regarding

this issue, because it has to do -- it's the only question I'm going to try to pose to you about July 2011, and what it means for the draw down, because I know that that's a sensitive topic where discussions are ongoing.

But I do want to make sure I'm hearing you right, because we know that about four years ago, a different generation of Joint Chiefs was very concerned about the surge in Iraq and wasn't so sure that the force could sustain it. And that was an ongoing subject of discussion between General Petraeus, when he was commanding in the field then in Iraq, and some of the Joint Chiefs back home.

If I hear you right, you're saying that, yes, there are multiple considerations that have to go into drawing down or how fast we draw down forces this summer, but the state of the Marine Corps is not one of them. In other words, the Marines can do what they're asked to do at whatever pace of draw down the President elects to pursue?

GENERAL AMOS: Absolutely, there's no doubt in my mind about it. And I think you saw this by some of the questions that came up. You know, when we met with the Marines, we always open it up to questions, any questions they have. And we quite often got the questions about, General, how are we? Are we going to be able to complete what we've started here? I mean that was the typical question that came out of the youngsters and some of the oldsters out there, are we going to be able to finish what we've started? You know, are we going to be able to ensure that the Iraqi army -- excuse me, the Afghan army is now trained up and in position along with the Afghan National Police or the Afghan Police to be able to sustain the area, keep the Taliban out and allow the culture in that little community to kind of seek a sense of normalcy again? That's their concern. So it's not a matter of can we sustain it? The answer is yes, so I'm really not worried about that.

DR. O'HANLON: Before I turn to the budget, which is the other main area that I wanted to discuss with you prior to opening things up to the crowd, I did want to ask about Libya, if you don't mind, in passing, at least, because, well, you've got experience in Italy and in NATO, and we went through Naples on our trip and got some briefings.

You also have experience with the operation in Kosovo a dozen years ago in which we tried to use air power to achieve an effect on the battlefield. And, by the way, I'm sure many have seen the news today, it appears Mladic has finally been arrested, which is very welcome news. But it sort of reminds us of the long time horizons that can be involved in some of these things. You're a Marine Corps aviator, and I can tell the crowd he still flies airplanes extremely well, from personal experience, I was able to see that firsthand. But you also know what air power can and maybe can't do.

GENERAL AMOS: Right.

DR. O'HANLON: And I wondered if you had any guidelines for us about how we should think about the Libya campaign now. Is this the sort of thing where you feel fairly good about it, where you think we're going to have to perhaps, as the United States, do more to help our allies, where we're going to have to consider escalating in some way, shape or form, or where really patience is the most important virtue, and if we just stick with it, we'll be okay?

GENERAL AMOS: Yeah, I think your last point is something that's important for all of us to remember. When this thing was first -- when the world's attention had changed from Tunisia to Egypt and then kind of in between in Libya, different pockets rose up and wanted to move quick, wanted to move very, very quick. Other folks wanted to be very cautious and move very, very slow. My sense is we've got it about right and I think at this point tactical patience is probably in order.

One of the things we talk about when we talk to our young lieutenant colonels that are in graduate schools is, when you're dealing at the national diplomacy level, things aren't always crystal clear like they are if you're in a classroom. You know, a classroom, you have a problem, and the professor pretty much knows what at least the two or three best solutions are. When you're dealing on a national stage, around the world, the international stage, it's not always clear what the next best move is.

My sense is I think the United States handled this just about right. And I think NATO, you know, we're a member of NATO, we're a teammate of them, and I think NATO stepped up. And even though everybody, I wish they had done it this way or they had done it, I think if you step back and look at it, we probably handled it just about right.

DR. O'HANLON: I want to ask just a couple of questions on the budget. I know it's an ongoing discussion. I don't think I'm telling any secrets when I can tell the crowd that after spending a day, a 14-hour day, in Helmand Province going from base to base, out in the sun, generally giving these speeches and having town hall meetings and listening to the concerns of Marines, General Amos had to get up at I think about 1:00 a.m. to do a video teleconference with the chiefs back home because of the pressing demand of the ongoing budget. So I admired your heartiness and your strength. And I'm sure it's not over yet with those conversations, and so you probably can't tell us everything we'd love to know, but what can you tell us about the nature of the ongoing exercise, and specifically, is the $400 billion number that the President outlined on April 13th in his speech, is that set in stone or is that a number that you sense is really subject to reconsideration as the chiefs and others have a chance to weigh in on what that number would mean for the size and strength of our military?

GENERAL AMOS: Yeah, I can't talk about whether the 400 billion is locked in concrete, Mike, I don't know. But I think the greater signal was -- to the

department was, okay, our nation is working its way through some fiscal -- I mean some real serious fiscal struggles right now, and everybody has to be part of the solution. And, you know, and our secretary has been pretty strident. You know, a year ago we worked through about $100 billion worth of efficiencies. In our case, within the Marine Corps, we found a significant amount and actually applied them to kind of recapitalize some of our equipment and some of the things that -- some of the near-term expenses in ’12 and ’13 and ’14, so we actually spent that money pretty efficiently.

So I don’t know precisely where this is headed, but the one thing the department has is it has the message, in other words, this received -- it understands that we’re team players in this. So where we are right now, there’s no numbers within the Department of Defense. There’s been no -- there’s no Marine Corps, this is your piece of this. None of that has happened yet. Rather, at this point, you know, the secretary, in just typical -- the wise way he does business, he said let’s take a look at the strategy first. In other words, if our nation is going to begin to draw down its military and take -- reduce the Department of Defense’s part of the federal budget, then let us just put that on pause momentarily while we take a look at strategy. In other words, what is it the United States of America needs of its military, its Department of Defense? And I tell you what: I think all the service chiefs are in line on that, what is it that America wants its Department of Defense to do? I think we had a good run on that in QDR 2010, but QDR 2010 was being birthed, you know, a year and a half, two years ago, and the fiscal landscape has changed.

So if you take what is it that our nation needs its Department of Defense, not what the Marine Corps needs itself to do or not what the other services do individually, but our nation, what does it need its Department of Defense to do, and you start there, and then you say, okay, now, based on that, I have all these things that I’d

like them to do. I'd like you to be forward -- I'd like to have forward presence around the world. So how do you do that and who has the capability to do that, what services? And then I'd like you to be able to do this, this and this, and you come up with your list of a dozen major things that the military should do for our nation or has to do, and then you say, okay, then you lay in the budget.

And this is kind of where I am right now. As I sit as the Commandant, I look at what's going on in the world, around the world: Afghanistan, helping our Japanese brothers and sisters up in Northern Sendai, being off the coast of Libya, helping out with the humanitarian -- that disaster that took place up in Northern Pakistan when the floods came, all the things that we do. And then I -- and I have this kind of confluence, this nexus of budget reality and they're all kind of coming together, and where they cross is where I'm paying very, very close attention, because I don't think we're going to be able to do everything that everybody wants in the future.

So the issue now is back to the strategy. What does our nation want of its military? Then who can provide it? What services can provide that? What's inherent? What have we already paid for, and then what is it we can't do because we can't afford it?

And then -- and this is -- I think this is the really -- I mean it's all important, but this is a very important part, because if we say that this is important to our nation and we want the Department of Defense to do this, these things to this degree, and then we lay that on top of fiscal reality, and we say, okay, we can only do this much and these things we can't, we're no longer going to be able to do, that becomes a risk.

And whenever we're doing real operations around the world, there's always risk in every single thing that happens. I mean everything we've -- every operation that any of us have been involved in, it eventually comes down there are pieces

of risk, and so then you have to ask yourself a question, how do I -- I can either ignore that risk or is there a way I can mitigate that risk? In other words, is there a hedge? Is there something that I can do that in the event that this does happen, that I can -- that I'm going to be okay because I've mitigated it with this kind of capability?

And I'll be honest with you, I mean you've asked the Commandant of the Marine Corps to come here to speak and so forgive me for being just a little bit parochial here for just a second and then I'll put my Joint Chiefs hat back on. I think that's what we do. I mean that's what the Marine Corps does for our nation. We are our nation's insurance policy. We are that hedge against that risk that we may not be able to have everything we want or be able to do everything we'd like to do, but those elements of risk, is there a way we can mitigate it? And so that's kind of where I think we fit in, Mike.

DR. O'HANLON: I'd like to ask you in a minute about the main modernization efforts of the Marine Corps. And, of course, we know that these are an ongoing major concern for you. One of your first acts as commandant that gained big headlines was, of course, to cancel the expeditionary fighting vehicle. You've also now got a big burden in shepherding the so called F-35B. In this crowd, you have probably an even mix of people who know, you know, a lot about the F-35B and people who are more generalists. So maybe once I pose the question, if you could just explain a little bit about how that airplane fits into your strategy.

And then, of course, there's the V-22 Osprey, which is the tilt-rotor aircraft that is doing so well in Afghanistan, and I know that you've been pleased with that. But am I correct in asking about these three, sort of, in a sense, not the only important Marine Corps modernization items, but in many ways, what gives the Marine Corps its unique capabilities and characteristics, and three systems that are really at the center of your concern as Commandant, and then how do you see these three, especially

the F-35B, these three programs going forward?

GENERAL AMOS: You know, if you go back to kind of the mission of the Marine Corps to be that -- deployed, always ready for us, there's a couple of things that are implied in that. Number one is that you are ready to respond today, to today's crisis. You don't have to back up and say, okay, I'll be there in about 30 or 40 days if you just give me enough time to gather my stuff together and I'll put it on ships and I'll put it on airplanes and I'll fly it there, or drive it there, so that's, you know, this term expeditionary really is for us.

It kind of caught on about four or five years ago, people piled on, but it's our mindset. I mean it's the way we think. We buy equipment. We buy equipment that fits on ships that you can sling underneath helicopters that you can put on LCACS and this kind of thing to get it off ships.

So everything we've talked about these three programs all fit with that expeditionary nature of the Marine Corps, I mean truly the ability to be America's crisis response force, to respond to today's crisis with today's force today.

V-22, you know, I was in the Pentagon in 2000 and 2001 when it was struggling, and we used to talk -- we told folks, because it was really a vision then, it wasn't a -- I mean it was a program, airplanes were flying, but it was struggling. And we said, look, this will give us the ability to carry three times as much -- excuse me, twice as much, fly three times as far, and fly two and a half times as fast. It certainly has proven to be that way. The V-22 right now is on its ninth deployment, its sixth combat deployment, and you and I flew around. I suspect that F-15E pilot that was running from the Libyans that night was very thankful he didn't have to wait another two hours on the ground for a traditional rotary wing airplane to come get him, because from the time the ship was notified of his going down in Libya to the time that they launched, found him,

pulled him off the ground and brought him back to the Kearsarge, it was 90 minutes instead of 4 hours or 4-1/2 hours.

The V-22 allows us longer range, a greater payload. You flew in it you could fit 24 combat-loaded Marines with all their stuff very comfortably. You can get in and out of landing zones very safely.

The truth of the matter is, even though it had a publicized start, right now it's the safest airplane we have in the Marine Corps inventory. It just passed 100,000 flight hours. So it fits in that -- we can take forces and we can self-deploy that airplane around the world anywhere.

The expeditionary fighting vehicle, it just became too expensive. I watched it for 26 months I was the assistant commandant, I watched it for the 24 months I was the head of requirements, and I just came to the inescapable conclusion it was just -- we just couldn't afford it. It doesn't mean we don't need the capability.

So back to the expeditionary nature, you know, America needs a capability to come -- be offshore, an offshore option, and be able to come both from the air in V-22s and helicopters, and be able to come on the surface with Marines.

People talk about forcible entry and they kind of get stuck on that and they go, I don't know whether we'll ever do forcible entry operations again. Well, let me just kind of give you a sense of magnitude.

When the Marines surrounded the town of Fallujah in Iraq, we had five infantry battalions on the edges of that town before the Marines entered, and Fallujah is a different place today, you know that. In fact, there isn't anybody in here that can tell me the last time you saw the name Fallujah in the newspaper, so it's turned out to be a good, but five battalions. What we're really talking about is having our nation, a superpower, have the ability to put six battalions of Marines ashore in amphibious vehicles. So it's a

pretty modest investment for a nation that has global reach and has international responsibilities. So we need a vehicle that can come out of the ship and swim ashore and then operate on land as a fighting kind of a vehicle. You kind of get a twofer there, you get seaborne transportation, you get the ability to maneuver on the sea, and so we need that.

And then the last thing is the F-35. Our nation has 22 capital ships. What am I talking about? I'm talking about 11 carriers and 11 large-deck amphibious ships, like the Kearsarge that the V-22 launched off of the coast of Libya. If we don't have the Stovall JSF, right now we're flying Harriers off of -- if that -- those Harriers will run out of service life around 2022, 2024. If we don't have the ability to put a fifth generation airplane on those large-deck amphibs, then when it's all said and done, our nation will have 11 capital ships that they can send around the world to do the nation's bidding instead of 22.

I think it's more -- it transcends the Marine Corps' mission. It's important to the United States of America to have a fifth generation capability on 22 capital ships instead of 11.

DR. O'HANLON: And you feel that program is starting to do a bit better?

GENERAL AMOS: I do, I do. I track it. I think you know about I guess around January -- I mean, I've been watching it, and I watched it go through the (inaudible). And I said, okay, this is it, we're reclaiming ownership of the F-35B program. And that was -- I think I've used the public statement, nobody beat me up for it, but I said you're looking at the program manager of the F-35B. Now, and I'm not. You know, I understand the rules, but I am a player coach. I'm like Bill Russell of the Celtics. And there's nothing that happens on that program right now for that model that I don't see.

In my office, I've got a set of metrics I'm watching every single day. You

can't put a pound of weight on that airplane that I don't know about. And we're trading; we're making business decisions at the headquarters Marine Corps.

One last point on this thing, Congress doesn't give the program manager the money, Congress gives the United States Marine Corps the money, and I take that responsibility very seriously.

So the plane is doing well. It's ahead of schedule right now. It's about 140 percent ahead of all the scheduled test flights, vertical landings, test points achieved. The engine fix is for the three or four major things have been designed, they're putting them in over the next couple of months. I'm optimistic.

DR. O'HANLON: Two more quick questions on the budget and I'll be done and go to the crowd. One is on the issue of military pay, pensions, entitlements. It was interesting in Secretary Gates' speech on Tuesday at IEA, which we billed as his last major policy speech, that this great revered, respected, experienced Secretary of Defense didn't give us some speech for the history books about where we stand vis-à-vis the rise of China and Islamic extremism, and two wars versus three wars versus one war, he came down to pay and pensions and Tricare as almost his valedictory set of issues for his send off.

Now, maybe that's the most he could say about where we are in the budget review right now, which is not exactly something he expected two months ago to be the main thing that he was coping with on his last days in the building, but nonetheless, it was sort of striking that he basically said we're going to have to rethink, to some extent, the military timing system, the military TRICARE system and the premium structure, which, of course, is very favorable to service members. And I think most Americans would believe and support the idea that military compensation should be very robust, especially at a time of war, especially for those deployed.

But would you echo Secretary Gates' thoughts, that if we are going to begin to approach $400 billion in savings, we are going to have to rethink in some fundamental ways our compensation and personnel policies?

GENERAL AMOS: I absolutely do. These are different times. I mean I've been in the Marine Corps for 41 years and I've seen this ebb and flow and I've seen the budget cycle go up and down in its typical 10-year cycles. I'm probably more concerned now than I ever have been before, and I think that's probably the -- the service chiefs, all of us, this has caught our attention.

And probably it's exacerbated because we are at war. I mean, we've got 20,000 Marines on the ground in Afghanistan, another 12,000 deployed on ships around the world, and the Army is significantly more, and the Navy has got a bunch, and the Air Force does. So while we are -- we have this friction that's building. We are currently fairly heavily engaged in some pretty important parts of the world, and the vision, though, is the budget is going to go down, and so it has caught our attention. And so it doesn't surprise me that the Secretary, his last public address or major speech talked about that.

So I do think it's going to -- you know, we're looking right now among ourselves, how can we be more efficient? How can we be more frugal? We're returning the Marine Corps back to its frugal roots as the penny-pinchers of the Department of Defense.

And part of that, though, it can't just come from programs. In other words, you can't just say, okay, we're just going to cancel all these programs because 5 years from now or 10 years from now we'll be at the next part of the world history. We'll be dealing with, you know, decades old equipment that are outdated and worn out, so it can't just come from programs.

We are paying -- about 60 percent of the Marine Corps budget goes to

manpower. Sixty percent. About another 25 percent goes to operations and maintenance. So if you kind of do the math, I'm down to about, you know, small -- below 20 percent to buy new equipment and to put money out for research and development in that. So how do we -- I think the personnel piece that bill has to become -- has to be reduced, it is a sensitive topic. And here's another point of friction: We're doing that while we have these forces engaged. And we're asking a lot of them, and it's an all volunteer force. So I think there's a balance there. We don't know where this is, you know. We are just kind of new into this, taking a look at the entitlements piece, but I think we ought to, I think we ought to look at it.

We get into the what's owed me, what did I sign up for, what was it when I joined, you know, you enter that arena, but I do think it's time for a healthy look at what -- at where all this money is going, because it's going, it's increasing. The entitlements piece is increasing and our personnel costs are increasing.

I remember we testified, the service chiefs testified I think in March or April, when we were doing our posture statements, and we supported the idea of just adding a $5 a month TRICARE addition to your cost. And it was purely for -- it wasn't for active duty and it wasn't for those retirees that are truly retired. It was for the retirees that are actually still in the work. In other words, you spent 20 years in the Marine Corps and you're out and you've got another job and you're working, all we asked for was just raise the TRICARE premium by $5. It hasn't happened yet. I would say that's pretty modest since we haven't adjusted the TRICARE premium since the '90s. So I do think -- I think -- how far -- what will it end up with? I can't tell you, Mike, but I'll tell as a service chief, I'm sensitive to that, but I think we ought to look at it.

DR. O'HANLON: One last question, then we'll go to the crowd, and this may be the hardest one to answer, because you've found a way to answer all my

questions so far and so you're allowed at least one invocation of that's not what I can talk about right now.

But is there a range of Marine Corps in strength numbers that you've now decided have to be considered as options? In other words, I know you have a plan for what the Marine Corps should look like once we get through this period of intensive engagement in Afghanistan. And you worked very hard on that, and clearly, you would hope that that would be the plan we would stick with. But I'm assuming that every service is being asked to rethink its force structure in the course of this $400 billion drill, and is there a range of numbers that you can tell us is sort of under active consideration for Marine Corps active duty in strength?

GENERAL AMOS: Yeah, there's really not. And I'll tell you the reason why, is that we spent all last fall -- when Secretary Gates, in September, told the Marine Corps, and I was the -- just about to become the Commandant, I was about a month away, so it really -- he told the Commandant then, but he gave it to me, he says, you shepherd this.

We spent all four -- he said build a force. That was post-Afghanistan, build a force that understands you're 202,000 now. We drew the Marine Corps from 179,000 to 202,000 in 2006 and 2007 to help ease some of the dwell and the turnaround times.

So think about when you come out of Afghanistan, Jim, and build a force now that meets the Department of Defense's demands and all these requirements that we talked about earlier, and he said, I want you to be able -- I want you to take -- I want you to build a force that kind of focuses on what we call the center of the range of military operations, those day-to-day kind of crisis response stuff. And I'm not just talking about handing out MREs and humanitarian assistance, but we do that, as well, but also that

kind of range of military operations that are in the center. And then take -- what he said was in the high end, in other words, it doesn't mean you're not going to go to some major theater war, but don't build a force that's designed purely for that. Build a force that's designed for this, but have the capability to do that. And we did that. We spent four months at it, and we put our best minds to this. And there's a lot of analysis and rigor behind that to build a force that's going to come down to 186,800.

It's a better Marine Corps than we have today. It's a more capable Marine Corps in many ways than we have today, even though it's a smaller number. We've incorporated the lessons learned of 10 years of combat. And there's a host of things, and I won't go into them for time, but I'm very comfortable that the rigor has been put in that number, Mike.

We haven't started dialing the force down yet because Secretary Gates said don't do it until we come out of Afghanistan, but we have the plan and we're continuing to refresh that plan. So it would be pretty premature to take the Marine Corps and say, okay, that was then, this is now, give me another plan. The truth of the matter is, we put a lot of effort in this thing and can show just about anybody what the value of this force is. So I'm not prepared to fall off that yet, because we haven't even started going down to it yet. We need to start down that path and then see where we go and then adjust from there.

DR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Well, let's open it up. Please wait for a microphone, and identify yourself and then pose a question. We'll start with Peter here in the front.

MR. SINGER: Pete Singer with Brookings. Again, thank you for joining us. I wanted to go back to that question Mike asked about the EFV and the F-35. You talked about the experience of watching the EFV essentially go through almost like a

death spiral until you concluded it had gotten too expensive to meet the needs that you needed. What are the lessons that you drew from that experience, and how are you applying those lessons to the current F-35 program?

But then, secondly, to the potential replacement in amphibious assault, what did you draw from that and how are we applying them? And in many ways, another way of parsing it is, are there some that can be applied and then there are others that just simply we learned a lesson? But you know what; it doesn't apply in terms of a different set of programs.

GENERAL AMOS: I'll tell you what: you know, I've been in this job, I think I'm in my eighth month right now. The time has gone by pretty fast, I've learned a lot of lessons, but I'll tell you what, the acquisition piece of the major programs is a lesson that has just been -- I mean I've learned that lesson now. I'm not saying I'm done learning, but I mean it's in here.

Quickly, here's my sense of this thing. I think, you know, as we -- and I'll just pick on the acquisition, there's probably acquisition folks out here that are going to take me to task, but we have over the years, as we've taken our acquisition cycle and we've trained folks and we have them certified, and then we lay out programs, we lay out a milestone chart, and we've changed that a couple of times since I was a young brigadier general, and we put more scrutiny on it. And what's happened is, my view, is that the acquisition cycle has been pushed out, it's been extended to mitigate risk.

In other words, we're not -- we do a lot of things sequentially in the acquisition cycle. Very seldom do we do things in parallel. In other words, if I anticipate that this has to be done, then I can get started on this sooner now and maybe we can do two things at once to arrive at a point where we have a product that's acceptable and at a point in space and we can move on. So my personal sense is we've made the acquisition

process way too hard.

The second piece -- lesson learned on this, Peter -- is that I think the services have abrogated their responsibility to the acquisition community as it relates to bringing new equipment in. Now, what do I mean by that? I made the point earlier, I said Congress doesn't give the F-35B program manager or the F-35, he doesn't give them the money, he gives it to the service chiefs, and Congress expects the service chiefs to be good stewards of that money.

We turn around and we go I'm not worthy, I'm not qualified to manage this thing, I'm not even qualified to provide oversight. So you take this money acquisition community professionals and then you come back and tell me how I'm doing. And meanwhile, we go off and we focus on other things, like Iraq and Afghanistan and all the things around the world.

All of a sudden we turn back and we go, well, we now -- another $4.3 billion. Well, how did that happen? Or in a case of an EFV, we go -- we're entering our second and a half decade, and the program went from $4-1/2 million a vehicle to somewhere between 17- and $18 million a vehicle, and the program cost grew from whatever it was up to $13 billion. You go, well, how did that happen? I think the service chiefs need to reclaim ownership of these major programs, these really expensive ones. We need to have oversight. And that's what -- that's where I am on the F-35B, coming into it a little bit late.

If you talk to folks that really understand development programs, they'll tell you the very best thing the services can do early on in the concept development phase and when you're really kind of developing this thing is to be engaged, because there are tradeoffs that the service who is going to use this vehicle and buy this capability will need to trade off; and as costs become reality, engineering challenges. 'If you want

this vehicle to go 15 knots in the water, it's going to cost you this much more, but if you're willing to have the vehicle go 12 knots, you can save.' And I'm just making this -- you can save a significant amount. So the services ought to be involved in that instead of just going, well, 15 knots is what I want, so you just go away and come back and tell me how much that costs, and then be shocked at the cost.

So back to the EFV, back to the amphibious combat vehicle. We have right now, I mean, a really systematic approach to using the best engineering minds and production minds across this nation. We know how much it's going to cost. If you want to go an extra 3 knots, we can tell you precisely how big the motor is going to have to be in that thing, which is a function of space inside the hull of the amphibious combat vehicle. We can tell you precisely, you know, how much the gun is going to cost if you want a different caliber.

So what we're doing right now is we're defining the requirement today, working very faithfully on this thing. In fact, we're probably within about 60 days of having this thing really -- and guess who's making those decisions. It's the senior leadership of the Marine Corps, I mean the very senior leadership of the Marine Corps, sitting across the table with the engineers and the systems engineer folks, taking lessons learned from the EFV, and going, okay, what are the trades so that we know now we can actually build a vehicle, we've got some idea reasonably how quick -- how much it's going to cost.

The other thing I'd say is that we have to accelerate production of these test articles and get -- you know how long it took the SR 71 Blackbird to -- from the time it was being drawn on graph paper to the time it first flew. I think it was 18 months. Eighteen months. That was in the '60s, this is 2011. You're going to tell me -- now, here's what the acquisition guys said when we were going to cancel the EFV. They came to one of my premier three stars who kind of manages this effort for me and they

said, okay, we're going to go for an alternate vehicle, General Amos. And I said that's exactly right. And they said it'll be 2024 before it will do initial operational capably. I am not making that up. I wanted to pick the heaviest thing up in my office and throw it at them. I mean just think about that.

So one of the lessons learned, how are they going to apply? Let's be engaged right up front. Let's do trades, requirements trades so we can realistically have an idea what this thing is going to cost, and let's get the acquisition cycle, maybe not quite as aggressive as the MRAP was. I mean we did the MRAP in a year, ladies and gentlemen, a year, and it saved lives, I mean an untotalled amount of lives. But maybe not quite -- but it was a pretty rudimentary thing. You know, it's a steel box and a V-shaped hull and a drive terrain and the shock absorbers and a gun on top and seats in it. This is going to be a little bit more sophisticated than that.

But I tell you, you can take the lessons learned of the MRAP acquisition to push the acquisition cycle faster so that we can actually come out the other end with a product that's affordable. Everything, the longer it takes, the more expensive it becomes. So that's the lesson learned, F-35, I think we're coming into it a little bit late. Those requirements arrived about 1998, '99. I was in the Pentagon as the deputy of aviation, when it was all PowerPoint, and so we're farther down the road on that.

But that's why the Marine Corps has come back in and engaged right now on what are the requirements on that -- what's acceptable, and so we're looking at it right now. So I think early engagement is a lesson learned. I think you can do -- you can accelerate the time on an acquisition. Service chiefs need to reclaim ownership of those major productions -- those major programs. And I had one other point I forgot, but, I mean, I really think we can do a whole lot better, okay.

DR. O'HANLON: Let's start working back a little bit, about six rows back

on the aisle.

MR. YAZAKI: Hi, Anthony Yazaki, NHK News. General Amos, do you have any reaction to the proposal set forth by Senators Levin, Webb and McCain to merge the Futenma Air Station and the Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa?

GENERAL AMOS: You know, the -- I do have a couple of reactions to it and I think they're favorable. First of all, I think we've got a good plan that our nation and the Japanese at the very highest levels agreed to in 2005/2006. I've flown in and out of the Futenma Air Station many times, and have flown -- have lived on Okinawa for a portion of my life as a Marine, so I'm reasonably familiar with that.

I think, in good faith, the Marine Corps needs to find another location for, you know, the airplanes, what we call Marine Aircraft Group 36, rotary wing airplanes that are in Futenma. And the reason for that, for those of you that aren't familiar with it is, it's a great little air station and it's wonderful to fly out of and it satisfies all our needs, but like some of the airfields around the United States of America, it's been encroached. I mean the building and everything, the construction, apartments, schools, businesses have encroached all around the airfield's parameter. And so I think it's in the best interest of the Marine Corps and I think it's in the best interest of our nation and the nation in Japan to find another location for Futenma, and we completely support that.

Another thing, it's -- you didn't ask about it, but there's a significant amount of land that's south of Futenma. You know, you really kind of get to the center of the island and just start going down towards Naha, and the agreement, of course, is to give that land back. You know, we've got some logistics facilities down there and we've got some areas down in the Port of Naha. You know, the plan is to give that back to the people of Okinawa as soon as we reasonably can.

So I think the plan is sound, and I support the movement of the airfield. I

think it's in the best interest of all of us to be able to do that. We just -- the -- of course, where does that capability go? And that's what our nations are working on right now at the very senior level.

DR. O'HANLON: Just two further back, right there, yeah.

MIDSHIPMAN BENIG: Good morning, gentlemen, sir, Midshipman Connor Benig, University of Southern California, ROTC, Trojan Battalion. Beat UCLA. I'm here of USC International Relations Course on WMDs and nuclear proliferation. And I was wondering --

GENERAL AMOS: Can you speak up just a little bit for me? Just put the microphone and speak up, sir.

MIDSHIPMAN BENIG: Oh, yes, sir. Is that better, sir? In the wake of Osama Bin Laden's death, I found it interesting many media outlets immediately reported that a drone strike was what killed him. And as the First Commandant in the Marine Corps from the aviation community, I was wondering where you see the role of Marine aviation going specifically, and with UAVs and the Marine Corps Shadow Tactical System coming into play in both Afghanistan and other conflicts, sir?

GENERAL AMOS: Okay. I want to make sure I've got your question right. As first aviator commandant, I don't focus on that very much, to be honest with you. I'm just a Marine. But what do I see the role of Marine aviation in the future, was that the gist of your question?

MIDSHIPMAN BENIG: Yes, withdrawn, sir, specifically to Marine Corps Shadow Tactical System.

GENERAL AMOS: What was the last part of that?

DR. O'HANLON: Shadow Tactical System.

GENERAL AMOS: Shadow, oh.

DR. O'HANLON: UAVs.

GENERAL AMOS: Okay, UAVs, okay.

MIDSHIPMAN BENIG: Yes, sir.

GENERAL AMOS: I think it's interesting when we crossed the border in 2003, I was the only commander on the ground. And we had about 435 airplanes and probably about 60 of those were the forerunner of Shadow, which was the Pioneer. And boy, I'll tell you what, I had limited experience at unmanned aerial systems, and I quickly fell in love with them. I mean I had -- we were able to use these things and I think all of us -- think all of the service, even our nation, has come to understand the real value of an unmanned aerial system.

So I think, as you know, the Pioneer was replaced with the Shadow, which is an Army program, so we're all in cahoots with the Army on this. Very effective, we have them on the ground.

I'll tell you how effective they are. We had two squadrons of UAVs, of Pioneers; we now have built almost four squadrons of these things with this four structure review. So we are doubling the size of the unmanned aerial system capability in the Marine Corps. I'm a fan of it. I think it's got a future. I can see down the road where, you know, these -- the capabilities on unmanned aerial systems are growing almost exponentially. The ability to move information around the battlefield, the ability to see things and be able to relay that information real time down to forces on the ground, the ability to deliver precision munitions, I see a time in the future where we'll probably do some Medevacs with an unmanned aerial system.

I'm a big fan of what we call the Cargo UAV, it's now called the Cargo UAS, where we can deliver logistic supplies around a battlefield, especially, you know, at 2:00 in the morning, when it's dark and scary and pilots get nervous. You know, a UAV

doesn't care. It just launches out and flies out and delivers ammunition and water and that kind of -- food, so I'm a big fan of it.

I think there's a huge future in it for all the services. And as a Marine aviator, I'm not threatened by it at all. There's always going to be a requirement to have somebody with a brain making decisions on things on the ground, but I'm a big fan of -- and I hope that answered your question.

DR. O'HANLON: If I could follow up quickly on that, General, and I apologize to people I keep waiting, but is it -- this is not meant to be a critique of the F-35B program, but we have seen the F-35 program stay at about 2,500 airplanes through a period in which UAVs -- UASes have become much more effective in general. And, of course, you were just talking about some of the cargo responsibilities of UASes, which are not related to the F-35 mission. But is it possible in this budget drill that the services can realistically and reasonably be asked to rethink the 2,500 number without going to the F-35B specifically? Is there a case that we really are still planning to build too many manned tactical airplanes, even as we're doing so much more with unmanned systems?

GENERAL AMOS: Well, I don't think there's any question we're doing a lot more with unmanned systems, and I think that there is a piece to the future that the unmanned system owns, but I can't tell you right now how much, Mike.

I mean I can't tell you is it 2,500 minus 300 systems? Is it 2,500 plus unmanned systems? You know, we're just -- right now we've got four airplanes delivered to us. We're about to take our fifth one here in the next -- towards the end of this month. The Navy has got one, the Air Force I think has got four or five, so too premature to say yet, you know. We need to get the airplane in production. We need to see how it's going to do, and then also technology is going to advance. So I think that's a decision that

doesn't need to be made right now. I think that could be a decision that could be delayed out there 10 years as much.

When you think about how long it takes to produce 2,500 airplanes, it takes a long time. I mean we're going to be building airplanes and delivering them out to 2025 and 2030. So I don't think it's a decision we need to make right now because capabilities are going to increase significantly between now and then. I think we ought to stay where we are and let's just get the airplane built and let's see where we go with technology in the future.

DR. O'HANLON: The next question, please, yeah, here in about the seventh row, young lady three in.

MS. PERK: Hi, I'm Claire Perk here with the University of Southern California. You talked about the reasons for optimism earlier, such as increase in infrastructure, district government leadership, and increase in education. I was wondering if you could shed some light on the potential challenges that we're still facing in Afghanistan, and, more importantly, why these reasons for optimism that you listed earlier might or might not have sort of snowballing effects to address these challenges or how they might spill over to offset these issues.

GENERAL AMOS: First of all, I think the education piece -- and I want to make sure I answer your question for you -- I think the education piece is critical, especially in a country like Afghanistan, which, as I recall, has an 85 percent illiteracy rate.

Education is important in the Marine Corps. And we don't have an 85 percent illiteracy for everybody in here, so I don't want anybody to think we do. But it's critical for security. It's critical for any maturing organization like us or any maturing country like Afghanistan.

So I'm very optimistic and I'm very hopeful that the education -- I think education is key to what's going on. I know there's an effort underway in Afghanistan right now to train the 85 percent, a large percentage of which are policemen, soldiers, mechanics, teach them even language up to first grade. So I'm, you know, I am very optimistic about that. I think it's important part of the future of that country. But I'm sensing I'm not answering your question. Could you -- did I miss a piece of it?

DR. O'HANLON: Do you want to follow up with any clarification or additional part of your question or has he answered it pretty well?

MS. PERK: I guess if you could talk about the potential challenges that we're still facing in Afghanistan, and maybe why education or other important things like that would offset those challenges, I guess.

GENERAL AMOS: I think -- I'll tell you what, here's -- we're just going to go to fundamental kind of counterinsurgency and helping good people reclaim their country. I mean this is kind of fundamental blocking and tackling.

First of all, there has to be the will of the people that -- it's not a matter of will the change, but a will that they like to have peace, the will that they'd like to be able to have some of the most fundamental things that we take for granted when you drive up here around Dupont Circle and you move around Washington, D.C. I have freedom of movement; I'm not going to be threatened.

In that country, you know, some of the most basic freedoms of being able to take your goods out of your small garden that you grow and put them in the market and sell them, I mean that is significant. And can you imagine that in the United States of America, things that we take so much for granted, that's what they want. They'd like the ability to put their children in school. So the key to all of this is strong leadership.

Remember, it's a tribal system, so it's not like we don't -- we can't view it the way we view ourselves in the United States of America. It's a strong tribal system, the tribal chiefs have a lot to say, the elders, and it's even different than it was in Iraq with the sheikhs. So the elders have an awful lot to say about what's important to that town, that village.

And I'll tell you, while we were there, one of the tribal chiefs said -- and I'm not going to tell you where it is, and this is not unanimous across Afghanistan, so I don't want anybody to walk out of here and go, well, this doesn't count anymore in Afghanistan. But one of the tribal elders in a very rural area of Afghanistan, in a part that is in the Marine zone of Helmand Province, said, you know, I don't care about electricity. I would just like to have fresh water and I'd like to be able to take the stuff that we grow, my villagers grow, I'd like to be able to take it to a market and sell it. Now, that's pretty significant. I mean that's pretty visceral.

So I think, you know, back to your issue, back to your question, I think a strong local government with responsible leaders and an ability to provide security. And what is that? That's the police force, a credible police force that's honest, that has the best interest of the local community at heart, and then a credible military that, should something happen, that they will step in and reinforce the police or they will step in and do the bidding of the nation. That's pretty simple. I mean that's -- to me, that's the fundamental basics of counterinsurgency.

And it's not nation-building. We're not, you know, we're not trying -- but I'm saying that that's what's important for Afghanistan. And I'll tell you what, from what I saw and what I think, you know, Michael can speak for himself, there are those leaders that are there, they're in the villages like Nawa, they're in the villages like Lashkar Gah, they're in the villages like Delaram, and down at Garmsir, and Marja, imagine that.

You know, a year ago, Marja was on the lips of everybody in this room, and now, for the most part, unless you're visiting with us -- and we were in Marja -- unless you're visiting with us, you probably can't remember the last headline you saw in a newspaper anywhere in Washington, D.C., that had the name Marja on it, and yet a year ago it was on the tips of our tongue. And Marja has got a series of governors and police chiefs and Army, and they're doing an incredible job.

So if they can do that at that fundamental level and we can help train them to do that, then the United States can ease out, which is exactly the plan. And they can build schools and they can build wells. We help them dig wells and that kind of stuff, so that's fundamental.

One last point on this thing, and just forgive me for blowing this, but this is key to the -- what is it that they really want? One of the governors, district governors, I was with at Christmastime, and he's a great, courageous man, and he said I'd like to have my market opened again. I'd like to have fresh water.

Now, we're in the middle of this little village and here's this, what we might call a pretty nasty looking, very shallow creek kind of flowing through it, with water that probably nobody in this room would drink. And he said I'd like to have fresh water. And he said you know what else? I'd like to have some kind of medical care. I don't necessarily have to have an OB/GYN. I don't necessarily have to have a pediatrician or a thoracic surgeon, but I'd like to have some medical care, because I just put two of my women in the back of a pick-up truck that were about 8 months and 29 days pregnant and they were having problems in their pregnancy. Put them in the back of a pick-up truck to drive them to Lashkar Gah and they died en route.

That's all he wants. He would just like to have a nurse. And I mean I think that's the success. That's what those little villages want. Mike, do you care to

comment on that, on what you saw or anything?

DR. O'HANLON: I'll just say two brief things about -- you told it very well in terms of what's been accomplished and still what's to be done, two encouraging little factoids or statistics that some people maybe interested to hear. As you all know, governance at the civilian level in Afghanistan has been a challenge, and certainly in the south, but I was encouraged to see that in the last 12 to 15 months, the number of Afghans populating the key government positions at the district level in Helmand has roughly doubled, from about 30 percent to 60 percent of the estimated requirement.

That's not by any means adequate and it doesn't mean that every one of the 60 percent is comparably competent, but it was still an encouraging number. Another thing that I heard that was encouraging and it's been said publicly before, so I'm not too hesitant to say it, but district governors in Afghanistan are now able to travel by road to meetings. Previously they never would. They would go by helicopter because they'd be afraid of encountering a roadside bomb or that the roads would simply be manned by Taliban checkpoints. But now the district governors in the central Helmand River Valley are moving by road. So that's one indication of headway, obviously still a long ways to go.

Let's go over here and then we'll go from the back of the room, and Jason will be after this gentleman here.

MR. GORDON: Hi, General, my name is Andy Gordon. I'm with the Office of Senator Richard G. Lugar. The senator, as of late, has voiced his concerns that the cost, both in terms of financial and the human capital, is outweighing the interest or the vital need in Afghanistan, so I was wondering what your response is to that perspective, and how the Marine Corps is vital to securing those interests or those needs?

GENERAL AMOS: You know, I'm not -- truly, I'm not qualified to -- the answer is, the cost in human capital and money outweighed the -- our national interest. I can't answer that question. That's -- I mean that's for the very most senior leadership of our country to answer. I'll just tell you that there's been a fairly healthy price paid. You know, we paid a pretty health price in Iraq. I think if you use Iraq as a little bit of a -- as a model, we lost 851 -- Joe, move your head that way. We lost 851 Marines killed in action in Iraq and about -- just about 9,000 wounded, various kinds of wounds. That's a pretty healthy price. But if you look at Iraq right now, you look at the Anbar Province, and you -- I mean I keep going back and I say when was the last time anybody saw anything in the paper about Fallujah or Ramadi or, you know, any of these places that were in the headlines of our newspapers.

So you ask yourself the question, was it worth it? And there hasn't been a commander on the ground haven't lost my Marines, haven't put a lot of, I mean, just heartfelt time in there. And the answer for me is, yes, absolutely is yes.

So I transition that to Afghanistan. If I take that same concept and that same ability -- and that's why I look and I'd say I'm very encouraged. I mean, I am. And I'll tell you, you look in the eyes of these young Marines and they want to finish the job. And I don't mean finish the job like in a bad way, like, you know, a vengeance way. I mean in a good way.

When you've got a young 19-year-old Marine and he's excited because the guy just opened up the bakery in Marja and is now serving that wonderful Afghan flatbread. And by the way, that guy had gotten run out two years earlier by the Taliban and he's -- and that young man's corporal is 19 from Akron, Ohio, is excited about that. I mean, they want to finish. That's what I mean by finish the mission. They want to train the Iraqi -- the Afghan Army. They want to help train the Afghan National Police. They

want to provide security. They want to finish the mission.

So I can't answer about your initial question. I just want to give you a sense for what the Marines are feeling.

DR. O'HANLON: Jason, in the far back. Jason has got the gold tie; he's standing near the door.

MR. CAMPBELL: Thanks for the directions, Mike. Jason Campbell with Rand. General Amos, over the last few months there's been a fairly well-publicized increase in the number of representatives from civilian agencies in the government. However, there's been other reports that due to security concerns many of these newly arrived civilians aren't able to get out to the field as much as hoped. Looking specifically at RC Southwest, can you speak to the impact the civilian surge has had on the area of operations?

GENERAL AMOS: Jason, I'll be happy to. You know, everything we've done certainly in the last 10 years has been evolutionary. We're not the same. We don't look at things the same in the Department of Defense as we did prior to 9/11, and I suspect that a lot of our interagency partners don't view things the same way as they did prior to 9/11 either.

I mean who would have thought that we would have -- that we would actually be hiring people in the civilian agencies now, and part of their contract, the way I understand it, you know, when you sign on, is that you are deployable and that -- and you can go to some of these thorny places around the world and some of these places actually are at times very, very dangerous? So we've changed.

And my sense is that we're headed -- we're absolutely headed in the right direction. We spent some time during the evening, in fact, a couple of occasions with a provisional reconstruction team in the Helmand Province, which is headed up by a

Brit, and who's doing a terrific job, by the way. I mean, the guy is a hero. And his staff is coming together. The State Department flushing that out. You know, there's others that need to be a part of that, and they're coming in. Is it slower than we'd like? Yeah. But is the vector heading in the right direction? Yes.

I'd argue that part of this evolutionary learning process is we're going to have to hire specific kind of people at the front end to be willing to go out with the skill sets, to be willing to go out and do some of the really hard things that our nation is probably going to expect of our civilian part of the solution.

The other piece they'll say on there, Jason, is that not only is it heading in the right direction, but it has to head into the right direction. I mean it's imperative, because one of the other lessons we've learned is this: you know, we talked about the whole government, people use that phrase like it's a bumper sticker, but it really is the truth. We're in it together.

The Marine Corps has -- I don't have and my generals have no business thinking that we're going to go some place all by ourselves, flying the Marine Corps flag, playing "From the Halls of Montezuma," and we're just going to stake out our claim and that's it. I'll be happy to be in complete support of some interagency effort someplace else around the world, and we're supporting them, we're providing the capabilities and security and the ability to be able to do the nation's bidding. We're all in this together. So it's not where it should be, but it's heading in the right direction, and I'm encouraged.

DR. O'HANLON: Another question from the back. The young woman with the red hair, about four -- yeah, there you go.

SPEAKER: Good morning, General Amos. A few months ago Secretary Stackley was talking about how he would like to reorganize acquisition in the Department of the Navy so it's along capability lines instead of program lines. Some of the ones he

mentioned were lateral warfare in NIFC-CA, which seemed to have a lot to do with what the Marine Corps is doing. And he started recently by establishing PEO LCS, and I was wondering if any of the Marine Corps' acquisition programs look like they're going to be rolled up in that effort and reorganized under kind of different acquisition structures or if you see that effecting the way the Marines do business?

And another quick question I had for you, do you see the Marine Corps taking an interest in U Class at all in the future?

DR. O'HANLON: It's mostly about which programs will come under new acquisition framework or strategy, if I heard you correctly, and then the last party, because, I'm sorry, the acoustics weren't great, the U Class particularly was hush-hush.

SPEAKER: Do you see the Marine Corps taking an interest at all in U Class in the future or looking at modifying it in any way so that it can launch off of an amphibious ship instead of a carrier?

GENERAL AMOS: Okay. When we started -- the first part of your question dealt with the acquisition, kind of a new acquisition framework. Is that -- and how do I -- what was the question out of that piece of it, Mike?

DR. O'HANLON: Yeah, why don't you summarize very quickly and just put a point on that part of the question?

SPEAKER: Okay. So Stackley has talked about organizing acquisition by capabilities instead of programs. Specifically he's mentioned NIFC-CA a as a Naval Integrated Fire Control-Counter Area, I think, and lateral warfare. I was wondering if there's any signs at this point whether Marine Corps acquisition programs will end up getting rolled up in those new structures or whether you think it will affect Marine Corps capabilities?

GENERAL AMOS: I don't, you know, I don't know personally of any, and

if there's an effort underway to kind of change the acquisition program to talk about -- kind of lump things under capabilities, I'm unaware of that. I'm not saying it's a bad idea, but I haven't put any thought to it.

You know, when I spoke earlier, I was talking primarily about how do we take what we have and make it better? I wasn't necessarily lumping it under capabilities, so I can't answer that.

And I heard U Class back there, and I think you're talking about the Navy's carrier of their thing, I think that's a tremendous effort. I think, you know, we go back to the UAS question we had earlier. I mean there's an example of taking technology and a requirement and actually bringing it aboard something like a Nemesis class carrier, that's pretty significant.

So I, you know, you have to be seeing the airplanes flying right now, you have to be seeing how it's going to turn out, but we're optimistic. But I don't know of any effort right now of trying to pull all that together under different sets of capabilities in the acquisition world.

DR. O'HANLON: I guess we have time for one last question. Are you waiting, sir? Over here, yes, please, last question, wrap up.

MR. FREDERICKSON: Hello, gentlemen, I'm James Frederickson from the University of Edinburgh. Concerning one of your previous answers to a question concerning the budget difficulties, you mentioned an emphasis on strategy first; the aims, goals and priorities must guide reduction within the context of risk assessment.

My question is how that risk assessment is actually going to take place. For instance, is there more emphasis on capability in Afghanistan now or more emphasis on the desire to shape the Marine Corps after Afghanistan?

GENERAL AMOS: That's a very good question. My sense is, though,

when we start talking about budget items and you start thinking about, you know, the fiscal pressures, we're probably talking post-Afghanistan. I don't think there's anybody, and let me just speak for myself. If you were to look at the written guidance I put out the day after I became the Commandant, I have -- there's a bunch in there, but I have four priorities, and my number one priority is to do everything that's required to guarantee success in Afghanistan for our deployed forces. That's my number one priority.

And my promise to the Marines on the ground and the families back home and those Marines that are training is that I will spend whatever money is required. I'll take whatever personal capital is required. In other words, people, I'll make whatever expenditure is required with regards to training our forces and equipping our forces, all of that. I'll do all of that, even at the expense of the rest of the Marine Corps, to guarantee success in Afghanistan.

Now, you heard me talk earlier that it's not winning or losing, and success is a sense of, you know, well being and how are we doing, that's what I mean by that. So Afghanistan is my number one priority. And I know as I sit on the Joint Chiefs, it is absolutely a top priority for our nation and certainly our service chiefs.

So I don't think -- I don't see that changing, until such time as the withdrawal plan is executed and America comes out of Afghanistan, and our allies, you know, our UK brothers and sisters and everybody else, so I don't think that's going to change. I think what we're talking about is the risk is in the future. In other words, we're out there in '13, '14, '15, '16, '17, probably the next decade, and you could make a case that if you're going to look out over the next decade, you probably ought to look out over the next two decades, because when you start buying equipment and procuring stuff, it takes a long time to buy it. It takes, you know, all the things that we just -- we talked about over the last hour.

So my sense is the risk will be addressed in what the world -- what the Department of Defense is going to do for our nation in a post-Afghanistan environment. It doesn't mean it's not going to apply prior to that, but I think if you take a look at the bulk of the effort, it will be towards strategy for the world beyond Afghanistan, and then what can we do? What's required? What can we do? What is it we can't do? That's risk, how do we mitigate it?

DR. O'HANLON: Please join me in thanking the Commandant.

(Applause)

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/s/Carleton J. Anderson, III

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