

TRANSCRIPT

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THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT AND MAY CONTAIN ERRORS. USERS ARE ADVISED TO CONSULT THEIR OWN TAPES OR NOTES OF THE SESSION IF ABSOLUTE VERIFICATION OF WORDING IS NEEDED.

Q: I wanted to ask you to follow up a little bit on something that General Hagee mentioned when he was here a month or so ago. It was in the aftermath of the release of the QDR. Someone raised the question with him about the wisdom of this proposed 5,000 Marine cut in force structure, end strength, over the next five years. He disagreed with that. I can't remember his exact words, but the import was that he didn't think that was a terrific idea and in fact the Marine Corps was going to do its own review and assessment of where we go with that.

He also repeated that, I believe, at a Senate hearing a week or so later. Where do we stand on that?

A: You all have to be careful about quoting each other as a reference. I don't believe that's exactly what he might have said. I wasn't here. This is my opportunity to get in the attention of OSD Public Affairs. [Laughter].

I believe what the QDR report basically tells us to do is to kind of be where we are. Right now the programmed level for Marine Corps end strength excluding supplementals, is 175,000 Marines. It so happens that the Congress has authorized a higher level of 179, and because of the Secretary of Defense's inherent authority to allow us to float up two percent and in war float up three percent, we're at about 180,000 today. The difference between the 175,000 that has been in the last three budgets and the 180,000 is called supplemental funding.

So what the QDR basically says, we want the Marine Corps to return to its programmed funding level of 175,000 and I think it's by FY12, I think it says.

Q: FY11.

A: The last year of the last FYDP. So with the Commandant--First of all, if we believe that, and we're at 180,000 now, but the 179,000 authorized which allows you to still float up two to three percent, we think that's exactly right for the Marine Corps today in the middle of a long war.

Is that exactly right for the 2015 Marine Corps or the 2025 Marine Corps? We don't know that and we've got a capability assessment group right now that is, for the second time in three years we're looking at the rather enormous changes that have taken place and are taking place in the Marine Corps such as the standup of Marine Special Operations Command just a little bit over a month ago. We're going to grow 2600 Marines and Sailors at Camp LeJeune and Pendleton and they're going to be combat deploying by the end of this calendar year. And a lot of other changes that were already decided such as standing up additional light armored vehicle companies, more force reconnaissance and reconnaissance capability, more civil affairs capability, more quite frankly recruiters to recruit the more Marines and the more instructors to instruct the more Marines.

So the question is, that was all good two years ago, is it all still valid now in light of MARSOC standup, a relatively recent decision on the part of the Secretary of Defense, and the continuing lessons learned about the changing nature of 21st Century warfare. The answer is we don't know. That's why we've got Major General Steve Johnson down at Quantico right now doing a capability assessment. The assessment is, what do the combatant commanders want from the Marine Corps in the 2015 timeframe, which is sometime after 2011, 2012. In other words, kind of look out a ways because manpower takes a while to change. For us to change somebody from being an air traffic controller into a force reconnaissance Marine, number one, you may not be able to do it with the same Marine; but number two, it takes you at least four years to make some significant changes in the force and there are other pacing items. Like you can't stand up another infantry battalion unless you've got, believe it or not, the communications gear for the battalion. And it turns out the communications gear is actually the long pole in standing up a new infantry battalion. It's not the Marines. Then of course it would be nice if you had barracks for them if you're going to add another battalion.

But that's what we're looking at. So I'm not trying to correct what the Commandant said. I agree with the Commandant, of course, since he writes my report. But I think the Marine Corps is about exactly right at the 179,000 authorized level. I think the Secretary of Defense is going to see later this year the results of a capability assessment that says what should the Marine Corps look like at 179,000 or 180,000? And what would the Marine Corps look like if it comes down to about 175,000? The truth is, all 5,000 [inaudible], and I don't want to put too fine a point on this. We believe that all 5,000 will come out of the operational capabilities of the Marine Corps. Now that could be very very bad. It will absolutely not be very very good. We would not design an inefficient Marine Corps and then take the inefficiency out with the 5,000. We think we're already highly efficient right now so you will lose either some capacity, some number of units that we're still going to keep, or you may in fact decide, you being the Secretary of Defense and the Commandant, decide that there's some capability that we're not going to do because the

combatant commanders won't need it. But that's where we're going to be.

Q: Okay.

A: But I like the number 180,000.

Q: You dealt with some of my original questions, so let's go to another--

Q: He did mine too.

Q:--subject.

The Navy's in the process of changing over its electronic attack from the Prowler to the Growler. The Air Force is still trying to decide what they're going to do with that mission. The Marine Corps has aging EA-6Bs and no intention of buying the F/A-18 Growler version. Is there any planning underway of what the Marine Corps is going to do for the electronic attack mission in the future?

A: It's a joint mission. Right now the Navy and Marine Corps provide the only manned tactical airborne electronic attack. Some portion of this mission at some time in the future is going to translate into unmanned platforms. That's not in the program right now. So trying to guess at how much of it is required is less important than trying to figure out how much is required. In other words, how many platforms or sorties are required, just like the Marine Corps in 2015, to support the combatant commanders in 2015?

OSD and Joint Staff are looking at that. This is not the first time we've looked at this. This will be at least the second big study. The first one resulted in the stand-down of the Air Force's E/F-111 Ravens and the transfer of that mission and a chunk of money and structure to the Navy. The Navy is, as you've said, is getting out of the Prowler which has mostly ICAP II capability and I don't want to get into the technical stuff, but it's not the latest generation of electronic warfare pods. The latest generation is ICAP III which is being put on a limited number of the aging EA-6B Prowlers.

The Navy and Marine Corps stood up eight land-based electronic warfare squadrons. The truth is, the only difference between the land-based squadrons and the ones that fly on the carriers is that we've said that they're land-based squadrons. The crews can fly off the carriers. It's just a matter of maintenance.

The Navy is going to stand down their four squadrons as they transition to the Growler. We're going to stand down our squadrons as soon as this study tells us it makes sense to do it.

We're getting out of this very specific and highly capable mission area because the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter is going to have a pretty robust electronic warfare capability and the Growler is

going to provide the only program, and the question is going to be how many Growlers does the nation need? And the other one needs to be that the Growler needs to be capable of doing land-based expeditionary because I agree with my shipmates that sea basing does an awful lot for the nation, but if we need to be flying out of Manas or K2 or Diabukur, it's really kind of tough to get a carrier to drive in that far, and you get very limited sortie time if you're going to be sea-basing hundreds of kilometers away. So the Navy needs to chunk down the change and buy a capability. And at some point we will decide what's the right number of airplanes, what's the right number of squadrons? Should there be Air Force officers and Marine officers in the squadrons? But the Navy is going to have the man capability.

Now the real question is what's the unmanned capability, and I don't have an answer to that. JUDAS and systems like that have the payload capability to start carrying it. As to whether or not they've got the electrical power generation capability, are they stealthy enough? Those are very large questions that may be answered by the study. I think the study's focused on manned.

I don't want to correct you about the Air Force, but the Air Force is out of the B-52 standoff jammer which was a great idea that didn't pan out. It wasn't a question of whether they had it funded right, it was just not going to pan out.

I believe the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and I don't want to use the core competency word, but he believes this is a requirement kind of like combat SAR, so as to whether or not the Air Force actually has its own airplanes or is in joint squadrons or goes unmanned is something that's in the TBD column.

Q: GAO recently put out a study saying the reset of equipment in Iraq and Afghanistan, that there's really a lot of open questions on how to achieve reset and what the plans are, adequate funding and what not. So I just wanted to see what the plans are for current and future reset. I know that people have talked about two years of supplementals even beyond the war, the end of the wars. But that's also, some people say, are tough political sells. So I was wondering--

A: This idea of going to war is kind of a tough political thing. The administration, this administration, the next administration, the congress, will decide what they're going to appropriate money for. When we were asked the question two year ago by the Secretary of Defense in a study called Demand on Equipment, which was later informed by--We were on our successive redeployment to Iraq with much higher equipment densities in the battalions and squadrons, than we normally planned for. This is a very specific war we're in here, counter-insurgency, stability, security operations, training Iraqis and Afghanis. So things like communications gear, night vision devices, personal armor, vehicle armor, counter-IED, were things that we didn't think of on 9/10. So maybe we didn't anticipate this war, but I think historically speaking we don't do a very good job of anticipating wars. We hopefully have about the right capabilities and then the war just shows up.

But we need about \$12 billion to reset the force. It is true that as the war continues there will be

additional costs of the war. We believe those will largely be what we call costs of war. In other words, incremental costs of deploying the troops, operating the force, the attrition of ammunition and systems. But when we took a look at what had happened in what's now entering the fifth year of the war, highly accelerated use of principally ground systems but also aviation systems, we required that number one, we needed to replace them, making some reasonable assumptions on what the users was doing to their planned safe and useful life. And then secondly in many cases these systems are out of production. They're just not in production. You can't just go buy another one when the line is closed, so we were kind of caught, all four of the services, in mid-strike of modernization or transformation, whichever word you prefer. So in some cases we can't buy a Joint Strike Fighter to replace the Harrier that we lost. So the answer is we're going to wait and that's not part of this bill. But we can buy a V-22 to replace the CH-46 that was lost. We can buy LAVs that are in production for foreign military sales to replace LAVs that were lost, and we can also change the force. Individual Marines down to the rifle platoon level are getting different rifles, different rifle combat optics, different night optics devices, personal role radios so they can talk to each other on the side of one brick thick walls, UAVs, et cetera. So it's not so much that we're resetting the way we were in the past. Actually originally the Secretary of Defense didn't like that term. He wanted us to talk about setting the force. Okay, now we're talking about reset.

We think with two years, which is that \$12 billion I talked about, \$9 billion for the ground side, about \$2.7 billion for the aviation side, so now I've given you a decimal point. That will reset us. If we don't get that money, and we think we're going to get that over about two years. The supplementals aren't coming as quickly as we would like. Perhaps OMB isn't giving us every dollar that we ask for. It never happens in this town anyway. Then the requirement slides to the right and so therefore we think that amount of money plus whatever the incremental costs of the war, this war will probably go on for several years. I call it a generational war, by the way, but I'm the only one that seems to have done that. And that doesn't mean it's going to last more than 20 years, but it's a long war. But I think that will do it.

Do we need supplementals two years after the war ends? I don't know. Some of the services seem to be planning on an indefinite stream of supplementals. I think it's pretty clear that the supplementals will probably match up with the overseas combat activity of joint forces and the amount of money that will be put into new investment in futures supplementals is likely to decline. So I think we've got to be very prudent about assuming that you're going to transform the force based on uncertain annual supplementals.

So we're thinking this is it and then everything else is going to be incremental costs of war.

Q: This dovetails with your last question. The V-22 force, that would be replacing CH-46 helicopters.

A: Right.

Q: How is that going to work? Does that mean that this--

A: The rotors kind of go like--[Laughter].

Q: Is this extra funding, say it gets appropriated for a certain number of aircraft. Is that going to then increase the near term procurement rate beyond what's in the '07 FYDP?

A: Absolutely.

Q: It is.

A: You just said it. It's supplemental and it's on top of what is in the President's budget request. But of course if it was in the supplemental it's a supplemental budget request, so it is on top of.

Q: Then looking long term in that program do you think the Marine Corps is likely to neck down the overall number of aircraft they're planning to buy below 360? Or do you see that requirement staying long term?

A: Interesting crystal ball. I was the original V-22 requirements officer when the number was 552, that's 5-5-2. It went down to 360 during the tenure of Commandant General Chuck Krulak. We continue to look at the acquisition objectives of everything. Expeditionary fighting vehicles. By the way, the number of rifles and pistols has changed during this war. Fewer pistols, more rifles.

So is it possible we'll be buying a different number of Joint Strike Fighters, CH-53 Kilos, V-22s? I think it's likely, is right.

Do I think the number 360 is wrong? I've seen nothing to indicate that the number of 360 is wrong. What I can tell you is the rate at which we are buying them in the FYDP is wrong, it's low. We're in full rate production right now, and what is the constraint on increasing the production rate of this aircraft, which I know, every time it's carried in the Philadelphia paper or the Fort Worth paper or somehow the hometown paper is always the one that kind of rips the face off of a program. But every time it's carried in there's this question about the history of the program.

This program is doing great. It was authorized to go into full rate production, and full rate is going to be full rate at the rate that is affordable. We'd like to be transitioning these aging CH-46 and CH-53D squadrons at the rate of two squadrons a year which would require about 30 aircraft a year.

Is 30 aircraft a year in the President's budget right now before the Congress? No, it's not. We're just stepping off of the minimum sustaining rate of 11. If we could buy another three the

company has the capability to make those. These are like 24-36 month airplanes because you've got to go buy the engines and all of that. But these would replace not only combat losses but they would accelerate the ability of the Marine Corps to deliver more relevant squadrons for this war. Squadrons that can take off of ships in the Gulf of Oman and go directly, do not land in Pakistan, go directly into Afghanistan.

Now are we buying aircraft for Afghanistan? No, that's not the point. The point is we're buying aircraft for the future. And yes, they would be on top.

The company has the capability to ramp up to 30 or 31 aircraft a year. Their limit is going to be tooling. Actually, the real practical limit is the ability of the Marine Corps in the middle of a war to stand down squadrons for about two years, train the ground and air crew through simulation and ground trainers and aviation, flying aircraft, stand them up. That takes the squadron out for about two years.

So the throughput problem here is not the production line.

By the way, the aircraft are doing great, and I know we've had a ground mishap down at New River. Dr. Etter did a great job of promptly asking the right questions and jumping on this because we've isolated this to what may be a software problem in the FADEC, the Fuel Air Digital Electronic Control units. There's two of them. And in fact the investigation is going to determine not what happened. We know what happened. But why did it happen. But this has nothing to do with tilt rotor. This had to do with the FADEC on the engines.

Q: This is a--

A: By the way, Dave wins the tie award today. I want to let you know that. There are a couple of honorable mentions today, but--[Laughter]--I'll judge those at the end today.

Q: I know you're jealous of the tie.

A: I am. You don't have one like this, though. [Laughter].

Q: I've been writing about the military since 1981, and spending a lot of time in the field with Marines and Soldier. During most of that time the military has not been at war. The military has been thinking about war, dreaming about war, practicing war, rehearsing war, planning war, writing doctrine for war, not being at war. Now you've been at war for three years, four years. What's the change on the institution?

A: Okay.

Q: I can give you some suggestions but--[Laughter].

A: Do I get to pick the answer, or--[Laughter]. Why don't I give you a suggested answer and then you can criticize my answer, okay?

I've been in the same military that you've been writing about since 1964, so I remember when it was an interesting thing to consider when you were 18 years old about whether or not you wanted to join the military or get told to join the military, this thing called draft. This is something that's an interesting concept for today's youth today because there's not even any obvious penalties for not even signing up for it. Although quite frankly, the military's changed so dramatically, quite frankly I don't want draftees in my Marine Corps or my Army or my Air Force or my Navy. I do want people who want to volunteer to serve their country. But we have absolutely no need and I think no desire for the fleet average person to join the military. We need highly motivated, intellectually capable, highly educated young men and women from our high schools to join and the Marine Corps is getting them in the right quality and quantity.

Why do I say that? This is not pejorative about the American population. This is a very demanding job. Even the infantry are using PDAs at the level of NCOs and staff NCOs and junior officers, directing in munitions from standoff platforms 20-30 miles away. This is not something where you want to have the bottom 25 percent of the high school class that didn't graduate show up and run your war in Port au Prince or Kandahar. Oh, no.

And by the way, much of the decisionmaking is taking place at the platoon level and below, not at the level of the National Security Council. Now quite frankly, it's framed by policy and rules of engagement, et cetera, so we have an extraordinarily talented group of young men and women and they are the best and brightest in their generation, much as the greatest generation was back in World War II.

Now having said that, it's an all volunteer force. Let's get to the point, Bob. It's an all volunteer force. This is the first time in American history we have had a long war with an all volunteer force. The all volunteer force in this country, much as you, those of you who may be familiar with the French who are getting out of their conscription and going into an all volunteer, is more expensive. I remember when cigarettes were ten cents a pack, and they were in the green Lucky's packs. Cigarettes cost a lot more, so do the Soldiers and the Marines and the Airmen and the Sailors. In fact the Army, Navy and Air Force, they expect someone who enlists to stay for 20 years. About 75 percent of their enlisted are in the top six enlisted grades which indicates that they keep them longer.

The Marine Corps has about 52 percent in the top six. We kind of like that because most Marines come on active duty, serve one four to six year tour of duty and then go home. They go home to the Selected Reserve, or they just go home and the Marine Corps operates just fine because were a lot more tooth than tail than the other services are.

But the effect on the services' culture is dramatic in the last generation. You've got a highly professional yet still all volunteer force which relies on America's moms and dads giving us the

top 25 percent of the high school class continuously, requires that when they get in the service that the message they thought they were getting that caused them to be recruited is the one that makes them want to stay. In other words there needs to be consistency between what they thought they were getting and what they actually get, and oh by the way, we happen to be at war now. So when you're looking at your girlfriend or your husband and you're deploying for the third time into combat--not the third time to go on a sea tour, but the third time into combat--then this is really not about money, although pay and medical benefits are very important; but this is about the ability to sustain a force at war at the level of quality that's essential to the national defense, but also quantity has a quality all of its own so if you need battalions you need boots on the ground.

So that's what's very different. It's not an experiment, at least as far as the Marine Corps is concerned this is working. To our own surprise we are able to sustain this tempo we think probably indefinitely. Now I'm not advocating for 25,000 Marine in Iraq indefinitely, don't go there on me. But we thought, we were very concerned and we are still concerned about making sure that we don't break the Marines and their families and we don't break the readiness of the Corps, particularly since we're changing over helicopter squadrons and things like that.

But we're doing this about as well as anybody would have literally imagined because I didn't think we would do this this well two years ago. The other services have different challenges.

That's kind of what's different. Is this the way of war of the 21st Century that we're going to be in a George Orwellian kind of continuous war? I don't think so. I hope not. I read the papers like you all. We follow political direction just like Carl Clausewitz told us to, and the Constitution tells us to do. If we need to have 20,000 Marines in Iraq for the next X number of months, they'll be there. If they should come home or they should go some place else, they'll be there. If there's another major war that pops up in the middle of all of this, it will take a little bit longer to get them there, but they'll be there. It's working well.

Q: You've got a generation of people who have been on three combat tours in Iraq. Can you feel the difference inside headquarters?

A: I feel a difference much better when I'm not in the headquarters, but yeah, I feel a difference inside the headquarters and I feel a different when I go to Iraq and Afghanistan to visit principally the Marines and Sailors, but spend some time with the Soldiers who end up eating at the same table as the Marines. If you're on the Pakistani border there aren't a lot of choices in terms of dining facilities out in that part of the world.

But first off, and I don't want to get to the point of saying It's fun to shoot some people like my good friend Jim [Maddox], but the nation has a military. When it needs to either defend itself or take offensive action, proactive defense, this is what these young men and women, and some of the ones that are no longer so young, this is what we signed up to do. This is our job. So I'm not looking for a war, but should a war come I've got to tell you that when I go talk to Marines that

are in the Reserve, they actually get a tinge of angry when they are not being ordered to be mobilized. Nobody wants to go home and tell their spouse or their employer, oh yeah, for the third time I volunteered to leave you. And by the way, take care of the soccer games and the laundry and the sale of the house, and I want my job when--No. They want to be ordered to go to war. They volunteered, they know what this is all about. But quite frankly, there is a steel will, a motivation, and a professionalism on subsequent combat tours. And oh by the way, the ones who are going on their first combat tour, they are not starry-eyed kids. By the time they get done with their training in their cohesive squadrons and units, there are plenty of volunteers that have been on multiple tours and they know exactly that this is not a safe game. This is a tough game, hopefully right now tougher for the enemy, and we will not only outlast but we will beat this enemy provided that the will of the people is sustained.

War is a violent contest of will. So the will of the Afghan people, the will of the Iraqi people, and the will of the American people is fundamentally important to how well the professionals can do this. And by the way, that includes the professional insurgents and terrorists. But your military is doing absolutely--

When I tell you, I hate to be long because Gabby doesn't want me to be long. But about every two weeks I go to Bethesda and Walter Reed, and I just came back a couple of weeks ago from Camp Pendleton Hospital in Balboa. And I know many of you have done it. But those of you who haven't, please don't go interview them, just go talk to them. Go talk to a young lance corporal who has lost both of his eyes and has a big smile on his face as he's being mustered out of the Marine Corps to go into a civilian occupation and not only has a positive attitude about the future, but also is extraordinarily proud of what he gave up.

Go read the stories of the legal immigrant sergeant in the Marine Corps who rolled over the grenade, and he knew exactly what he was doing in split seconds, but got killed so that he could make sure that the fellow Marines that were in the building doing the fighting could survive. So he gave up all of his, this is the guy with the green card who came to America for a future, right? With his mom and a pop and a family. Gave up all of his tomorrows so that his fellow Marines could have theirs.

But they're handling this thing awesomely, and I've talked to Marines that have been on their second and third combat tours. I was talking to a corpsman last week who had the Purple Heart with a star on it. Had been on three combat tours, was not serving in Balboa Hospital with the wounded Marines there. Very proud of what he had done. He had been on two sniper teams and in the course of being attached to two sniper teams got his two Purple Hearts along with the snipers, because now we're talking about the real pointy edge of the spear, and he's perfectly willing and ready to go back with the Marines a third and fourth time. You've got great young men and women here. We're getting the right ones. We're training them right. We're doing as good a job as we can do equipping them. Somebody can always think of something better, and please, cards and letters keep them coming. This enemy is very clever and very ruthless. But they are resilient, they know what they're doing, they knew what the potential cost to them is.

And the thing that's really truly interesting on top of that is their families are hugely hugely supportive of them and what they're doing.

Up until yesterday I had never met a family member that was at all regretted what their child had done, including those that were about ready to lose their kids in ICU, or their husbands. And the first one that I met yesterday didn't regret what they had done but didn't feel good about it simply because of the fact that on the record of emergency data that their child had written out, their child had intentionally not put their names so they didn't get notified. And they didn't like that. But the truth was, we're doing exactly what the young men and women have asked us to do. Train and equip them, support them, take care of them if they get wounded, take care of their families in the event that they become a casualty or permanently disabled in this war, and we're doing it literally according to their wishes. I have just been so tremendously impressed by them and their families, especially when you've got the moms that you know they're about ready to break down and cry but they're smiling because their son's sitting in the bed. Then you grab ahold of them and they break down and cry. I say you know, it's really good that you break down and cry because your son knows you want to cry, now just stay here at the foot of the bed.

The docs are doing awesome work. This is a nation at war in the fifth year of war. How many times has the nation been at war this long? The Revolutionary War, pretty small force. After the Battle of New York there were about 3600 Americans and there was a question about whether they were going to stay. They weren't even getting paid, by the way. So that was a challenge.

The next longest big war that we had was Vietnam. Then there's this war right here. And by the way, this is the first one in all of the 230 years, an all volunteer force in a long war. These kids are doing great. And I think the nation is doing great, although there's an obvious dialogue about what's the cost of all of this.

Okay, long answer, sorry.

Q: General, you're an aviator. I wanted to ask you about MARSOC, the fact that there are no plans to give it aviation assets.

A: Right.

Q: Why is that? Are they going to need their own assets?

A: First off, why is that? Because the combatant commander, General Brown, has specifically not asked for it. It's not that he didn't ask for it and we're saying oh good, he didn't ask for it. No. He was asked, is that what you want? The answer was no, and almost a quote, "I don't need another air force."

Now what he's doing, the 2600 Marines and Sailors that are there, there's about 110 Sailors in the total, obviously mostly Naval medical personnel. But the combat deployable part of that which is

the Marine Special Operations companies, there's also a foreign military training unit, and there are a lot of other things included in that. The intention is, this is the concept, is that they will be, when they are deploying in larger combat units, they're going to be deploying with the expeditionary strike groups. If they're not, they're going to be deploying with other joint forces, whether it's from the sea or going directly into some place, whether it's the Republic of Georgia or into Colombia for training or other operations. So therefore they're going to have the availability of the V-22s and the 53Es or the Army H-47s. They're going to have the availability of all of the general purposes forces personnel and equipment that they go with. Like the other 2100 Marines that are in the MEUSOCS, about 100 persons in a Marine Special Operations company will go with them. And the ships and all that goes with that. If they go ashore they're going to be with other joint forces.

At some time in the future Special Operations Command may think they need some tactical mobility. If they do we'll deal with that when they ask for it, but this is literally, we are providing forces, providing Marines--and these are going to be Marines. In fact General Brown wants them to keep their Marine culture and ethos. We're providing them in response to a series of questions by the Secretary of Defense to move us more into irregular warfare capabilities and the requirements of the combatant commander, which is exactly the way it's supposed to be.

Q: General, when you say this war will go on for several years, were you referring specifically to Iraq?

A: It's a global war against terrorism. Obviously we're in the--We have two campaigns that are going on right now. There's a campaign in Afghanistan and actually Djibouti is related to it because they're both OEF. This is about denying bases to AQ and in Afghanistan obviously to their Taliban allies, and quite frankly there are a lot of other bad folks running around the mountains there. Beautiful country. Then of course the second campaign of the war is Iraq where you have AQI and the associated movements. So now it's all called AQAM. We can't really do anything in this town without a bunch of acronyms. But this is bigger than that.

The Australians were attacked in Bali. We know the networks are global. I'm from New York. You all heard of the guys from Lackawana, right, that went to prison. So I am not predicting a third campaign in the war in Country X. But we are doing tremendous damage to this network, but this is a very difficult war amongst populations. More dense in Iraq which actually has fewer people than Afghanistan. There's 26 million in Iraq and about 30 million in Afghanistan, but the insurgency or the Mujahadeen or the terrorists or the anti-government forces are operating amongst the people. And in Afghanistan they're operating in much more rural areas so they're very different. But this will take many years.

Now quite frankly, we want to continue to build partnership capability--

Q: You think the Iraq component of that will take several more years?

A: The Iraq component of that will take as long as the government in Baghdad--For the United States, it will take as long as the government in Baghdad and our civilian authority wants us to be there. I'm being evasive here because it's a political answer. The answer is we will probably be there in some number for more than one year. [Laughter].

What am I going to do? I'm going to predict how long the war is? I mean this is one of these hypotheticals the White House never takes.

If they form a government this summer, and hopefully they will, a strong government with broader based support, and they ask us to reduce our forces by half within 12 months, we will. If in fact they ask us to stay and there remains strong support amongst the will of the Iraqi people to support their government which is something, a work in progress. Strong support principally in the United Kingdom and the United States to continue this, then we won't. There's a huge debate going on about this right now.

Q: But when you said you could sustain a force indefinitely, but you can't sustain 20,000 to 25,000 in Iraq indefinitely.

A: I didn't say that. We can sustain 20,000 to 25,000 in Iraq indefinitely.

Q: That's not what you just said. You said just a minute ago, you're not saying that. Don't get me wrong.

A: I am not saying that we ought to be doing that. I am telling you that the Marine Corps can sustain the tempo of operations that we are experiencing now indefinitely. I am not advocating that that's what we ought to do. Again, the political authority is going to tell us what they want us to do. And by the way, if somebody decides they want to have a surprise war in East Asia, there will be Soldiers and Marines that show up there too.

Q: General, recently President Bush gave a speech where he talked about the success story of Talafar and that success story very much revolved around the changes the Army has made in adapting to counterinsurgency warfare. They call it clear, hold and build. You know it better than I. But it goes along with a whole bunch of changes that the Army has done in reaction to its experience in Iraq, from its training grounds to its doctrine to its tactics in the field.

I know the Marine Corps has always thought of itself as more of a counterinsurgency force, but clearly you've also gone through a thought process where you've adapted to what you discovered in Iraq. Can you talk about, parallel what you've done to change tactics, doctrine, thought, training, whatever? Adjusting to what you've discovered in Iraq over the last three years.

A: The Soldiers, Special Operations Forces and the Marines in every war are going to adapt to the war we've got. The Army is shifting to become a more modular force simply because it was continuing a shift from a heavier Army that was more oriented towards major ground combat in

Europe and major ground combat in East Asia.

We've been a modular force for as long as I've been a Marine. We build, whether it's MEUSOCs or brigades or MEFs of different sizes, combatant commander, Secretary of Defense, tell us what you want and we'll put together the package that is appropriate for that mission. This is not a criticism of the Army, it's a different way in which the Army which heretofore went to war, and still goes to war, quite frankly as corps, Lieutenant General Kiarrelli is Multinational Corps Iraq, so the Marines are underneath him. So the Army has to have a capability to be an Army, to be a corps, and to operate at the level below. But they're basically brigading the Army from the former divisional construct which was the old construct of major theater war.

But the enormous change here is number one, in the equipment at the lowest levels. At the brigade level, the regimental combat team level, and below, the tremendous increase in equipment for the individual Soldier and Marine. And I'm talking about the rifleman and the infantryman as well as the truck drivers. Trucks that were seen to be utility vehicles, right? The HMMWV A1s and the HMMWV A2s that are now becoming M-11-14s. They were never thought to be armored before because we never saw ourselves operating with contested lines of communications. We were always a little bit concerned in Korea about rear area combat, but special operations as opposed to the whole rear area being kind of like the Judge Roy Beans' Wild West of the Pecos. And in fact that's exactly what the problem is in a very large counterinsurgency.

So you've got machine gunners on the top of trucks. You've got Blue Force Trackers on almost every vehicle in a convoy instead of just the lead vehicle in the convoy, and then when you find the lead vehicle in the convoy's Blue Force Tracker doesn't work, nobody knows where the convoy is any more.

You've got audio gear in trucks that we never had--We just thought trucks carried truck drivers with supplies and equipment and perhaps Marines. No, no. These are now becoming, these utility vehicles are becoming tactical vehicles. But it's an example of the kind of transformation that's taking place at the tactical level when you have individual Marines with personal [world] radios. We bought these initially from the UK to solve the problem that you probably read about in Back Hawk Down. The inability of troops to literally communicate with each other when you're in an urban environment where you don't have line of sight, and in fact our conventional communications were normally at the platoon level and above, so what do you do with your fire team when you lose contact with the Marines that are literally on the other side of the wall?

So I think for the Marine Corps the change is in a higher density of equipment at the regimental combat team level and below. And that means literally, if you take a look at the Marine rifleman who's probably sporting about 70 pounds of gear right now. Outer tactical vests. The most modern SAPI armor, deltoid protectors, groin protectors, side protectors. And oh by the way, this is all protecting them, this is not actually getting them to do their mission. It's slowing them down. Giving them radios, giving them a day optic and a night optic on an A4 rifle. Giving them

a night vision device on their helmet. We're talking about troops that used to be equipped with a couple of thousand dollars worth of gear are now sporting eight, ten, twelve thousand dollars worth of gear, and they're trained to maintain it and to use it on their first combat tour as a United States Marine. That's a very different thing.

The level of sophistication at the lowest level for your first tour soldier or Marine is extraordinary. It's almost like we would have thought ten years ago for Special Operations Forces. And oh by the way, what are we asking them to do? We're asking them to shoot the right people and not shoot the wrong people. And they're doing this like on a daily basis. There's always a lot of controversy, and these are messy wars when you're into the midst of so many people in a built-up area, and they're using highly lethal equipment such as calling in an F-15 or an F-18 strike at night in the middle of a city with a 500 pound bomb to take out just that building on the corner and not the school that's right next to it.

That's the transformation that's taking place in the Marine Corps. We're training them differently at Camp Pendleton and at LeJeune. The principal focus is what we call Mojave Viper out at 29 Palms. If you get a chance go out and see it. Intensive convoy training for all the Marines. What do you do when you're attacked? You counter-attack. You drive through the kill zone but you counter-attack. So the people that do this know they're going to die.

Now what do they do? They stand off a kilometer now with cell phones and dial the IED. But these folks are trained to do convoy operations, operations in a built-up area, how to have conversations with Sheiks and religious leaders and shop owners in Arabic. So we've got Iraqi-Americans and others who are literally speaking Arabic out at 29 Palms. And they're also trained on how to recognize and defeat IEDs. This is a very complex business to train a Marine from being a recruit standing on the yellow footprints at Paris Island and San Diego, and just within a matter of months going through their basic infantry training regiment, six months of training with a battalion. So within about nine months they're in combat in Afghanistan or Iraq, and oh by the way, you don't get any learning curve here. Your very first patrol has got to be successful.

Q: Has there been any sort of parallel to the Army's evolution towards this clear, hold and build, less firepower, less aggressive sweeps, more establishing a security zone and then building within it on this oil spot? Has there been any parallel on the Marine Corps to the Army's sort of evolution in thinking towards that?

A: We've been fighting small wars in the Marine Corps for 230 years, and this is not a criticism of the Army, they have also been doing it. So it's not like the Marine Corps owns American history here. But as we're making this into a doctrinal discussion about firm bases is the way you do it when you're operating with some stability and permanence, we know how to do this. But it is unique to the culture that you are operating in.

One thing we have learned is, first off, we do what we're told to do. If you want us to go in and clear a city like Fallujah and then you change your mind in the middle of the battle, it gets kind

of ugly and it actually makes it look like the other guy won. On the other hand, there are sometimes that you have to go in and do a clear, hold and build operation that makes the city look pretty ugly at the end of it when you've allowed them to do that. So--

Last spring we went through the series of operations, Matador and the others, that tried to clear out the enemy's bases in the Euphrates and Tigris River Valleys. The question is do you have enough troops on the ground to go in and clear and hold and then can you get your provincial reconstruction teams in there with any security? I'm reading the papers too in the morning. To do the building. And of course the combat operations, do you have to drop a bridge, which was in the papers this morning too, in order to prevent insurgents that are coming in from say some other country that might be slightly to the west of Iraq. So you drop the bridge, and then you find out a year later on that the bridge is essential to what? Building and commerce. This is a messy business, war, and of course--

But I think we know how to do this. We have the right number of regimental combat teams and BCTs there. We're training the Iraqi police, the Iraqi security forces, the army. I've gone over there and talked to Iraqi brigade commanders. They can take back their country. Their challenge is a small p, political challenge. Can the Sunni Kurds, can the Sunni Arabs, can the Shia Arabs, can they have enough confidence in a central government to allow a central government to direct security operations and to rebuild the economy? That's a question that only they can answer.

Q: The Army last week said that it prohibited its Soldiers from using privately purchased commercially available body armor and it said that lives were threatened by using inferior commercial body armor. Will the Marine Corps also take the same action the Army did? If not, why not?

A: We're providing all of our Marines, all of the combat gear including the most modern body armor that has been approved for wear. I know there are a lot of folks out there that are trying to sell us lighter, better, all of that. But we and the Army are very careful about armoring and arming, but armoring our troops as well as their equipment.

We're probably not going to come out with an enforceable policy that prevents mom from sending her son a pair of ballistic goggles. We're giving them the ear protection, the eye protection, the outer tactical vests which by themselves are not bullet proof but they're resistant, and that's why we put the armor plates in them.

And by the way, when you've got a sniper with a Dragonov rifle 200 meters away and what he does is he aims for the point underneath the arm--and I've seen that, where they shot a Marine literally on purpose when they raised their arm because that was the only place they could reliably get a kill shot, and the bullet went right through the guy's body and came out his hip and killed him. There's only so much you can do.

But the Marine Corps is not currently considering a policy prohibiting people from bringing

additional gear. There are certain kinds of gear we don't want them to have, and they can't bring their own personal weapons to the combat zone. We're not going to tell mom they can't send a GPS to their son. They don't need it. We're giving them all the stuff before they deploy. We've had multiple cases where [inaudible] incorrect information, particularly when we were mobilizing reserves. The families got all excited because they read all these stories, and I'm not saying you all are not printing what you think to be true, but they read all these stories and of course they run out and by \$3,000 worth of body armor and give it to their son because they think their son or daughter--And the truth is, they show up at their mobilization site and boom, there's a set of armor there for them.

So I think there is absolutely no necessity for anybody's husband, wife, son, daughter, brother, sister, to feel like they're not getting the gear they need as a Marine. So I think prohibiting them from going out and getting something that they don't need is probably something we don't need to do.

Q: I wanted to ask you, General, about the IED threat in Iraq. First off there's been a lot of movement around how it's managed. The Army recently set up an organization to sort of oversee that out of the Pentagon with a retired Army four star. Congress has certainly weighed in a lot, added a lot of money, [inaudible] on that.

I'm curious for your assessment of how well the IED task force has been managed from a Marine perspective. And then also how you see the IED threats evolving in Iraq.

A: First off, General Monty Miggs and I know General [Miggs'] been very good about not only going around and briefing everybody and asking questions, but he's been over not the combat zone, he's been out to the National Training Center, he's been to 29 Palms. He's looking at the full spectrum. It's not just the counter-IED device. He's looking at the whole problem of IEDs which has a lot to do with training and equipping. It's not just the technology that you put on a vehicle or on a person, but things you put on UAVs. So it's more than just trying to at the point of explosion try to defeat the device. That's a very expensive way to do this, but of course we're going to do that too.

So number one, I think he's doing great, but remember now, they just got started. Not yesterday, but it's not like this has been an operation for a year, so that we can now do what we love to do in Washington which is measure the results.

Having said that, we have been doing this for four years. This is becoming a more coherent organization under the IED Defeat organization, but in particular the Army and the Marine Corps are already plugged in. They were before when this was started under Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz. And the same folks are plugged in now. Some of them are different folks, but the same capabilities. In the Marine Corps it's Brigadier General Tex Alis who's in charge of our warfighting lab, working underneath Lieutenant General Jim Maddis. So we've got a fair amount of combat experience here, and we are talking to our Marine Expeditionary Force commanders

that are providing the forces there as well as the ones that are in country.

And you've got in particular the Navy providing its technical expertise. The Navy is the expert in, they're not the only ones. It's not like the Army and the Air Force don't have expertise. But in terms of the technical aspects of IEDs and what causes the kill chain, how do you interrupt the kill chain. If we're talking about armoring, that's a kind of brute force answer to a brute force problem. We're trying to get more elegant answers to that, not to make them expensive but to try to break this kill chain a lot sooner, like break the kill chain in the garage while they're still making it; break the kill chain by interrupting the electromagnetic spectrum,; break the kill chain by seeing these guys digging holes in the ground and then dropping them in their own holes with a sniper bullet, that kind of thing.

But I think it's working well. I think it's also--You will see them, and you already have, the enemy. Number one, they're all up on the web sites. You can visit their web sites, especially if you speak Arabic. But they're talking to each other about what's the latest thing. And see, they don't have to go through an ACAT1 decisionmaking process with approval by--[Laughter]-- Defense Acquisition Executive, you know. [Laughter].

So the answer is, they go down to the local equivalent of Radio Shack, and a lot of this stuff is technology from Japan and China, manufactured in Pakistan. I mean stuff that--Your cell phone, they pull the cell phone apart, they pull out the part they need which is the initiator, they code it, then they hook it up to what? Four Chinese antitank mines, and of course once we start to defeat that part of the spectrum what do they do? They put a pressure plate on top of it, going back to the old way you did it, which is when you drove over it, stepped on it it goes off. Then there's not very much of a kill chain to interrupt unless you go find the vehicle, or better yet drop the guy who's digging the hole in his own hole.

So this is an intelligent enemy. This is a ruthless enemy. I'm not so sure the guys digging holes are all that smart, but when you're unemployed after a while the attractiveness of getting a hundred dollars to dig a hole in the middle of the road gets to be pretty high, especially if you're motivated by things other than just money. Your vision of the future.

At any rate, I think we're doing a great job. Is this one of these things like slap on the back, this one's solved? No. This is 21st Century Warfare. They've now gotten to where they're using pneumatic tubes to activate mines. It used to be, there used to be a little wire you would trip or somebody would have a wire that would be electric. They got through that. They started to use the electromagnetic spectrum, which is a very big spectrum, by the way, so defeating the electromagnetic spectrum means you are basically defeating your own radios. Not a very good thing. So that's very expensive and sophisticated.

But once they see that we're being relatively successful at that, what do they do? They put a simple rubber hose buried across the road, the rubber hose has a little bit of pneumatic or fluid pressure in it. You drive over it. That puts a pulse which hits a switch and it goes off.

But this is war. We're fighting an intelligent enemy here. The idea is the way you defeat an intelligent enemy is you have to get into their mind with a 50 caliber bullet. [Laughter].

Q: General, I'm wondering if you could speak for a minute about the Commission on National Guard and Reserves. Are you working with other Vice Chiefs right now to determine kind of a military-wide way to strike the balance between Reserves in the combat theater and Reserves here? And also, what are the Reserve mobilization lessons learned that you mentioned on [inaudible].

A: Two questions. First question, Arnold Penaro is chairing that commission with a bunch of really stellar folks from the Congress. The Vice Chiefs went over and testified in front of that commission almost three weeks ago now. So they've got some work to do and I don't know when they actually report back to the Congress, but they've now broken down into smaller teams focusing on specific areas of interest.

We're talking with the commission. We are not reacting to the commission in terms of how the Army, Navy, Air Force and the Marine Corps are shaping or reshaping, in our place the Reserve, for the Army and the Air Force we're talking about also the Guard. But having said that, we have continued to shape and reshape Marine Forces Reserve since 9/11.

When we found out there were some things they did that were in very high demand that only they had such as our civil affairs Marine which is around here somewhere. We had two civil affairs groups in the Reserves. We had no civil affairs capability in the active force.

Once we got into a high tempo, long war situation, you could only mobilize the Reserves for so long without the President going to Congress and asking for full mobilization, right? So we could mobilize them for two years. There are certain policies now that kind of constrain that, but we could call up the 4th CAG or the 5th CAG for 12 months and then we could bring them back for an additional 12 months under certain circumstances.

But if you needed more, even if you brought them all up, what did you do? Well the answer is we're continuing to balance and rebalance the force so we're creating civil affairs capabilities in the active force. Not groups, but given the planning capability so like infantry battalions so they can do some of this capability. Because what have we found? Infantry battalions and artillery battalions are running cities. At the end of major combat operations, what do we have? We had a country we had to run. You weren't going to lay that at the feet of all the civil affairs capability, and mostly in the Special Operations Command, but in the Marine Corps we had it in the Reserve.

So we continue to do things like that. We found out that for the first time in 50 years we actually mobilized a Reserve TacAir squadron. We had an F-18 squadron reserved. Then of course this thought came to us that we hadn't mobilized them in the other 49 years. So maybe this was an

asset that was a little out of balance. But we mobilized all of our Reserve 53 squadrons, all of our Reserve light attack squadrons, all our Reserve C-130 squadrons, every single one of our Reserve infantry battalions. But we hadn't mobilized what was three of the four but now is two of the three remaining F-18 squadrons. Maybe the message for the future is you really need to consider how much of that capability do you really need in the Reserve?

So it's that kind of thing. I've got lots of anecdotes but it will be too long an answer.

The other question had to do with lessons learned from mobilization.

First off, it wasn't to our surprise, but again, when we mobilized the Reserves we found out that they were more ready to be mobilized than strategic lift was to move them. In other words, we can get them to the mobilization points.

The other thing being, of course, now, but this was not like going to war in Korea or any of the conventional plans. This required more training. We talked about a more sophisticated--So there's a lot of equipment being used over there that the Reserves were not training on in previous years. We're using Scan Eagle UAVs that aren't even programs of record. So how do you use a Scan Eagle UAV in combat when there was no training for training for Scan Eagle UAVs.

So one thing we've learned is we're changing the way we're training them when we're not mobilized, and by the way, that means we're looking at again not only the right kind and number of units, but what kind of equipment do they have? Because I'll get to the second big point. The third point will have to do with the individuals themselves, is that we normally gave the Reserves what we call TA, Table of Allowance. It is a large fraction of the amount of a table of equipment they need when they mobilize. So if you needed 100 things when you went to war, and even the active duty units only had say 95 of the 100 things because of affordability, well the Reserves would get like 65 to 75 percent of that. The idea was when they were mobilized they would fall in on the active duty gear because as the active duty went to war they left some gear behind, we'd pull stuff out of the War Reserve Stocks, out of the caves of Norway.

Of course if you had a higher density combat gear that stayed in Iraq so there was less stuff left at home and all of the stuff that you needed was in Iraq, they fell in on, in some cases, next to nothing. So having 65 to 75 percent of what you needed, especially if the truck that you were driving was not the same truck that they're driving over there, it got to be a problem.

So that's part of this \$12 billion we're talking about, resetting the whole force, because we have tried very very hard to make sure the Reserve was mirror image to the active force. A Reserve infantry battalion had the same radios, weapons, as an active duty battalion because we plug them normally right in regimental combat team two which is an active duty regiment, and as you've seen, they get in some pretty tough stuff. 3rd Battalion 25th Marines last year; 1st Battalion 25th Marines mobilizing this year. And we owe it to the Marines, we owe it to the

combatant commander, we owe it to their families that they equip and train just like their active duty brethren. And by the way, they look just like their active duty brethren because we don't have any big flag on their shoulder that says Reserve. And they do a great job.

So the third lesson learned has to do with the people. We have a lot of lessons learned about how we initially mobilize them, how we mobilize them at their mobilization centers where they actually get ready to go train. How we maintain contact with the families which are not clustered in Camp LeJeune and Camp Pendleton, but they're up in Northern Minnesota and Idaho and they're in Maine. How do you make sure they know, and how do we take care of them health care wise? Now they get 90 days worth of health care before they're actually mobilized. They get 180 days worth of health care after they demobilize. But also, how do you do this?

It's much easier to do it with an active battalion or squadron. We have a key volunteer network, the spouses are pretty well knitted together. Even when they go home to Pocatello everybody knows where they are. But when they were scattered like popcorn all over the place as the Reserve and Guard are, how do you do that?

So we've got a lot of tremendous lessons learned about that. I think we're doing a very good job but we need to do a better job on that, about how we train them, how we ensure they not only have the right kind of equipment but the right density equipment before they're mobilized, and then we've learned a lot of lessons learned about mobilizing the individuals and the units and taking care of their families.

What I can tell you is the families have not told me that they are angry and disappointed at the Marine Corps but they have high expectations and we're trying to meet them.

Q: The future shape of the maritime platforms off which an expeditionary force would deploy strike me as awfully murky. I don't know what sea basing is yet and I spent all of yesterday up at the Navy League. And the shape of that keeps changing. We're about to build or have started to build the first big deck amphibious ship in a long time without a well deck, and that has some big implications for what the Marines can and can't do.

Lurking underneath this is the fact that you paid for building and operating the large ships with blue dollars and not green dollars. You've got two or three big threshold questions out there on the table to be settled to determine the shape of the sea-based platforms off which Marines will be operating 20 years from now.

A: Let me see if I can do this succinctly. First off, sea basing I think, we make this a lot more complicated than it is. Admiral Mahan would be astonished that we were having this discussion. Not you and I.

Sea basing is simply the ability to operate independently from the sea. It's not building up Lieutenant General Walt Pagonas' iron mountain ashore which is the way we do it. Because even

if--If your NATO ally will not let you go through their country, then you can't use their infrastructure. If your Pakistani ally says you can go through their country but only at night and leave no visible footprint in the day, this kind of constraints your options. Okay?

Q: Not that they would really do that.

A: Well, not that they would. [Laughter].

So I think the combatant commander and the commander in chief of the future needs to use the options that we have before which is to leverage a place where we have dominance, which is control over the sea lines of communication, until it starts to become green water and brown water. Then you worry about diesel submarines and mines and anti-ship missiles and those things. But that's what you've got a Navy for. A Navy's got to protect the Navy so if the Navy can protect the Navy then the Navy can provide a protective shield, sea shield, to protect ships at sea.

All we've got to do is we've got to take what are now the black hulls which is the maritime prepositioned ships, and give them a capability to do what I call trans-load at sea.

Right now they pull up to a harbor like Jubail or Aswhayba, or Diabokir in Turkey, and they can offload a brigade set worth of equipment ready to go right to war. And I mean we can put a brigade together inside of a week. But you need to have hard stands, deep water harbor, 50 ton cranes, a secure port, and time. What if none of that stuff was available? What if you had to go to a country that was like an Archipelago that didn't have a deep water harbor, didn't have any hard stands and 50 ton cranes, but you had to go put part of the brigade ashore? The alternative to that is do it with amphibious assault ships.

There's a finite and declining number of those ships. They're very very capable. But can't we leverage the other ships?

Number one what we've got to do is science and technology projects to--and this is not rocket science, really. To be able to offload a 70,000 ton ship and sea state three is not hard. We just haven't got the technology in hand. The ships don't move very much, by the way, they really don't. The center of gravity of one of those ships is below the water line. Your destroyers may be rocking and rolling, they're barely moving.

But offload them by air, and try to leverage air as much as you can. Not buy a bunch more V-22s, but use the ones that the Congress bought you.

So the no weld deck ship is to leverage Joint Strike Fighters, 53 Echoes and 53 Kilos in V-22s, and it's also a strong signal that maybe the heavier, bulkier equipment ought to go into the MPF future squadron. Then you surface offload it onto high speed vessels, onto air cushioned vehicles, you have to have a way to do the transload. We can have a discussion about that

afterwards. I don't want to turn this into a technology discussion. So continue with the science and technology.

The second thing is continue to modernize the sea shield against submarines, against mines. We have a really big problem with mines, especially as you get to the high water mark, but you've got that problem anyway. You have to deal with that anyway. Amphibious assault ships don't help you solve the mine problem.

The third thing is going to be affordability. If there was an infinite amount of money and time we wouldn't have any problems. so the answer is there may be an infinite amount of time, I'm not going to see it all, but there isn't an infinite amount of money and the CNO Admiral Clark and now CNO Admiral Mullen are really challenged with being able to make sure that we understand the configuration of different classes of ships including the amphibs and the DDXs and the CGXs and particularly the MPF Future. Because the prepositioned ships and the amphibious ships and the combat logistics force ships historically have not been the highest priority of the Navy. Okay. I've got it. I'm not even going to criticize that.

Nuclear submarines, nuclear carriers, surface combatants that provide you sea strike and sea shield are important because if you don't have the sea shield, building the other stuff--On the other hand, building ships that give you 110 nautical mile throw for 155 millimeter round, but not being able to deliver the battalion that it's supposed to support. That's a problem also.

So the CNO Admiral Mullen is working very hard with the Navy and with us and with the folks over in NAVSEA and industry because if we can't get our arms around the cost of all of the platforms in the sea, and that's a challenge--labor costs, material costs, things like steel because the Chinese are building steel things and the world market price of titanium [inaudible] isn't one of those. Then the objective of getting 313 ships, a lot of different kinds of ships to make the sea base work, is going to be more than a little challenging to do.

Having said that, though, the sea base has got to work. Now whether or not sea basing and MTF Future is realized in 2014 or 2020, whether we have one squadron or three squadrons is kind of irrelevant. I think the main thing is, we've already got sea basing. That's why you've got a Navy. That's why you have the Army regional flotillas and the MPF. The question is okay, so why don't we use the sea base instead of demanding that we have a Pakistani port or a, for that matter, Saudi ports that we're no longer using. Jubail and Abdamam are not our major ports of demarcation for this war. There's a message there.

Sorry.

Q: We'll have to leave it there.

Q: Thank you, General.

Q: Thank you all very much.

Q: Hey, General, who was the guy you said was doing the future study?

A: The Capability Assessment Group is Major General Steve Johnson who just got back from being the 2 MEF Forward Commander in Iraq. He's working down at Quantico.

Q: When is that study due?

A: It's going to report to the Commandant this summer, roughly in the June timeframe. The commandant will then determine what he does with the recommendations from that study, and we'll be having a discussion later this year with the Secretary of Defense about this whole issue of 175,000 funded, what the QDR report says, and what are the implications for the 180,000 person Marine Corps at war. What would you have to do to get back down to 175,000 people, as opposed to 175,000 programs?

Q: Is there going to be a briefing on that?

A: Well, I don't know about public, this is not a commission where we're required to. It's kind of internal.

I think the results of it are not going to be compartmentalized or top secret and so to the extent that the OSD and the Marine Corps wants to be able to talk about it I'm sure there will be discussion about it. I'm sure we're going to get questions about it. I understand the GAO already wants to know.

So some of the questions, like yours, I could always ignore. But some of the questions you can't ignore. [Laughter].

Q: Thank you very much.

A: Thank you very much.

END TEXT