

**STATEMENT OF
GENERAL JAMES L. JONES
COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
BEFORE THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
ON
SEPTEMBER 27, 2000
CONCERNING
READINESS**

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Warner, Senator Levin, distinguished members of the Committee; it is my privilege to report on the state of readiness of your Marine Corps. On behalf of Marines and their families, I want to thank the Committee for its continued support. Your efforts reveal not only a commitment to ensuring the common defense, but also a genuine concern for the welfare of our Marines and their families.

Last March, as this Committee considered the state of our armed forces, I testified to the qualities of naval expeditionary forces and the Corps' commitment to the care of our four pillars of readiness: Marines and their families; infrastructure; modernization; and, "legacy systems." We use the phrase "legacy systems" to describe the equipment, aircraft, and weapons systems currently in the inventory of our Marine Air Ground Task Forces. It is an accurate phrase because our "legacy systems" comprise equipment from the past, handed down from our predecessors. I also suggested in March that we consider, and that our Nation should discuss, the

proper level of investment in national security for the 21st century. This is a matter of great importance as its outcome will not only determine our future readiness but, more importantly, the character of global leadership that America will provide.

In response to the Marine Corps testimony cited above, this Committee and the Administration provided some relief for our \$1.5 billion unfunded priorities. Marines and their families are grateful for the Committee's work to support our programs, improve health care, and to provide increased compensation for their hard work — actions that significantly enhance our recruiting and retention efforts. Cumulative efforts this year have allowed us to stabilize but not improve our readiness.

I stand by my testimony of last March. Then, as now, the Corps' focus is its operating forces and our first priority is readiness. As we examine the state of readiness of our armed forces, we should remember that current and future readiness cannot be viewed discretely, and that indicators are not limited to "C" ratings, but include both the recapitalization of the infrastructure on our installations and the level of investment in equipment modernization. The Marine Corps, therefore, assesses its health in terms of its entire organization – the five distinct elements of the Marine Air Ground Task Force: command element, ground combat element, aviation combat element, combat service support element, and bases and stations – in both the near and long term.

Today's Marine Corps is healthy and remains central to the Nation's efforts to promote and protect its many interests. There are currently 172,500 Marines on active duty. Of that total, over 114,000 are in the operating forces and nearly 30,500 are forward deployed, forward based, forward stationed, or deployed for training around the world. Key to our Total Force are the

39,000 men and women of the Marine Corps Reserve. This past year we reestablished the middle tier of our expeditionary warfighting capability, the Marine Expeditionary Brigades, to augment the smaller Marine Expeditionary Unit and to enhance the larger Marine Expeditionary Force. Recently in Greece and Turkey, nearly 4,400 Marines of the 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade participated in the highly successful Operation DYNAMIC MIX. In Kenya, the 1st Marine Expeditionary Brigade participated in NATURAL FIRE/NATIVE FURY, conducting peace support operational training with the defense forces of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. These exercises clearly demonstrated the deployability, versatility, sustainability, and economy of our expeditionary brigades.

Americans can be particularly proud of those Marines, active and reserve, who participate in operations in the Balkans, East Timor, and in the skies over Iraq. Your Marines have performed superbly in a wide variety of other missions to include humanitarian relief efforts in Turkey, and Central and South America. The Corps also provides valuable service here at home as evidenced by our continued support of counter narcotic operations along the Nation's borders and our recent contributions to the fire-fighting operations in Montana. The Corps' Chemical Biological Incident Response Force, a national asset of increasing importance in light of growing asymmetric threats, was recently moved to Indian Head, Maryland to improve responsiveness to the National Capital Region and better position the force for worldwide deployment.

Becoming a Marine is enticing to those young, patriotic men and women who seek challenges and embrace responsibility, which makes the difficult job of our recruiters more manageable. Our recruiters convey a straightforward and appealing message, and for 62 consecutive months the Marine Corps Recruiting Command has successfully achieved its

accession mission in qualitative and quantitative terms. This is a remarkable achievement given the prosperous economy and the daunting task of identifying those young Americans best qualified to be Marines. For their efforts, the Marines of the Marine Corps Recruiting Command will be awarded the Navy Unit Commendation and are deserving of our continued gratitude and support.

Our greatest assets are dedicated, loyal, selfless Marines who are well educated and trained in the ways of the Corps. Their effectiveness is dependent, in large measure, on the support provided by their families. Consequently, our families are vital to any discussion concerning readiness. Our success in building cohesion and loyalty among Marines has contributed to improved retention rates. We are continuing to enjoy lower first term enlisted attrition – approximately a 20% improvement from Fiscal Year 1998 to Fiscal Year 1999. Though we must still work hard to overcome the challenges of re-enlisting and retaining Marines with specialty skills, more junior officers are electing to remain beyond their initial obligation and we are achieving our enlisted retention goals. Marines are choosing to stay on active duty, despite alluring opportunities in the civilian world and the impact of previous force structure reductions that, combined with increased operational commitments, result in a higher personnel tempo.

The ultimate expression of our Nation's will, lives in the difficult decisions we sometimes make to commit our forces to service in harm's way. The Marine Corps draws upon two hundred and twenty-five years of experience and a proven formula to ensure that every Marine is prepared to meet uncertain and varied challenges. We train for the worst-case scenario — high-intensity conflict — and as a result, we are prepared for the full spectrum of missions.

The process of making Marines is governed by a strict adherence to the highest standards and bestows upon the individual many tangible and intangible benefits, not the least of which is the privilege of simply being called “Marine.” Within this process, it is “Mission First, People Always.”

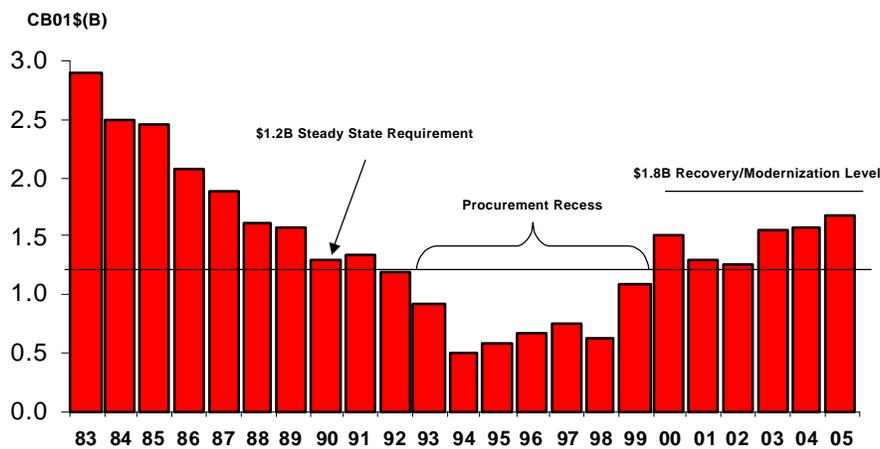
SINCE THE LAST QUADRENNIAL DEFENSE REVIEW

Though the last Quadrennial Defense Review led to tangible improvements, it also resulted in a reduction in our end strength that essentially removed the warfighting “shock absorber” of the Marine Corps. As a result there remains little flexibility in meeting the personnel demands inherent in a robust operational tempo. The dramatic increases in operational requirements coupled with topline constraints over the last several years, have mandated a very reduced rate of modernization. We are, in essence, continuing to maintain our current status at the expense of future readiness. We are at a point where failure to rectify modernization shortfalls can no longer be ignored.

To maximize our resources, the Marine Corps continuously and aggressively pursues internal efficiencies. We are increasing the number of Marines in the operating forces by 2,100. This increase is the result of an effort to identify billets across the Corps that are or will soon be either eliminated or filled by our “civilian Marines,” or by contract personnel. We reorganized our Systems Command, and Depot Maintenance Activity into a Marine Corps Materiel Command, improving our acquisition process and ability to address the challenges of aging equipment. We are exhausting all reasonable means to extend the service life of our legacy

equipment and infrastructure. Though we strive to avoid subjecting our families to substandard quality of life aboard our bases and stations, we have historically adhered to a tradition of emphasizing weapons procurement before investing in our installations. The Marine Corps leads the Department of Defense in converting every dollar into credible combat power. For approximately six percent of the Department’s budget we provide twenty percent of America’s active ground maneuver battalions, twenty percent of the active fighter/attack squadrons, seventeen percent of the attack helicopters, and approximately one third of the active ground combat service support. The balance of my testimony will address the modernization needs of the Marine Corps.

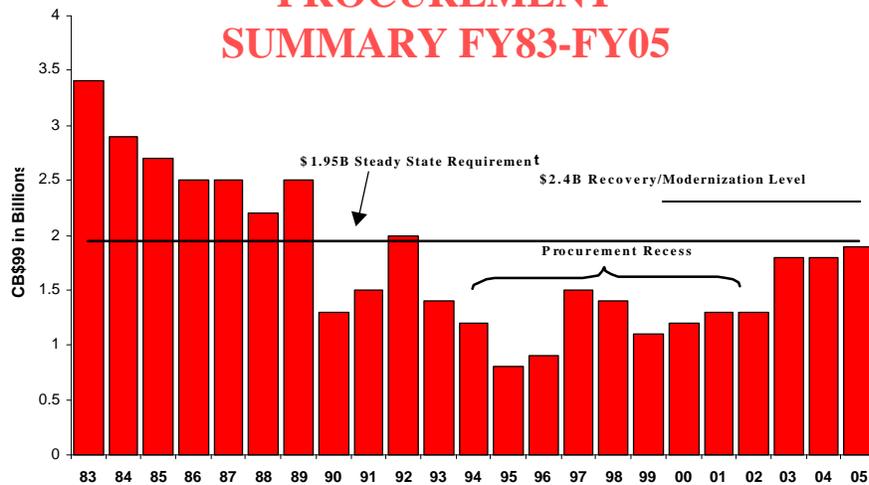
Figure 1
GROUND
PROCUREMENT
SUMMARY FY83-FY05



For the last eight years of the 1990s, the Marine Corps’ ground equipment funding was well below the “steady state” requirement of \$1.2 billion. As Figure 1 shows, this extended period of underfunding has resulted in a recovery rate requirement of \$1.8 billion per year that

we do not reach in the Future Year Defense Plan. I want to express my gratitude to our Secretary of Defense, Secretary of the Navy, this Committee, and the Administration for supporting a budget that has returned us to the sustainment level. However, we critically need your assistance to recover from the cumulative effect of the eight years of procurement underfunding we experienced in the 1990s. The longer recovery is deferred, the longer we must maintain aging legacy systems and confront the risks associated with them. Figure 2 reveals a similar situation with our aviation equipment. While we have a viable, balanced plan to field new and improved aviation platforms (MV-22, JSF, KC-130J, AH-1Z/UH-1Y), the pace at which we will do so is critical. We are currently funded at approximately \$0.5 billion below our historical steady state funding for aircraft procurement. Similar to the under financing of our ground equipment, this has left us with a recovery level of \$2.4 billion. Funding at that level would both accelerate our pace of modernization by moving forward our full fielding of these systems and shorten the period of increased expense for sustainment of our legacy airframes.

Figure 2
AIRCRAFT
PROCUREMENT
SUMMARY FY83-FY05



It is readily apparent that we are fast running out of short-term fixes for budget shortfalls. One-time increases in defense spending are not the solution. A sustained period of increased funding is required in order to ensure the future readiness of your Corps. What the Nation gains as a result of such an investment is essential to its future.

READINESS AND THE MARINE AIR GROUND TASK FORCE

The necessity of maintaining readiness is so deeply ingrained in Marines that for us readiness is truly a way of life. Our expeditionary character is synonymous with the word. For good reason, Marines must be absolutely prepared to respond at a moment's notice to the full gamut of contingencies, from humanitarian operations to small-scale contingencies to major conflict. Our emphasis on training for the worst possible scenarios, guarantees proficiency in smaller conflicts and challenges. The Marine Corps fights as a combined arms team and our readiness depends on the health of each element of the Marine Air Ground Task Force. In terms of readiness, the following reflects the current status of each:

Command Element

The Marine Corps is a perfect example of a Joint Force. Ashore we fight shoulder to shoulder with the Army; we control the skies with the Navy and Air Force; and we come from the sea. We, therefore, aggressively seek joint solutions to our communications and command and control requirements. Technologically advanced weapons systems require joint, secure, technologically interoperable systems to support them. The modernization of the command element requires the fielding of Marine Air Ground Task Force command and control systems

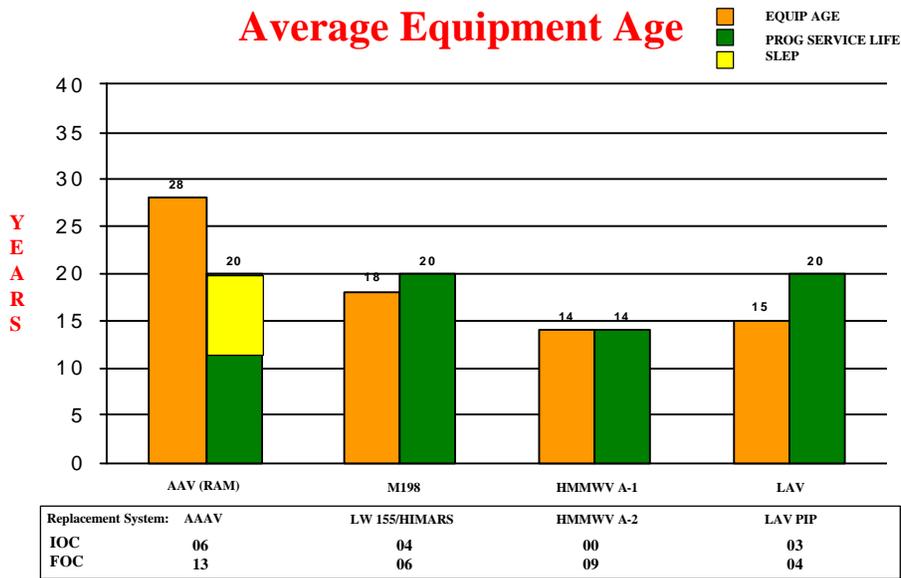
that support joint and combined warfighting. We must modernize and transition several of our existing capabilities to meet the requirements in this environment. This improved capability is critical to allow commanders the ability to manage, direct, and influence an increasingly complex battle space. With your support we will continue to improve our existing systems and drive toward joint solutions.

Ground Combat Element

The primary equipment and weapons systems in our ground combat element are aging and reaching their programmed service life all at the same time as the sample systems show in Figure 3. We have taken maximum advantage of Service Life Extension Programs, which enable us to marginally improve our legacy systems but cannot fulfill our modernization needs. Our reliance on aging equipment negatively impacts our capabilities in many ways: the buildup of combat power ashore is slowed and more predictable, our ability to conduct in-stride breaching of mines and obstacles is limited, and our single artillery piece lacks sufficient range to provide essential fire support to maneuver elements. Additionally, the countless hours of maintenance on our aging ground systems directly impacts the quality of life of our Marines. The replacement of the 17,000-vehicle fleet of HMMWVs with the HMMWV A-2 is a crucial step in our efforts to modernize our ground mobility. Acquisition of major replacement systems such as the Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAAV), the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), and the lightweight 155mm howitzer is only part of the solution; work still

remains to be done to identify successors for much of our aging equipment to include individual and crew-served weapons such as the replacement of nearly 1,800 squad automatic weapons in our infantry battalions this year. Lethality and the ability to maneuver our forces remain cornerstone requirements for the ground combat element.

Figure 3
GROUND COMBAT ELEMENT
Average Equipment Age

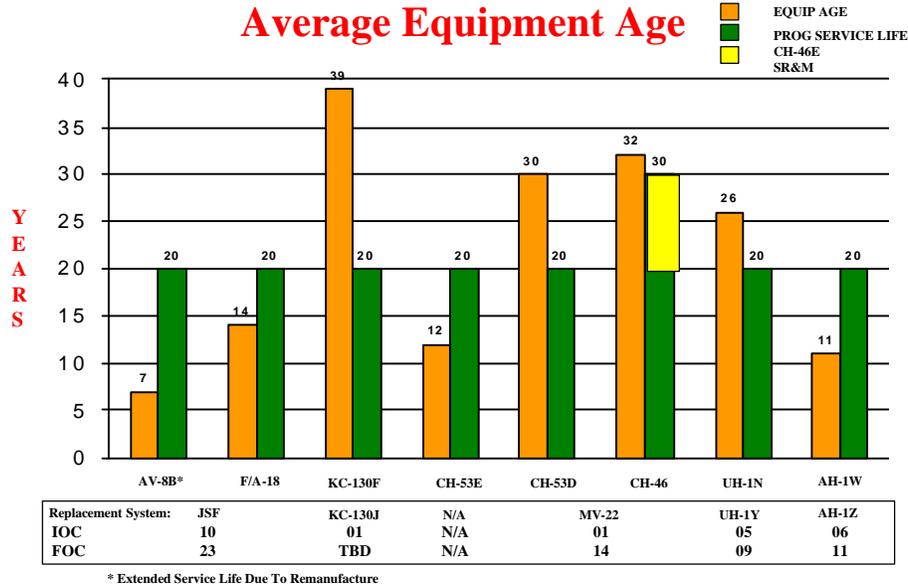


Aviation Combat Element

Many of our aircraft are approaching block obsolescence. In fact, the majority of our primary rotary-wing airframes are over twenty-five years old. Figure 4 reveals that the majority of our key aviation equipment is older than the Marines who use it. When our first KC-130F rolled off the assembly line, President Kennedy was beginning his first year as the Commander-in-Chief, thus underscoring the importance of the KC-130J. Similarly our CH-46E, an off the shelf platform, averages over thirty years old — some of our younger pilots are flying the exact same aircraft that their fathers flew. While we are now receiving the MV-22, their rate of production and delivery is neither economical nor efficient, and thus prolongs the retirement of the CH-46E. The Short Take Off Vertical Landing Joint Strike Fighter, the replacement for our F/A-18C/D Hornets and AV-8B Harriers, is scheduled to begin delivery in 2008 with an initial operational capability in 2010 — we must hold the line on this.

Our success in keeping Marine Corps aircraft safe and operational is due to a constant and tremendous maintenance effort. While the recent grounding of four different types of aircraft was primarily a flight safety issue, increasing maintenance challenges do influence our level of readiness. Since 1995, the direct maintenance man-hours per hour of flight increased by 33% and there has been a 58% increase in our "cannibalization" rate. During the same time period the full mission capable rate, though still within acceptable parameters, has decreased by 9.4% across the force. These statistics represent data for all Marine Corps aircraft and show a declining level of readiness.

Figure 4
AVIATION COMBAT ELEMENT
Average Equipment Age



Combat Service Support Element

Figure 5 illustrates that the equipment used in our combat service support element is also aging similar to that of the other elements of the Marine Air Ground Task Force. Despite the importance of combat service support to the flexibility and responsiveness of our forces, we continue to rely on aged vehicles, trucks, and materiel handling equipment that should be replaced. Acquisition of the Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement (MTVR), a cost-effective replacement for our existing tactical trucks, and the Hercules M88A-2 Recovery Vehicle, a successor to our tank retriever, are crucial steps in our efforts to modernize. We recognize that new vehicles and equipment will not materially improve our combat service capabilities without attendant improvements in doctrine, organization, and processes. Consequently, we have

developed a pioneering Integrated Logistics Concept to underwrite our combat service support capability.

Figure 5
COMBAT SERVICE SUPPORT ELEMENT
Average Equipment Age



Bases and Stations

The challenges of improving our infrastructure are equally significant but, with your assistance, we have made some progress. Our 17 major bases and stations — the fifth element of the Marine Air Ground Task Force — must provide both unparalleled training facilities, as well as a high standard of quality of life for our Marines and their families. We are developing a long-range plan that will guide our strategy for our infrastructure through the year 2020. Our intent is to have an infrastructure that minimizes redundancy, maximizes efficiency, is cost-effective, environmentally sound, and capable of supporting the weapons systems and operational concepts we are developing. With regard to family housing, our goal is the elimination of inadequate units by Fiscal Year 2010. While making progress in the replacement

of family units, we continue to have a deficit of approximately 10,000 units. Our Backlog of Maintenance and Repair has been arrested, but it still amounts to over \$600 million. Although this is a reduction from last October, it is not close to our intended goal of \$100 million by Fiscal Year 2010.

As you know, restoration of our deteriorating infrastructure is not limited to reducing our Backlog of Maintenance and Repair, but includes Military Construction (MILCON) as well. Budget limitations force us to make hard choices that result in funding only our most critical construction requirements. Although we have reduced our MILCON replacement cycle to approximately 100 years, it is still twice the industry standard.

In addition to the challenges just described, we must be vigilant to protect our bases and stations against the many forms of encroachment that threaten to curtail our operations. Urban growth and development near our installations inevitably require coordination and compromise with many elements of the civilian sector concerning issues such as land use and environmental stewardship. Despite this pressure, we remain good neighbors and, in the main, enjoy excellent civil-military relations. We work diligently to accommodate the demands of adjoining communities without degrading training and the mission effectiveness of our bases and stations. However, we anticipate that encroachment issues will increasingly affect readiness in the years ahead. We will, therefore, continue to need your support to ensure that encroachment issues are controlled as these challenges increase in frequency, complexity, and cost.

Finally, our greatest concern in the area of modernization is not a lack of planned replacement systems; rather, it is the pace at which the replacements will be fielded. Figures 3-5 identify the year we attain Initial Operational Capability (IOC), and Full Operational Capability (FOC), for replacements for some of our aging equipment. Key is FOC, which is the time at

which the replacement system will be fully fielded. The FOC for the AAV, the replacement for our AAV is Fiscal Year 2013; the FOC for HMMWV A-2 is Fiscal Year 2009; and the MV-22 Osprey, replacement for our Vietnam War era CH-46E and CH-53D, will not be fully fielded until Fiscal Year 2014. FOC for the Joint Strike Fighter, the replacement for the AV-8B and the F/A-18C/D, is Fiscal Year 2023. Acceleration of the pace of modernization is absolutely essential to our readiness and to the timely improvement of our capabilities.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Despite the many challenges that confront us, the Marine Corps, drawing upon our two hundred and twenty-five years of expeditionary tradition, is primed for the future. We constantly evolve our warfighting capability through the continuous development of new tactics, doctrine, and equipment. On a bright note, with your support, we are on a modernization track that in 2008 will result in the initial convergence of a number of major programs. If realized, this will profoundly modernize the Corps and dramatically enhance our strategic agility, operational reach, and tactical flexibility. In the very near future, our Marines will benefit from the revolutionary MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft and the Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAAV). Along with the Landing Craft, Air Cushion (LCAC), the MV-22 and AAV will allow the realization of the capabilities required for future Marine Air Ground Task Force operations. We are also prepared to further the capabilities of our ground combat element by fielding a new generation of modern ground equipment to include the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System and the lightweight 155mm howitzer. With your support, our aviation combat element will receive the Short Take Off Vertical Landing version of the Joint Strike Fighter — a truly joint weapons system that can be operated from expeditionary airfields, amphibious ships,

and aircraft carriers. Furthermore, we are ready to improve our combat service support element with systems like the Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement and Hercules Recovery Vehicle.

Fully exploiting the tremendous potential of equipment modernization and improvements to infrastructure will hinge, in part, on the achievement of a proper level of amphibious lift. Our amphibious lift requirement is well defined. The Department of the Navy Lift Study and Mobility Requirements Studies recognize a 3.0 Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) equivalent amphibious lift capability as necessary to allow us to satisfy all forward presence requirements while maintaining the flexibility to deal with the unexpected. The 2001-2006 Defense Planning Guidance establishes a fiscally constrained amphibious force to support 2.5 MEB equivalents, equating to 12 Amphibious Ready Groups with a total of 36 ships (twelve big deck LHDs and LHAs, twelve LSD 41/49s, and soon with your help, twelve LPD-17s).

Today's Navy and Marine Corps team relies on some amphibious ships that are reaching the end of their service life. A remedy is easily attainable. The twelve-ship LPD-17 class will replace four aging classes of ships and provide increased capabilities and greater amphibious lift. As our LHAs approach the end of their service life in 2011, we should improve the capabilities of our big deck amphibious ships by using the LHD-8 as a transition ship to an LHA replacement. Another critical component of our strategic lift capability is the Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF). However, our MPF ship leases will expire soon and we need the resources to replace these cost effective and proven strategic assets. With your help we will achieve our concept for MPF Future that will provide a previously unachieved degree of strategic agility. Furthermore, we believe we should purchase, by 2004, our important prepositioning facility in Blount Island, Florida. With the continued support of Congress these goals will become reality.

Proper investment in modernization is necessary to overcome the logistical challenges of ship-to-shore movement and deficiencies in Naval Surface Fire Support and mine countermeasures. We need the Landing Craft, Air Cushion (LCAC) service life extension program to ensure that LCACs continue to provide over-the-horizon logistical support long past their 15-20 year service life. The success of future amphibious operations depends on the fire support that the DD-21 Land-Attack Destroyer will eventually provide. Finally, we must exploit technological advances to improve our surf zone, shallow water, and very shallow water mine countermeasure capabilities.

The state of our infrastructure, like the legacy systems described above, affects the quality of life of our Marines and their families. It does and will continue to influence training and retention – another illustration of the interconnected nature of readiness factors. Though we recruit Marines, we retain families and adequate infrastructure is a key to the survival of our “all recruited force.”

Thanks to a Corps-wide commitment to warfighting, innovation, and experimentation, the Marine Corps is able to execute its mission. It will take the continued support of this Committee and Congress, however, to ensure that we remain ready. Capitalizing on the opportunities before us and achieving the promise of tomorrow is contingent upon an appropriate level of investment. As the world’s wealthiest Nation, in the midst of unprecedented economic growth, we have the means to ensure our security and the prosperity for future generations of Americans. We also have to continue our commitment to global leadership. We must seize this opportunity by prudently adjusting our investments to ensure the vitality and modernization of our force.

CONCLUSION

Our ascendancy to superpower status — militarily, culturally, technologically, diplomatically, and economically — during the 20th century is due, in no small part, to the valiant accomplishments of those who wore the Nation's uniforms during the emergence of our national identity. I agree with those who say that readiness, in and of itself, is not the issue. What will be our national purpose, commitment, and strategy for the next century? Are we committed to maintaining forces that are capable of carrying out this strategy? I believe that our citizens demand that we maintain the means to fulfill our long-term global leadership role and continue to achieve our goals to ensure our security, prosperity, and peaceful global development.

In essence, a sustained investment in national security is an investment to insure our way of life. It directly contributes to stability, the spread of democracy, growth of the world economy, and achievement of our multiple national security objectives. It is also, fundamentally, an insurance investment that must be made today to be effective tomorrow. Prudent people invest in insurance to offset the uncertainty of the future; long before a need arises that requires the insurer to indemnify. Similarly, we must not “under insure” our national security. Future contingencies will likely not permit time to overcome the consequences of miscalculation.

Earlier this year, at the request of Congress, I identified an approximately \$1.5 billion requirement for unfunded priorities for your Marine Corps. These unfunded priorities addressed critical elements across the Corps: ground equipment, aviation modernization, and infrastructure support. The Congress was instrumental in financing some of these shortfalls. While our future projections clearly indicate improving trends, my concern remains the pace at which we modernize. In assessing the list of unfunded priorities that I provided to the Congress this past

spring, I believe that \$1.5 billion still accurately portrays our highest priority unfunded requirements. Such an investment would address the warfighting modernization requirements of the Marine Corps for the first part of the 21st century and, in so doing, would dramatically enhance the level of readiness and capabilities of all five elements of the Marine Air Ground Task Force. With your consistent support we can achieve our goals and provide the young Marines of today a Corps that, by 2008, will be well on the road to complete modernization.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this important issue.