

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL
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ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**STATEMENT OF
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UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
COMMANDING GENERAL, MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON
BEFORE THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS AND MANAGEMENT SUPPORT
ON
20 MARCH 2001
CONCERNING
ENCROACHMENT**

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INTRODUCTION

Chairman Inhofe, Senator Akaka, and distinguished members of the Committee, it is my privilege to report on the effect encroachment is having on the readiness of your Marine Corps. On behalf of the Marine Corps, 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.

The tried and tested framework of the Marine Corps for 50 years has been the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF). The MAGTF is a flexible and mobile integration of air and ground forces, with supporting logistics and state-of-the-art command and control that has a proven rapid response capability. Its closely integrated elements, in partnership with the Navy, achieve the potent and battle-proven concept of Combined Arms Operations. It is how we must train; how we will go to war.

The MAGTF trains and deploys as a part of a Navy-Marine Corps team, with the Amphibious Ready and Carrier Battle Groups. The elements of these forward deployed naval forces need realistic and challenging training to effectively function as an integrated and cohesive team. MAGTF training must occur prior to deployment to be effective. Your Marines and Sailors must be ready for employment across the spectrum of conflict when they deploy.

Your Marines' success on the battlefield depends on having assured access to training ranges and installations on the land, sea, air and the communications spectrums. However, our ability to train effectively is being slowly eroded by encroachment on many fronts.

Urbanization, increasing environmental restrictions; competition with civilian demands for airspace, land, sea space, and radio frequencies threaten the long-term, sustained use of Marine Corps bases and ranges. Encroachment is a serious and growing challenge. Solutions are

possible--we can achieve balance between military readiness, encroachment pressures, and stewardship responsibilities.

ISSUES AND TRENDS

Encroachment on our installations comes in many forms, but generally falls within three categories: environmental regulation, community complaints about noise from military activities, and attempts by civilian authorities to use air, land, sea and the communication spectrum dedicated to military activities. In short, the root cause of encroachment is increasing population and urbanization pressures around our bases, stations, and ranges.

While encroachment inexorably shrinks our training ranges, the military is faced with the need to introduce and train with new weapons systems possessing increased stand-off, survivability, and lethality capabilities. The training demand on our bases is already high, because there are fewer training facilities than in the past, partly due to base closures and realignments around the nation and overseas. Our bases and their tenant forces have experienced both successes and failures in managing encroachment. We'd like to share a few of those with you.

Endangered Species

Military lands provide excellent habitat for over 300 federally listed threatened or endangered species that must be protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Department of Defense is the third largest federal landholder, yet is by far the holder of the greatest known biodiversity on a per acre basis of all federal agencies. Many of our installations have become the only large undeveloped areas remaining in urban areas where private development continues unabated. The lands remain undeveloped in order to conduct realistic training to assure readiness. The undeveloped areas on our installations support so many

endangered species because we are very attentive land managers stemming from the Marine Corps' decades-long recognition that we must be good stewards of our training lands, to ensure they are available to train future generations of Marines. Our stewardship commitment predates the Endangered Species Act. We take pride in our care for these resources and, in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, have devised means to protect them while meeting our readiness requirements.

Marine Corps Base (MCB) Camp Lejeune, in North Carolina, has met our training needs while protecting the nine endangered species on the base; including two species of sea turtles and the red-cockaded woodpecker. During the May through October sea turtle nesting season, eggs are removed from a one-mile stretch of Onslow Beach daily and placed in an incubator. The hatched turtles are later released. This protects these endangered species while attempting to limit the disruption to expeditionary amphibious operations. *MCB Camp Lejeune* also supports the only increasing coastal population of the red-cockaded woodpecker. Initially about 10% of the base had training restrictions designed to protect this species during its April through September nesting season. We managed the forests to improve the woodpecker's habitat, dispersing nesting locations away from primary maneuver areas. Now, only about 1% of the base has training restrictions due to the red-cockaded woodpecker. In the last three years, the species population increased from 35 nesting clusters to 53, an increase unmatched by any other land manager in eastern North Carolina. We are successful because of the willingness of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, State of North Carolina, academia, and environmental advocacy groups to work in partnership with us on the management of the endangered species at *MCB Camp Lejeune*.

Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California's populations of endangered species increased from 10 in 1994 to 17 today. Last year, approximately 70,000 acres of *Camp Pendleton's* 125,000 acres were proposed as critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act. To a significant degree, the gnatcatcher, fairy shrimp and arroyo toad critical habitat proposals overlapped, threatening to blanket *Camp Pendleton* with critical habitat and associated training restrictions. Recognizing the potential impact to the combat readiness of units training and deploying from *Camp Pendleton*, the Marine Corps and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service worked together in an effort to resolve the situation. Ultimately the Base was excluded from critical habitat designation for most of the species. The Fish and Wildlife Service determined that the benefits of exclusion outweighed the benefits of designation, and also noted that we are currently preparing an Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan, as required under the 1997 Sikes Act.

Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar, California, supports ten endangered species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in response to court orders, proposed designating critical habitat for two species on about 65% of the station's area--including the runways and supporting aviation facilities. Clearly, such designation would have had strong readiness implications. We developed an Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan that established a framework to protect and preserve the station's endangered species, guaranteed the plan would be implemented, and defined measures to judge the plan's effectiveness. Most importantly, the plan made military readiness activities and endangered species protection mutually compatible. In their final rule, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that lands on *MCAS Miramar* are not critical habitat for these species.

The Service's decision not to designate *Camp Pendleton* and *Miramar* lands as critical habitat is the subject of litigation brought against the Fish and Wildlife Service by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), and by a building industry association. The NRDC lawsuit demands that *Miramar* and *Camp Pendleton* lands be designated as critical habitat. If the plaintiffs prevail, the Fish and Wildlife Service may be compelled to designate critical habitat at *MCAS Miramar* and *MCB Camp Pendleton* even though our plans meet the need to protect endangered and threatened species.

Air Quality

Clean Air Act (CAA) visibility or nuisance-based "opacity" regulations can create challenges for the military during training operations that generate dust (from vehicular maneuvers) or smoke (from fog oil, smoke, or other obscurants) and temporarily impair visibility. For example, previous regulations in California and local air quality districts severely restricted and generally prohibited this necessary military training. The Marine Corps and the other military services overcame this issue by obtaining a statutory exemption under California law that allows the use of obscurants for training at military ranges in California.

The General Conformity Rule under the Federal Clean Air Act (CAA) also has significant potential to impact the basing of new weapons systems, new training activities, or significant changes in existing activities, at military ranges located in CAA nonattainment areas. The statute and the rule preclude any federal action or activity in such areas that do not "conform" to the State Implementation Plan (SIP) for the area. In these air quality areas, if the emissions from a new activity or significant change in current activities exceed the specified regulatory thresholds, the entire increase must be fully "offset" or the proposed action must be changed to reduce emissions. If the increase cannot be fully offset by reductions in emissions

elsewhere at the installation, emission reduction credits, or the State's agreement to revise its SIP emissions budget to accommodate the increase, the action is prohibited by the CAA and cannot proceed. In Southern California, the emission credit market is extremely limited and competitive.

Urbanization

Most encroachment issues result from population growth and urbanization. Urban sprawl is up against our installations and training areas, which were once remotely located. Methods for mitigating noise or other factors required by environmental regulations often deny the Marines realistic training.

Beaufort County is the fastest growing county in South Carolina and one of the fastest growing in the nation. *MCAS Beaufort* was annexed by the city of Beaufort. The action allows the city to exert influence on land use guidelines and urban growth on land surrounding the air station. The city appears intent on opening hundreds of acres of farmland around the air station for urban growth, which will increase the number of noise complaints regarding air station activities. Noise impacts from training are already an issue with the surrounding communities.

Marine Corps Base Quantico's border is facing encroachment due to a Western Transportation Corridor (WTC) Study, the purpose of which is to solve transportation needs in response to rapid urban growth. This proposed WTC in Stafford County, Virginia is another example of surrounding urban sprawl impacting an installation.

Air Space

Increased growth across the nation has been followed by a significant rise in civilian air traffic. Many of our bases and training areas are in the direct path of flight corridors between large urban centers. We have four major bases and air stations located directly along the Eastern

Corridor and five in Southern California are in the approaches to Los Angeles International Airport, one of the busiest airspaces in the world.

Special Use Airspace (SUA) is a dimension required for effective training. It provides access to the ranges, segregation from civil aircraft operations, and maneuvering space for performing various ordnance delivery tactics. An air-to-ground range cannot exist without SUA. Creation of an additional SUA associated with the air-to-ground target ranges BT-9/11 in Pamlico Sound, North Carolina is required to achieve realistic training for Marine Corps aircraft. This additional airspace includes the Core and Mattamuskeet Military Operating Areas (MOA's), which when combined with the existing restricted airspace over the target ranges will provide one of the best tactical training complexes on the east coast. A MOA does not prohibit civilian aircraft from operating within its boundaries. The desired result of a MOA is to provide a means by which military and nonparticipating civilian aircraft are allowed to coexist in airspace with as few constraints as practicable. Efforts to obtain this additional airspace have been pursued for more than 12 years. A recent modification to the Marine Corps's original proposal includes raising the floor of the MOAs from 500 to 3000 feet Above Ground Level (AGL) to lessen the impacts of noise on the areas below. Discussions are also continuing with the National Park Service in an attempt to address their concerns for maintaining the "natural quiet" on the nearby outer banks area of eastern North Carolina. Approval of this additional airspace is crucial to accommodate future training requirements, including deployment of standoff weapons.

Military Noise

Another concern of our civilian neighbors, with the onslaught of urban growth, is the noise created by our weapons systems and equipment – primarily helicopters, jets and artillery. This noise is not viewed by all as the "sound of freedom". *MCB Camp Lejeune* has received

noise complaints about tank gunnery activities in the Greater Sandy Run Area. Prior to construction of these ranges, units had to travel to other military installations at great expense to satisfy training standards and prepare for deployments. Now that these new ranges are operational, the surrounding community has placed great pressure on the Base to close them as a means to reduce noise complaints. A recent letter from the Onslow County Commissioners asked the Marine Corps to close the recently completed \$6.5M Combat Vehicle Crew Qualification Range. *Camp Lejeune* monitors noise levels at the active range and temporarily ceases live fire training when noise levels at homes in the surrounding area exceeds acceptable levels. Two recently approved housing developments are currently under construction within 2500 meters of two of the new Greater Sandy Run Area ranges, which will compound the noise complaint problem.

Complaints as a result of noise from military aircraft operations are becoming increasingly more emotional and political. Airborne noise potentially impacts installations, training ranges, SUA, and low-level training routes. Communities surrounding military airfields are principally exposed to noise resulting from aircraft takeoff and landing. Our installations develop Compatible Use Zone studies to identify appropriate land uses for areas immediately surrounding the installation. We then provide these studies to the local land use planning authorities, and request that they consider them when developing zoning ordinances. This process is only effective when it receives the support of the local planning authorities. Absent appropriate zoning restrictions, buffer land acquisition is our sole remedy to legitimate noise complaints

Unexploded Ordnance

The application of environmental statutes to unexploded ordnance (UXO) and munitions on active ranges could impact our ability to train Marines. Such statutes are: the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), the Clean Water Act (CWA), and the Safe Drinking Water Act (SWDA). Their application could shut down or disrupt live-fire training.

Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, aviation units have increased their use of Bombing Target-9/11, in Pamlico Sound, to make up for the temporary loss of training available at Vieques. Those efforts have been met by government agency and local resistance. The Marine Corps and Navy are actively engaging the state regulators on these issues and believe we will develop a satisfactory solution.

Frequency Encroachment

New improvements in telecommunications have placed pressure on the portions of the radio frequency electromagnetic spectrum used by the Marine Corps. This pressure is in the form of requests for portions of the spectrum for civilian activities and from interference to both civilian and military communications. This form of encroachment is tentatively scheduled to be briefed at another hearing, but you should know that it has the potential to adversely impact the command and control capabilities of our Operating Forces, bases, and installations.

IMPACT ON READINESS

Our bases are the platforms where we train our Marines, and from which we launch our MAGTFs. We need the sea, land, and air and the flexibility to use them. We would like to take this opportunity to cover with you some of the training challenges your Marines face on a daily basis as a result of encroachment.

Fundamental to the success of Marine Corps operations are the concepts of expeditionary maneuver warfare and combined arms. The employment of naval surface fires, air, artillery, mortar, and direct fire weapons in conjunction with maneuver is essential to the effectiveness of the MAGTF. The most significant effect is the restriction on our MAGTFs, in partnership with the Navy, to train as a single, cohesive entity. They are forced to train piecemeal, separated by time and distance; often never “tying it all together” prior to deploying.

No where is this more evident than at *MCB Camp Lejeune* following the 1999 restrictions on training on *Vieques Island* Puerto Rico-- a vital training facility used to ensure the readiness of deploying Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs) and their Amphibious Ready Groups (ARGs). Since the range facility was closed in 1999, the East Coast ARG/MEUs have been unable to conduct a live-fire Supporting Arms Coordination Exercise due to the lack of live-fire naval surface fire support (NSFS). Without the Vieques training, the MEU loses the opportunity to coordinate live-fire NSFS, an important piece of the integration package between the Carrier Battle Group (CVBG), Amphibious Squadron, and MEU. The January 31, 2000 Presidential Directive limits training on Vieques to inert ordnance. The 22d MEU did train on Vieques in October 2000 with inert ordnance to include inert artillery and mortars but, it was not the same. Live-fire training is essential to maintaining the readiness of Navy and Marine Corps forces.

Vieques is the only location on the East Coast that can support live fire training and maneuver on the scale necessary to maintain MAGTF combat readiness. MEUs have resorted to sending their NSFS personnel to train in Scotland with CVBGs enroute to the Mediterranean without the benefit of coordinating the training and application of fires with the rest of the ARG and MEU. As a result, ARGs and MEUs train in an environment that does not support combined arms operations prior to deployment.

MCB Camp Lejeune is the only location available for East Coast Marine Corps units to conduct amphibious operations. Sensitive habitat for all nine endangered species occupies five percent of the base's training area. Though, at a glance, this appears to be insignificant, it is not the amount of area that is of concern, it is the locations. The beach is also sensitive habitat. During nesting season, units are restricted to administrative offloads and traversing narrow lanes that have been hand-cleared of turtle eggs. Once off the beach, the remaining forms of sensitive habitat are astride roads leading to training and maneuver areas, and live-fire ranges. This hinders the ability of units to maneuver their vehicles in a tactical and realistic fashion. Because of the artificialities and canalization created by these restrictions, the advantages gained by force-on-force or freeplay exercises are greatly degraded. The limits to unrestricted movement and freeplay result in an inability to properly develop the decision-making skills of leaders at all levels, most severely the junior leadership, the future leaders of your Corps. Additionally, live-fire attacks with air, artillery and mortars in support of maneuvering forces cannot be conducted aboard *MCB Camp Lejeune*. These training restrictions and hindrances on *Vieques* and *Camp Lejeune* prevent our East Coast MAGTFs from the opportunity conducting realistic, meaningful training in combined arms and amphibious operations prior to deployment.

While simulation can be used to enhance combat performance, it cannot replicate or replace live fire. Technology has yet to produce a mechanism to simulate the complex, end-to-end series of procedures associated with preparing and launching live weapons, then assessing the results in a training environment. Likewise, the handling and use of live ammunition, with the resultant psychological impact cannot be replicated by simulation. This holds true for the training of the individual Marine as well as the entire MAGTF.

Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton is the Marine Corps' most complete amphibious training base. Yet the doctrinal landing of a Regimental Landing Team is not possible. Even Battalion Landing Team-sized landings are severely limited. Beach access is the major factor limiting these activities. Access to and across our beaches is key to the conduct of our Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare. *MCB Camp Pendleton* has approximately 17 miles of beach, yet there is only a little more than 1 mile of unrestricted access with usable exit points. Movement on the beaches and adjacent inland terrain is restricted due to endangered species concerns and the presence of a State Parks, Interstate 5, and the San Onofre Nuclear Generation Plant on our land. These restrictions have resulted in only three usable exit points off the beach. These exit points, which are under I-5 and the paralleling railway, completely prohibit any tactical movement off the beach and require units to abandon realistic training and exit the beach in an administrative, non-tactical fashion. During March 2000, the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, while conducting their Special Operations Capable Certification prior to deployment, was limited to only 500 yards of Red Beach because it was breeding season for the California Least Tern. Units coming ashore on Landing Craft Air Cushion's (LCACs) administratively offloaded at the LCAC facility, before moving inland to continue the exercise. Logistical support employing helicopters with external loads was restricted to the administrative delivery of cargo seaward of I-5 and the railway, because of restrictions on overflying these two manmade features that traverse the entire length of Camp Pendleton's coastline.

Inland training restrictions continue to apply pressure on commanders at all levels to come up with innovative, realistic training that complies with environmental limitations. Off-road vehicular movement is seasonally restricted in various areas because of either breeding and nesting seasons of endangered species or simply because the seasonal appearance of a vernal

pool. Environmental restrictions against digging have limited the placement of artillery and mortar firing positions. The placement of these positions is based solely on environmental factors, which prohibits the training experience of Marines learning how to position their units based on the tactical situation.

San Clemente Island offers the West Coast MEUs their only opportunity to coordinate naval gunfire, air, artillery, and mortars. It does not permit the coordination of fires with maneuver. Maneuver is limited because of the presence of the night lizard. This range is also home to an endangered population of the loggerhead shrike. During the bird's breeding season from February to July, our training is limited to three days a week. The use of live ordnance is restricted from May to November, because of the fire season. The use of inert ordnance is not practical, because the Marine Corps' inventory for artillery and mortars is limited.

MAGTF Training Center at 29 Palms is located in California's Mohave Desert. It has few encroachment concerns and is the only site Marine units have to exercise the live fire and maneuver capabilities of the entire MAGTF. *29 Palms* does not, however, provide for amphibious training. *Camp Pendleton* units are increasingly using *29 Palms* to avoid their Base's training restrictions. The increased competition between resident units, units training for the ten annual live fire Combined Arms Exercises, and units from *Camp Pendleton*, puts training time and space at a premium. Deploying to train at *29 Palms* has its drawbacks. Firstly, it is expensive. 11th Marine Regiment, from *Camp Pendleton*, saved over \$100,000 by conducting their annual Fall Firing Exercise at *Camp Pendleton* and *29 Palms* rather than solely at *29 Palms*. The down side was that the exercise was greatly reduced in size to accommodate the restrictions at *Camp Pendleton*. Secondly, deploying to *29 Palms* increases deployment tempo for Marines. *29 Palms* is not a panacea to the restrictions resident at *Camp Pendleton*.

MCB Kaneohe Bay in Hawaii has its own encroachment challenges. The Army's Makua Range is the only live fire range on Oahu capable of supporting company maneuver supported by mortars and attack helicopters. The range has been closed since September 1998, due to endangered species and archeological compliance issues. Without this range, Marines must deploy to the Pohakuloa Training Area (PTA) on the big island of Hawaii. Though workable, this solution has drawbacks. Ground unit maneuver and close air support or indirect fire are possible, but cannot be done simultaneously. It is also not cost effective to deploy Marines to the PTA and this option creates an additional deployment tempo burden. The Marine Corps wholeheartedly supports the Army's environmental analysis efforts to reopen the range.

MCAS Yuma in Arizona is the home of our Aviation Weapons Tactics School, which uses air-to-ground ranges, such as the Chocolate Mountains aerial gunnery range to the West and the Goldwater air-to-ground range to the East. The Goldwater Range provides habitat for the Sonoran Pronghorn Antelope. The Marine Corps completed an Environmental Impact Statement in 1997 evaluating our aviation impacts on this and other sensitive biological resources. A recent court decision requires the Marine Corps to prepare a revised cumulative impacts analysis of military air operation impacts on the species. The same court decision requires the Fish & Wildlife Service to reevaluate the biological opinion, which allows aviation operations that may affect the species. This reevaluation may result in further restrictions in air operations. Our current practice is to "wave off" flights when the animals are in the impact area. The target areas in the Chocolate Mountains aerial gunnery range are surrounded by critical habitat for turtles and cannot be relocated due to noise concerns from adjacent communities. The continuous impacts from encroachment have reduced the Chocolate Mountains air-to-ground impact zone, which was once larger than *MCB Camp Pendleton*, to an area less than one-tenth its original size. The

training value of these ranges is reduced, because target acquisition training becomes less challenging as the acquisition area becomes smaller and the targets fewer.

These encroachment limitations debilitate our MAGTF training. We are training a generation of Marines who will have less experience in the intricacies of combat operations. If encroachment continues, many of today's junior leaders may initially face the full challenges of combat not during training, but during conflict.

We have shown you some of the successes and failures your Marines experience on a daily basis while facing these challenging issues. We would now like to propose some possible solutions, which could result in a balanced approach to meeting the needs of the Marine Corps, the community, and the environment.

STRATEGIES

Just as encroachment takes multiple forms, the solutions to encroachment management are many. The Marine Corps encroachment management strategy is three fold: public outreach and engagement, legislative clarification, and dedication of surrounding undeveloped land as permanent natural areas.

It is in our best interests to reach outside the fence and actively engage our neighbors, educate them on our mission and operations in support of readiness, work to understand their concerns, and develop working relationships built on respect to limit or prevent encroachment pressures. We are engaging encroachment issues at all levels of government. Some encroachment issues affect more than one installation. Cross service coordination is often appropriate for resolving issues. One example of engagement at the regional level is the efforts to initiate constructive dialog with state governments such as California's Defense Retention and

Conversion Council. The Marine Corps can articulate recommendations for the state to reduce encroachments, while improving the viability of the installations, ranges, and training areas.

Recently, we met with members of the Endangered Species Coalition, an umbrella organization consisting of environmental advocacy groups concerned about endangered species. Many of the coalition's members have sued the Marine Corps over environmental issues. However, they understand that for many ecosystems, military lands are the only undeveloped lands left. Though they don't always agree with our activities due to their endangered species concerns, they are impressed with our stewardship record. They are interested in forming a strategic alliance with us to help keep undeveloped lands in their natural state. Achieving this mutually beneficial goal will limit additional urbanization around our installations. It also builds support for our military land use and stewardship efforts, while reducing friction and litigation.

This Congress will re-evaluate many laws governing environmental protection. The Marine Corps is not asking for a rollback of these laws. The Marine Corps' commitment to protecting our Nation also extends to protecting our natural resources. We have been innovative in meeting our compliance requirements, while meeting our readiness needs. We can, and are doing much to protect the environment. However, we cannot be expected to shoulder a disproportionate share of environmental protection and still meet our readiness requirements. We ask that you consider the unique nature of military activities when developing or reauthorizing these laws. Providing acknowledgement of the need to consider national security issues in development and implementation of regulations will also benefit the regulatory community by allowing them the flexibility to weigh the value of good stewardship offered through our land management practices in their enforcement of laws and regulations.

The Marine Corps needs the land around its installations to remain undeveloped. Our bases and ranges were largely acquired during the 1940's and 1950's. At that time, they were "sized" to fit the weapons systems of the day. They were also out in the middle of nowhere. The footprints of our weapons systems have become bigger, and the far-off cities have become next-door neighbors. Our installation boundaries, though, have remained the same, and in some cases have been reduced. The Marine Corps will need to acquire additional land around some of its installations and ranges to protect them from additional urbanization pressures.

CONCLUSION

Today's world situation, combined with our mandate to be a force in readiness, highlights the need for a properly trained Marine Corps. The Corps will continue to focus its efforts on the strength of its Marine Air Ground Task Forces. However, to meet tomorrow's challenges and maintain your expeditionary force in readiness, will require the ability to train Marines during peace the way we will fight in war.

We have spoken today about the need for fundamental recognition of our unique mission and military land use needs, our stewardship, our contributions to our local regions, and our vital role in the National defense. The Marine Corps takes great pride in its care of the environment and natural resources in its trust. We have achieved a fine record of stewardship. In light of that record, the Marine Corps needs support of its unique requirements considered by all levels of government when developing and implementing federal statutes, as well as local, state, and federal land use and air space policies and practices. In recognizing those needs, I am confident that we can achieve and maintain the appropriate balance between military readiness and competing demands for scarce resources.