

STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE
READINESS SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
ON
READINESS
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Today's Marines are thoroughly trained and are meeting all assigned Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) and combatant commander requirements. The approximately 7,400 Marines deployed in Helmand Province under Regional Command South-West remain our top priority. Rotation after rotation, their professionalism, training, and morale has remained. Over the last several years, their cumulative efforts have successfully created the conditions for the Afghan National Security Forces to grow and mature in size and capability, and they have given the Afghan people an opportunity to build for a better future.

In 2012, Marines have participated in more than 120 security cooperation engagements external to Afghanistan, developing partner nation capabilities and building up stores of goodwill among our global neighbors. Marine Corps forces have been ready and able to respond to a range of crises and contingencies from natural disasters to civil uprisings. Marines were sent to Libya in the wake of the assassination of our Ambassador and other U.S. personnel. Marines deployed to reinforce the security of our embassies in Egypt and Yemen following the attempted breach of the embassy walls by violent protesters. Marines supported Superstorm Sandy relief efforts here in our Northeast and Super typhoon Pablo relief efforts in the Philippines. In short, Marines have lived up to our reputation as the nation's crisis response force and remain ready to respond to future incidents that threaten our Nation's interests, regardless of the location or the nature of the occurrence.

Current Readiness

The readiness of our force is integral to our ethos; it's a state of conditioning that Marines work hard to maintain. Our mission is incompatible with tiered readiness. Marines don't get ready when a crisis occurs, we must be forward deployed and always ready to respond to events that occur without warning. This always ready, always trained, and always relevant ethos is the most important aspect of who we are and what we do.

Readiness does come at a cost and the high readiness of the deployed forces comes at the expense of our non-deployed units' readiness. The Marine Corps can sustain its current operational requirements on an enduring basis; however, to maintain the high readiness of our forward deployed units, we have globally sourced equipment and personnel for Afghanistan and other emerging threats from our non-deployed units. The non-deployed forces' principal readiness challenge is the reduced availability of equipment at home stations with which to outfit and train units. Currently, more than half of non-deployed units are experiencing degraded readiness due largely to portions of their equipment being redistributed to support units deployed forward. The manning of our home station units also suffers due to the need to meet the personnel requirements for deploying units, Individual Augments and Security Force Assistance Teams. The primary concern with the out-of-balance readiness of our operating forces is the increased risk in the timely response to unexpected crises or large-scale contingencies, since the non-deployed forces likely would be the responders. Efforts to maintain the readiness of all of

our forces would be exacerbated further if our Operations and Maintenance (O&M) account is diminished.

The training of Marines is an equally important component of readiness. As part of ensuring Marines are appropriately trained and are able to maintain currency in their required occupational specialties, we must ensure appropriate training ranges are available and suitable to meet those needs. In the near term, this includes ensuring the plans to expand our Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center under the Twentynine Palms Land Expansion initiative are executed. This expansion is necessary to address our current lack of a training area to support Marine Expeditionary Brigade-level combined arms training. Retention of the Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range and expansion of the Townsend Bombing Range are also crucial to maintaining combat readiness of Marine Corps aviation units as part of the Marine Air-Ground-Logistics Team.

Resetting the Force

Reset is a subset of reconstitution and comprises the actions taken to restore units to a desired level of combat capability commensurate with the units' future missions. After more than a decade of combat, this will require an unprecedented level of effort. The Marine Corps is resetting its forces "in stride" while fighting the war in Afghanistan and supporting other global requirements while also transitioning to the new Defense Strategic Guidance. Unlike previous post-conflict periods, such as after Operation DESERT STORM, we do not anticipate taking an "operational pause" to reset as we transition from OEF.

Our Operation Enduring Freedom Ground Equipment Reset Strategy, released in January 2012, is our overarching plan to identify the equipment we will either reset or divest. The reset strategy incorporates the investment and modernization decisions in support of future missions and our vision of ourselves as America's middleweight force. Our estimated total reset liability is based on the replacement of combat losses, the restoration of items to serviceable condition, and the extension in service life of selected items. Last year our reset liability was approximately \$3.2B. Based on reset dollars provided in FY12 and the first quarter of FY13, and the establishment of the Marine Corps' enduring Mine Resistant Armored Protected (MRAP) vehicle requirement, we now estimate our reset liability will be something less. The Marine Corps will continue to evaluate the totality of the costs associated with returning our equipment from Afghanistan and the detailed costs associated with resetting our gear after 10 years of combat.

The Marine Corps' enduring MRAP requirement strikes the right balance between capabilities immediately available to the operating forces, those geographically positioned for crisis response, and MRAPs placed in a cost-effective long-term storage capacity for enduring conflict. MRAPs placed in short-term storage within our strategic prepositioning stocks afloat, in Norway

and Kuwait will be maintained at a heightened state of readiness; available for crisis response with little notice.

The Retrograde and Redeployment in support of Reset and Reconstitution Operational Group (R4OG) is a vital organizational element of the Marine Corps' responsible drawdown from Afghanistan and the successful execution of the Ground Equipment Reset Strategy. The R4OG, which was established and deployed in May 2012, is the Marine Corps' component to the U.S. Central Command Materiel Recovery Element and it is tasked with preserving the operational capacity of combat units shouldering the load of clearing the battle space of equipment, supplies and sustainment stocks. The R4OG is focused on accountability and efficiency within the redeployment and retrograde process. This process includes retrograding equipment, repairing shipping containers, and processing ammunition. It has overseen the retrograde of millions of square feet of aviation AM2 matting and thousands of items of equipment to date. With the help of our R4OG and outstanding support from U.S. Transportation Command and the Defense Logistics Agency, the Marine Corps has retrograded 60% of our equipment items; 70% of our supplies, repair parts, and ammunition; and 85% of our AM2 matting from Afghanistan. Additionally, the R4OG brings discipline to the retrograde process ensuring Marine Corps combat units can dutifully withdraw from Afghanistan concurrent with the directed redeployment of Marine Corps forces.

Depot Capacity

The bulk of reset execution occurs in our maintenance depots. The continued availability of our ground equipment depot capacities at Barstow, CA and Albany, GA are essential in support of reset, and our ability to self-generate readiness and surge in response to demand. As the Marine Corps shifts emphasis from OEF sustainment to execution of our reset strategy, more equipment is returning to the depots in battle worn condition and requiring extensive depot maintenance repairs. Based on the current funding levels provided by Congress in HR933, we will be able to remain on schedule with our reset plan in FY13. However, the long-term impacts of lower discretionary budget caps on reset may result in cuts to depot maintenance and procurement accounts, which would hinder the Marine Corps' ability to reconstitute in stride by FY17.

If planned funding is reduced, a "depot lag" or a backlog of equipment requiring depot maintenance is expected. Due to the reset workload, depot maintenance requirements –both sustainment and reset requirements – are at peak levels for FY14 and FY15. In these fiscal years, we will require maximum throughput of our organic depot capability and will also rely on other sources of repair, which include other service depots and commercial options. Reduced funding would defer the maintenance requirements to out-years, thus increasing the backlog of equipment requiring service. Sustained funding reductions would cause a ripple effect, leading to a backlog that would adversely affect near- and long-term readiness. Compounding this problem, depot capability could be impacted by permanent workforce furloughs in the last quarter of FY13.

In addition to the readiness challenges already addressed, another long-term impact of sequestration is deferred maintenance. We would have to closely scrutinize and determine equipment maintenance priorities, assume risk in mission-essential weapon system readiness, delay normal depot sustainment, and delay reset operations. For example, the Department of the Navy plans to induct 686 aircraft into depot maintenance during FY-13. Of these aircraft, the Marine Corps will have 22 scheduled aircraft depot inductions across all type/model/series that will not occur as a result of sequestration reduction to the FY13 budget. Of the 22 aircraft, 9 are F/A-18A-D aircraft. This will result in less aircraft available for assignment to Marine F/A-18 squadrons, reducing the assets available for training and operational support. Each operational F/A-18 squadron should be equipped with 12 aircraft. Of the 12 USMC F/A-18 squadrons: five are deployed, with four in the Unit Deployment Program/Request for Forces (UDP/RFF) and one with the carrier air wing (CVW). The four UDP/RFF squadrons have 12 aircraft and the one CVW squadron has 10 aircraft. The reductions to depot throughput will cause the seven non-deployed squadrons to each have about 6 aircraft available. The long-term effect on non-deployed F/A-18 squadrons will be the inability of the units to achieve and maintain the minimum combat readiness required for follow-on deployments. The training squadron will be maintained constant at about 33 aircraft to meet training requirements for Navy and Marine Corps F/A-18A, C and D pilots and weapons system operators.

Reconstitution

The Marine Corps has a strategic trajectory to reconstitute to a ready total force by FY 17. Our reconstitution efforts will restore and upgrade our combat capability and will ensure our units are ready for operations across the range of military operations. Additionally, reconstitution will rebalance and sustain home station readiness so that our units are ready to deploy on short notice. To ensure we are organizing for the emerging security environment and its inherent and implied challenges, the Commandant directed a Total Force Structure Review in 2010. This Review aligned our force to meet the needs of the nation and took into consideration the realities of constrained spending levels; the Defense Strategic Guidance; and the lessons learned from 10 years of war, particularly the requirements to conduct distributed operations. Then in 2012, the Commandant directed another internal-look, a Force Optimization Review, to prioritize potential future cuts.

To meet the Defense Strategic Guidance within the fiscal realities, we are decreasing our active duty end strength, while retaining our reserve component at 39,600 Marines. From a wartime-high force level of 202,100, we are conducting a drawdown to 182,100 by the end of FY 16. We are currently at approximately 194,280 Marines. The active duty end strength reductions will occur at the rate of no more than 5,000 per year. We have no plan to conduct a reduction-in-force. These end strengths will retain our capacity and capability to support steady state and crisis response operations. The pace of the reductions will account for the completion of our mission in Afghanistan, provide the resiliency that comes with sufficient dwell times, and keep faith with our Marines. Reshaping the active duty component to 182,100 Marines will entail

some risk relative to present and future capacity requirements; but it's manageable, particularly as we maintain the reserve component's operational capability. Further force level reductions would cause us to reevaluate the Marine Corps' role in the National Defense Strategy. For us, a hollow force is not an option.

Five Readiness Pillars

To achieve institutional readiness, sustain operational requirements, and be prepared for crisis and contingency response, we must restore and maintain a balance for our Marine Corps across five pillars:

- High quality people
- Unit readiness
- Capacity to meet combatant commander requirements
- Infrastructure sustainment
- Equipment modernization

High Quality People

The recruiting and retention of high quality people remain essential to maintain a highly ready and professional force. We need the right quantities and occupational specialties to fulfill our role as the Nation's expeditionary force in readiness. In FY 12, the Corps achieved 100 percent of its officer and enlisted recruiting goals for the active and reserve components, while exceeding DoD quality standards for Tier 1 High School Graduates and Mental Categories I-IIIa. We expect to achieve the same in FY 13. The Marine Corps also achieved its retention mission in FY 12 and anticipates doing so again in FY 13. Critical enablers of recruiting and retaining a high quality force are appropriate compensation and benefits; we thank the Congress for its focus on this issue through the past decade of war. We rely on Congress' continued support of pay and benefits, incentive pays, and selective reenlistment bonuses to meet future recruiting challenges, position the force for the on-going drawdown, and shape the all-volunteer force to meet the new defense strategy.

Civilian Marines are an integral part of our total force, supporting the Corps' mission and daily functions. Marine civilians are a "best value" for the defense dollar and are shaped to support the Corps into the future. They are the leanest appropriated funded civilian work force within DoD, with only one civilian for every 10 Marines. Fewer than five percent work in the Pentagon. The vast majority of our civilian Marines, more than 95 percent, work at our installations and depots. Sixty-eight percent are veterans who have chosen to continue their service to our Nation. If furloughed, our civilian Marines could lose a substantial amount of pay during the last quarter of FY13. The potential readiness and human impacts associated with

furloughing our civilian Marines are significant. While we would like to believe a discontinuous furlough will reduce the impact on our employees, most will not be able to easily absorb the loss of income, even over a 14-week period - should it come to that.

The Marine Corps' Wounded Warrior Regiment (WWR) is a fundamental component of our pledge to "keep faith" with those who have served. The WWR supports Marines wounded in combat, those who fall severely ill, and those injured in the line of duty. The Regiment administers the Marine Corps' Recovery Coordination Program, which ensures medical and non-medical needs are fully integrated with programs such as the Warrior Athlete Reconditioning Program. Facilities such as our new Warrior Hope and Care Centers (WHCC) provide necessary specialized capabilities allowing us to support our wounded warriors and their families.

Key to this care is ensuring Marines execute recovery plans that enable their successful return to duty or reintegration into their civilian communities. Around the country we have established District Injured Support Coordinators whose duty is to assist Marines transitioning from active duty to a veteran status. Our WWR Medical Staff provides medical subject matter expertise, advocacy, and liaison to the medical community. The Sergeant Merlin German Wounded Warrior Call Center conducts an average of 7,000 outreach calls per month and receives calls for assistance 24 hours a day from both active-duty and veteran Marines. Our contact centers also conduct outreach to Marines who remain with their parent command to ensure their needs are met. Depending upon the individual Marine's requirements, these programs and services are coordinated for optimal care delivery, proving that Wounded Warrior care is not a process, but a persistent relationship between the Marine Corps, our Marines, and their families.

The Marine Corps is greatly concerned about the long-term care and support for our wounded veterans. Many of our young men and women have sustained injuries that will require support for the remainder of their lives. Given the youthfulness of this wounded population, this represents a debt to our Nation's warriors that will have to be paid for several decades. Our wounded warrior capabilities are an enduring measure of our commitment to keep faith with our young men and women, and we expect this capability will continue well beyond our return from Afghanistan.

Unit Readiness

This pillar upholds maintaining and shaping the readiness of the operating forces, to include the necessary O&M funding to train to core missions and maintain equipment. The Marine Corps will continue to source our best trained, most ready forces to meet combatant commander requirements. The challenge is to maintain the readiness of the non-deployed forces so they can respond to crises and contingencies with the proper balance of equipping, manning, and training.

As our forces return from Afghanistan, our focus will be on training to our core expeditionary and amphibious mission capabilities. We anticipate incremental increases in the core training

readiness of units as Marines and equipment flow back from Afghanistan over the next 12-24 months.

As we drawdown from Afghanistan, we expect to be increasingly engaged around the world – training, deterring, and responding to all manner of crises and contingencies. O&M funding is essential for our readiness to conduct steady state operations, including amphibious and Maritime Prepositioning Ships Squadron (MPSRON) operations; provide support to the combatant commanders; and provide for our supporting establishment’s sustainment of the operating forces. The battlefields of today and tomorrow necessitate more distributed operations and decentralized command – both of which will drive training costs higher. We know that these future requirements to maintain readiness will increase demands on O&M funding.

Sufficient O&M funding is also essential in the Pacific to support our unit deployment program in Japan; support rotational deployments to Australia and Guam; and engage throughout the region. It is also needed to cover the transportation costs for bringing together the widely dispersed Marine Expeditionary Brigade and Marine Expeditionary Force elements for training and exercises.

With the pending impacts of discretionary caps, the training and unit readiness of aviation units is also a concern. The Marine Corps has developed a highly refined process to achieve aviation unit core competency through interlinked standardized training and readiness manuals, resource models, training plans, budgets, and associated flight hours. Based on this process, Marine aviation units are resourced with the right amount of flight hours to achieve aircrew proficiency and resulting unit core competency. Any reduction in flight hours will have a corresponding reduction in aircrew proficiency. The short-term impact of these discretionary caps is a reduction in the programmed flight hours. The long-term impact is compounding readiness degradation due to resources that were programmed originally to maintain readiness, are now being used to attain readiness. The increased risk is any reduction in non-operational sorties will result in decreased aircrew proficiency. This degradation will directly increase risk to both the operator and associated equipment.

Capacity to Meet Combatant Commander Requirements

Force-sizing to meet Geographic Combatant Commander (GCC) requirements, with the right mix of capacity and capability, is the essence of our third readiness pillar. The GCCs continue to register an increased demand for crisis response and amphibious forces to meet requirements across the range of military operations (ROMO). Decisions made in our Force Structure Review and Force Optimization Review will provide a better breadth and depth of Marine forces, capable of executing regional, major contingency operations and optimized for current operations and crisis/contingency response. The capacities of our organic intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; command and control; and unmanned aircraft systems will be increased.

Our critical capacity versus requirement concerns include: shifting forces to the III Marine Expeditionary Force in the Pacific, retaining a global crisis response capability, and ensuring the availability and readiness of amphibious shipping and maritime prepositioned assets to meet increased training and contingency requirements. The primary challenge of the Marine Corps, from a logistics standpoint, is the "tyranny of distance" inherent in the laydown of forces across the Pacific covering an area thousands of miles wide and linkable only by airlift and sealift. To sustain our forces in the Pacific and mitigate gaps, we will rely on our own organic capabilities together with external support from the other Services, the Defense Logistics Agency and the U.S. Transportation Command. This combination will provide flexibility, agility, and responsive support to the operating forces while strengthening the synergistic abilities of the larger joint team.

Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs), coupled with their Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) partners, remain one of the key means by which the Marine Corps provides rapid response to emerging global crises. Their composition and capabilities see them frequently requested by combatant commanders to fulfill various theater engagements; most often supporting Central Command and Pacific Command requirements. We have assumed some risk in the Mediterranean with a reduced MEU/ARG presence, but still maintain the capability to respond to crises in the European Command and Africa Command (the Mediterranean). This response capability includes our Fleet Anti-Terrorism Support Teams (FAST) from the Marine Corps Security Forces Regiment deployed to Rota, Spain and the Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force - Africa stationed in Sigonella, Italy. To further mitigate the risk and hasten responsiveness to the "new normal" with an enhanced baseline of security at U.S. diplomatic facilities, we are looking to form a crisis response force whose primary duty will be to cover that region. This force will be specifically designed to provide embassy reinforcement and fixed site security in addition to other limited crisis response capabilities. As with all our MAGTFs, it will be forward deployed; rotational; and be self-contained with inherent ground, aviation, logistics, and command and control capabilities. This capability does not replace a MEU, but serves to provide a presence and an immediate crisis capability where MEUs are not located.

Infrastructure Sustainment

Infrastructure sustainment, our fourth readiness pillar, is the investment in real property, facilities maintenance, and base infrastructure to support the missions and readiness of our operating forces and other tenant commands. The quality of life for our Marines, Sailors and their families is measurably impacted by the condition of our facilities. As such, the Marine Corps is committed to the proper stewardship of our bases and stations to include the natural resources they encompass. We must adequately resource their sustainment to maintain our physical infrastructure and the complimentary ability to train and deploy highly ready forces. Additionally, as we rebalance toward the Pacific, we will strive to make the proper investments in ranges and facilities to maintain the training readiness of deployed forces to and within that area of operations.

Funding for our facilities sustainment, recapitalization, and modernization (FSRM), as well as military construction and operations, is required to provide and maintain quality infrastructure for our future force. We request Congress' continued support for facilities sustainment and demolition, family housing, environmental management, energy conservation and essential MILCON funding to support critical programs, units, and institutions such as the Joint Strike Fighter, MV-22, Marine Corps Security Forces, Marine Corps University, Marine Cyber Forces, and the Townsend Bombing Range.

Equipment Modernization

In this austere fiscal environment, we are conducting only essential modernization, focusing especially on those areas that underpin our core competencies. We are mitigating costs by prioritizing and sequencing our equipment modernization and sustainment programs to maintain their readiness in a fiscally responsible manner. To maintain operational capabilities and readiness, modernization is critical in the areas of ground combat tactical vehicles (GCTV); aviation; amphibious and pre-positioning ships with their associated connectors; expeditionary energy; and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR). Our modern expeditionary force will require fixed wing aircraft capable of flexible basing ashore or at sea in support of our Marine units. The Joint Strike Fighter is the best aircraft to provide that support today and well into the future. Likewise, a core capability of our expeditionary forces is the ability to project forces ashore from amphibious platforms and to maneuver once ashore. We remain committed to developing and fielding an Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) that meets this critical need.

While we have not cancelled or extended any programs as a result of the FY13 budget decisions, the uncertainty associated with FY14 and out-year budgets will require us to continually review and adjust our program plans consistent with the changing fiscal environment. Decreasing budgets within ongoing acquisition programs would necessarily lead to a review of the programs' abilities to execute approved cost, schedule and performance parameters. Our heavy variant high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle (HMMWV), assault amphibious vehicle (AAV), light armored vehicle (LAV), and tank modification programs, all critical to maintaining the operational availability of these vehicles, would be slowed significantly. Yet they remain essential to our medium and long-term operational readiness. Critical survivability and mobility upgrades to the AAV and LAV fleets would also be delayed. These delays would ultimately impact our ability to support our forward and deployed Marines with ready, relevant and capable combat systems. We request Congress' continued support for modernization to maintain the high level of future readiness our Nation will need. Failure in any one of these pillars of readiness begins to set the conditions for an eventual hollowing of the force. We will do everything within our power to avoid this outcome and request your continued support.

Prepared to Support the Defense Strategic Guidance (DSG)

Last month, Secretary Hagel launched a Strategic Choices and Management Review (SCMR) to help define the major decisions that must be made in the decade ahead to preserve and adapt defense strategy and management under a range of future strategic and budgetary scenarios. We are confident the Navy-Marine Corps team and our inherent naval forward basing, crisis response and theater engagement capacities make us ideally suited to support the current strategic guidance and any future reiteration of it, particularly any focus on the Pacific Command region. The Marine Corps will rebalance its unit deployment program to 2001 levels during FY 13 and FY 14. Last year, a company of Marines from Hawaii deployed to Darwin, Australia on a rotational basis. Another company of Marines recently arrived in Darwin for a second rotational deployment. The intent in the coming years is to establish a rotational presence in Northern Australia of up to a 2,500 person MEU-sized Marine Air Ground Task Force, with associated units and equipment. Our rotational presence throughout Asia is a tangible demonstration of the sustained commitment of the United States to the region and will provide opportunities to engage in security cooperation activities, improve disaster relief response capabilities, and enhance the ability to respond to any crises in the region. The sea-basing capability provided by our MPSRONS provides the flexibility to deploy forces anywhere, without reliance on mature infrastructure such as ports and airfields.

Our pre-positioning programs are a unique strategic capability, giving us the ability to quickly respond to a wide scale of global crises and contingencies. The Maritime Prepositioning Ships Squadrons (MPSRONS) are an afloat asset capable of providing global support to operational forces across the entire spectrum of military operations. A MPSRON provides an increased sustainment capacity and also supports the establishment of a Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB). Increasing strategic flexibility, the MPSRONS provide near immediate closure of equipment and supplies to the combatant commander to meet any contingency from combat operations to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. This strategic program will require continued Congressional support. For sea-basing to be effective, using both amphibious ships and MPSRONS, amphibious ship-to-shore connectors will also require modernization.

The Marine Corps Prepositioning Program – Norway consists of equipment and supplies prepositioned ashore in caves. While available for global employment, these are particularly important assets for use in the European and African theaters. In a cost-sharing partnership with the Norwegian Ministry of Defense, we have built a viable capability that has been used in recent years to support theater security cooperation as well as several humanitarian relief efforts. Originally designed to hold the equipment and supplies to support a MEB, we are reorganizing the program to maintain its relevancy. Of note, we are adding communications and ordnance assets not previously prepositioned.

Partnered With The Navy

Sea-based and forward deployed naval forces provide day to day engagement, crisis response, and assured access for the joint force in a contingency. Partnered with the Navy, we will continue to pursue innovative concepts for maritime expeditionary operations with platforms such as the Joint High Speed Vessel (JHSV) and the Mobile Landing Platform (MLP). As new maritime prepositioning force ships are integrated into the MPSRONS, they will provide additional operational benefits to the Combatant Commanders, such as an over-the-horizon surface connector capability and better selective access to equipment and supplies.

A critical component in building, training, and maintaining an expeditionary forward presence is the availability and readiness of amphibious ships. The combat readiness of our amphibious ships is a foundational requirement for expeditionary force presence, and when required, amphibious force projection. As such, the Navy has acknowledged that low amphibious ship availability and readiness can present a significant challenge to the training readiness of our Naval Expeditionary Forces and is addressing maintenance readiness shortfalls. Since 2010, the average deployment length for a West Coast and East Coast Amphibious Ready Group/Marine Expeditionary Unit has been 219 days and 292 days respectively. The increased duration of deployment combined with a high operational tempo, reduced ship inventory, and deferred/compressed maintenance periods demonstrates the imperative to maintain planned/scheduled maintenance cycles and to build to adequate inventory. This has a direct impact on the readiness of the amphibious fleet and on ensuring the ships reach their service life. Continued Congressional support for the Navy's shipbuilding and surface ship-to-shore connector plans is vital to the Nation's ability to retain and maintain an adequate fleet of modern combat-ready amphibious ships, to provide continuous naval expeditionary presence and project power across the globe, whenever and wherever needed.

Providing our Nation's leaders with "offshore options," naval aviation enables global reach and access. Through our partnership with the Navy, Marine Corps aviation continues to transition from 13 to 6 aircraft types with current deployed forces successfully utilizing transition aircraft: the MV-22, AH-1Z, and UH-1Y. Top priorities for naval aviation include investing in 5th generation strike fighter capability (F-35B/C); persistent multi-role intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; supporting capabilities such as electronic attack and vertical lift; robust strike weapons programs; and targeted modernization of the force for relevance and sustainability.

Additional Commitments

In addition to providing the Nation well-trained, forward-deployed, and forward-engaged units of Marines, the Marine Corps continues to support other national imperatives. In Indian Head, Maryland, the Marine Corps maintains a nationally engaged and pre-eminent Chemical Biological Incident Response Force (CBIRF) capable of responding to chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or high-yield explosive incidents.

Around the clock, our Marine Corps Security Forces Regiment (MCSFR) Marines guard a substantial portion of America's strategic arsenal. Marine Security Forces also encompass the deployment of Fleet Antiterrorism Support Teams (FAST) to the commanders of Pacific Command, European Command and Central Command. These teams serve as a crisis-response force and guard high value American assets.

We are reshaping organizations, capabilities, and capacities to increase aggregate utility and flexibility across the range of military operations, to include enhanced support to U.S. Special Operations and Cyber Commands. We now have 759 Marine Special Operators and 549 Marine Critical Skills Special Operators out of the 3,171 total active force Marines, Sailors and civilians serving at Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC), United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). We will continue to complete our build of MARSOC, reaching full operating capability in Fiscal Year 16 with an active-duty end strength of 3,113. Additionally, we have 308 Marines assigned to Headquarters, USSOCOM and its subordinate joint commands. From training, command and control and operational employment, all of these Marines provide a critical role in realizing tempo requirements in support of our National Security Strategy.

At Cyber Command, we have created Company L with the mission of planning and executing cyberspace operations to support joint and Marine Corps requirements. Company L is planned to grow significantly to meet MARFORCYBER requirements by 2016.

Finally, Marine Corps Embassy Security Guards support 152 U.S. Embassies and consulates around the globe and our FY 2014 budget request funds 1,635 Marines for this program. As requested by Congress, we are working with the Department of State to determine the appropriate number of Marines and will report to Congress by October 1, 2013.

Summary

On behalf of the Marines and Sailors who provide this Nation with its versatile, reliable, middleweight force in readiness, we thank Congress for your continued support and constant interest in and recognition of our challenges. Readiness contains a temporal aspect and with 32,000 to 38,000 new regular accessions a year, currency in our readiness is a state we continuously strive to maintain. Without the ability to transfer money among accounts and the restricted ability to make choices regarding where to take cuts, the impact of reduced funding could disproportionately affect our five pillars of readiness. Your continued support is requested to provide a balance across the five readiness pillars, so we may maintain our institutional readiness and, as you charged more than 60 years ago, "be most ready when our nation is least ready."