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UNTIL RELEASED BY  
SENATE COMMITTEE  
ON ARMED SERVICES**

**STATEMENT OF  
LIEUTENANT GENERAL JOHN F. SATTLER  
COMMANDING GENERAL  
I MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE  
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS AND MANAGEMENT SUPPORT  
CONCERNING  
READINESS OF MILITARY UNITS  
ON  
APRIL 20, 2005**

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**OPENING**

Chairman Ensign, Senator Akaka, distinguished members of the Subcommittee; it is my privilege to report to you on I Marine Expeditionary Force's (I MEF) current state of readiness. I MEF Marines and Sailors have answered our Nation's 911 calls and rapidly deployed in support of the Global War on Terror. Our number one priority is prosecuting the Global War on Terror and sustaining our readiness in order to meet all future challenges and serve as our Nation's premier expeditionary force-in-readiness.

The men and women of I MEF remain committed to warfighting excellence and the support of the Congress and the American people has been paramount to our successes in Afghanistan and Iraq. On behalf of all of I MEF, I thank you for your sustained and indispensable support.

**SINCE SEPTEMBER 11TH, 2001 I MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE HAS RAPIDLY DEPLOYED INTO REMOTE, ISOLATED AND LANDLOCKED LOCATIONS THAT WERE PREVIOUSLY VIEWED AS SAFE HAVENS FOR TERRORIST ACTIVITIES, FOUGHT AGAINST TYRANNY AND AIDED THOSE IN NEED.**

Operation ENDURING FREEDOM demonstrated our speed and flexibility when we task organized two forward-deployed Marine Expeditionary Units (Special Operations Capable) (MEU(SOC)) into Task Force FIFTY EIGHT and projected the first major conventional units more than 350 miles from its amphibious shipping into Afghanistan. Operation IRAQI FREEDOM I witnessed the flexibility of our Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) when over 70,000 I MEF Marines and Sailors deployed and arrived in less than sixty days at their Kuwait staging areas and attacked more than 500 miles rendering ten Iraqi divisions combat ineffective, seizing half of Baghdad, and occupying key areas to the north. When major combat operations concluded, strategic

plans called for Marine forces to redeploy and reset for any future contingencies and/or requirements from the Regional Combatant Commanders. I MEF redeployed to home stations in October 2003.

Late in 2003, I MEF received a short-notice tasking to deploy a force of approximately 25,000 Marines and Sailors back to Iraq to assume responsibility for the Multi-National Force-West Region. I MEF arrived in February of 2004 to accelerate a Relief in Place with units pending redeployment. In response to emergent requirements, three MEU(SOC)s deployed to the Central Command AOR during the summer and fall of 2004. Each MEU(SOC) was subsequently employed ashore under I MEF in support of combat operations in Iraq. Their addition to I MEF brought the total USMC strength in OIF II to slightly over 30,000. During Operation IRAQI FREEDOM II, I MEF Marines and Sailors with a truly Joint/Coalition Force liberated An Najaf and Fallujah and facilitated free elections in four Iraqi provinces. Finally, a I MEF MEU(SOC) provided tsunami relief in South Asia as it transited to Iraq in order to conduct stability operations until April 2005. Today these MEU(SOC) Marines and Sailors remain forward deployed and serve as the theater reserve within the Central Command AOR.

**THE CHALLENGE TO TRAIN AND EQUIP I MEF MARINES AND SAILORS FOR OIF II BEGAN IN OCTOBER 2003, EVEN BEFORE ALL I MEF PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT WERE BACK IN CONUS FROM OIF I. I MEF'S NOTICE TO RETURN TO IRAQ FOR STABILITY AND SUPPORT OPERATIONS (SASO) RESULTED IN COMPRESSED PLANNING TIMELINES AND REQUIRED THE UTMOST SPEED AND FLEXIBILITY IN IDENTIFYING FORCES, PREPARING EQUIPMENT, AND BUILDING CAPABILITIES DEEMED CRITICAL TO THE MISSION. PREPARATIONS FOR SASO FOCUSED ON EQUIPPING AND TRAINING MARINES AND SAILORS FOR AN ENVIRONMENT BELIEVED TO BE MORE UNPREDICTABLE AND DANGEROUS THAN WE HAD EXPERIENCED IN THE PREDOMINANTLY SHIA REGIONS OF SOUTHERN IRAQ IN THE SUMMER AND EARLY FALL OF 2003.**

In the training arena, each major subordinate command (MSC) of I MEF developed comprehensive plans to build individual and collective readiness geared for what was foreseen as a unique blend of civil-military operations—what has been aptly called the “three block war”. Moreover, the increased staff and subject matter expertise support required to meet the heightened demands of information operations, multi-source intelligence collection, force protection, Iraqi Security Force training and development, civil affairs and engineering projects, cross-cultural communications, and political engagement could not have been met without individual augmentees globally sourced across the Marine Corps. Marine and Navy Reservists proved instrumental to I MEF’s efforts in the Global War on Terror and they remain ready and willing.

These and other aspects of our approach to SASO missions were based not only on our own experiences but also drew heavily on the successes of the British Army in southeast Iraq. The 1st UK Division’s tactics, techniques, and procedures reflected many years of hard-won experiences in low intensity conflicts and peacekeeping operations around the world and were adapted wherever practical to the integrated Marine Air Ground Task Force. To this end, great emphasis was placed on language and cultural training with ten to twelve Marines per maneuver battalion receiving language immersion training. SASO collective skills were developed through conferences in Camp Pendleton, CA with visiting experts on Iraq and counter-insurgency operations, immediate actions for MAGTF convoys, crowd and riot control, cordon and knocks, counter-ambushes, offensive mining and improvised explosive device employment, and rear area security. Readiness for asymmetric warfare was further refined and tested through the creation of Revised Combined Arms Exercises (RCAX) at the Marine Air

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Ground Combat Center (MCAGC) at 29 Palms, CA; SASO field training exercises (FTX) in urban terrain at March AFB, CA; and air-ground concept of operations integration training at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Yuma, AZ.

Finally, I MEF's predeployment training included a reintroduction of the Combined Action Program (CAP)—similar to that used by Marines in South Vietnam from 1966 to 1971—where each deploying infantry battalion was required to have a specially trained CAP platoon. The CAP approach promises the highest returns on our investment as local security conditions improve and Iraqi leadership remains committed to the mission. Improving readiness and training for greater effectiveness in SASO and Counter Insurgency Operations (COIN) remained a constant concern. Thus, a concerted effort was made within I MEF and indeed, in a collaborative spirit across all major subordinate commands (MSC's) of Multi-National Corps-Iraq to share experiences in order to profit from those of others. Communications technology was a critical enabler. Enemy adaptations or new techniques, tactics, or weapons were immediately posted on classified web sites, passed through message traffic, or otherwise shared between headquarters. For example, every applicable lesson learned in the urban fighting in Najaf by the 11th MEU(SOC) under the operational control of the MEF in August 2004, was passed to the 1st Marine Division as it prepared for combat operations in Fallujah in November 2004.

**THE LIVES OF OUR MARINES AND SAILORS ARE OUR MOST PRECIOUS ASSET AND THEIR PRESERVATION THROUGH BETTER EQUIPMENT HAS AND WILL ALWAYS BE ONE OF OUR PRIMARY CONCERNS. ACCORDINGLY, IN PREPARATION FOR OUR RETURN TO IRAQ, FORCE PROTECTION EFFORTS WERE FOCUSED ON EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY TO BETTER DETECT, COLLECT, INTERRUPT, AND MITIGATE THE WEAPONS, TECHNIQUES, AND TACTICS FAVORED BY THE ENEMIES OF IRAQ. IN NOVEMBER 2003, THE MARINE CORPS**

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**ESTABLISHED THE URGENT UNIVERSAL NEEDS STATEMENT (UUNS) TO RAPIDLY TRANSLATE MISSION-ESSENTIAL NEEDS OF MARINES IN THEATER TO FIELDED MATERIEL SOLUTIONS.**

No single Marine Corps program had a greater impact on I MEF's readiness than the Rapid Acquisition or Urgent Universal Needs Statement (UUNS) process. The UUNS process provided an effective method for I MEF to identify and forward new requirements for review and approval (normally in less than 90 days) at the Service Headquarters. The UUNS process was an unqualified success in its ability to deliver equipment when it was needed. Coupled with pre-existing initiatives, this effort helped obtain adequate body armor (with front and rear plates) for every deployed I MEF Marine and Sailor. The results were clear throughout the MEF's area of operations. The UUNS process allowed us to armor our individual Marines, Sailors, High Mobility Multi-purpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWV's) and Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement (MTVR) trucks serving outside of all Forward Operating Bases.

Upgrades of Aviation Survivability Equipment (ASE) that included interior ballistic armor, advanced radar detections systems, improved defensive weapons systems, and missile countermeasures were developed for our rotary wing fleet and for our KC-130s. Both the size of I MEF's area of responsibility and the character of the SASO missions necessitated a larger number of tactical mobility assets than existing tables of equipment could support. Although tactical vehicle augmentation was possible by a selective off-load of our maritime pre-positioning squadron (MPSRON-2) in Kuwait, there was simply not enough adequate armor protection across the board for the threat conditions in Iraq. Thus, a major effort to provide flank and frontal armor for I MEF's entire tactical wheeled vehicle fleet commenced prior to the deployment. In spite of the

time constraints, an impressive array of armor, locally fabricated steel, and other protective measures were rapidly attained and installed prior to departure from Camp Pendleton or while in Kuwait to meet the small arms and fragmentation threat posed by ambushes and mine strikes of tactical vehicles in Iraq. By the time I MEF had fully deployed in March 2004 to relieve the 82ND Airborne in the Sunni dominated Al Anbar Province, the Marine Corps had provided first generation armor for 100 percent of its 3,000+ vehicles. As the security situation deteriorated further in the wake of the Blackwater murders in Fallujah, this force protection program expanded to the procurement of the much-improved M1114 and M1116 (factory armored) HMMWV as well as improving the protection levels of armor kits on all other tactical vehicles. As a result of this ongoing effort, the Marine Corps currently has 4,299 hardened vehicles in the CENTCOM AOR. These materiel solutions and ongoing efforts are designed to provide protection while still providing Marines the ability to rapidly dismount and provide offensive capability wherever needed.

Wherever possible, we team up with our Joint Partners to gain synergy in effort and economies of scale while ensuring appropriate stewardship of limited resources. As we address the challenges of the current fight, we look to exploit the opportunities of the future. We understand that willingness is a mindset but readiness is a statement of fact. To this end, close coordination and constant feedback from the field to the Marine Corps supporting establishment throughout I MEF's deployment—particularly the Combat Development Command in Quantico, VA—allowed rapid identification of emerging requirements that led to new equipment and training that saved lives and increased

mission readiness. The flexibility borne of these changes enhances the lethality of the Marine Air Ground Task Force and positions the Marine Corps for future operations.

With respect to logistics preparations and support for OIF II, a plan was developed to move over twenty-five thousand Marines and Sailors and tens of thousands of principal end items to Iraq in under sixty days. Equipment was resourced from various continental United States (CONUS) and overseas stations and locations, and by March 2004, I MEF conducted the successful off-load of a combination of seventeen commercial black bottom, Navy amphibious, and Maritime Pre-positioning Squadron (MPSRON) ships, and the reception and staging of all required personnel and equipment into the USCENTCOM AOR. I MEF's onward movement from Kuwait to its area of operations in the Al Anbar Province of western Iraq involved the detailed organization and scheduling of some 6000 vehicles into more than 100 convoys that moved through enemy territory.

With a mature logistics theater already established by Combined Joint Task Force SEVEN (CJTF-7), I MEF was able to further task organize its combat service support (CSS) organizations thereby reducing some of the equipment and personnel costs associated with a more austere, expeditionary environment such as encountered during OIF I. As such, heavy emphasis was placed on logistical planning for Theater and Corps level sustainment, contingency contracting, base camp infrastructure, and integration into Logistics Civil Augmentation Programs (LOGCAP), as well as for the reception, staging, and onward movement of forces and equipment flowing through Kuwait into Iraq.

**REGARDING MAINTENANCE IN THEATER, THE GROUND EQUIPMENT USAGE RATES IN THE IRAQI THEATER OF OPERATIONS WERE MUCH HIGHER THAN THOSE EXPERIENCED DURING NORMAL PEACETIME TRAINING.**

These higher usage rates, combined with extreme environmental conditions, unusually demanding operating criteria, and additional armoring of mobility assets, served to increase supply and maintenance demands. Despite these factors and as a testament to the ingenuity of our Marines, contracted logistics support, contingency contracting, and continual reach back to CONUS-based resources, the ground equipment readiness rates for I MEF while deployed continually hovered in the low ninety-percentile range.

In an effort to leverage additional logistical support, I MEF was in the early stages of capitalizing on the Army's forward deployed ground depot maintenance capability in order to reduce, and in some cases eliminate, long lead times for equipment requiring retrograde from theater for depot level maintenance. Further mitigating the large numbers of equipment having been destroyed beyond repair, initiatives were developed, known as forward in-stores (FIS), to establish a pool of ground equipment to expedite the replacement of major end items.

With regards to aviation assets, I MEF's inventory of legacy fixed and rotary wing aircraft performed their combat missions and held up extremely well under increased usage rates. Operating from austere former Iraqi air bases and deployed throughout multiple forward operating bases (FOB's) throughout the MEF AOR, these aircraft flew thousands of sorties in extreme environmental conditions and under an extraordinarily demanding operating criteria. While utilization rates have dramatically increased, the overall trend for our deployed aircraft readiness remained fairly constant in

the low seventy-percentile range. Initiatives to further improve aircraft readiness rates in theater are continually being developed such as the creation of a limited, forward-deployed aircraft depot maintenance capability.

**I MEF IS A STRONG PROPONENT OF THE "MARINE FAMILY" AND OUR COMMANDERS DEVOTE A GREAT DEAL OF ATTENTION TO FAMILY READINESS IN PREPARATION FOR THE UNCERTAINTY INHERENT IN COMBAT OPERATIONS. RECOGNIZING THAT INFORMATION FLOW AND FAMILY READINESS ARE CRITICAL TO UNIT MORALE AND COMBAT READINESS, WE DEVELOPED AND NURTURED A FAMILY READINESS PROGRAM SECOND TO NONE. THE FRONT-END INVESTMENT IN FAMILY READINESS PROGRAMS AND THE KEY VOLUNTEER NETWORK IN PREPARATION FOR THESE DEPLOYMENTS SERVED AS FORCE MULTIPLIERS AND ENHANCED THE COMBAT READINESS OF I MEF.**

In pursuit of this, I MEF sponsored Marine Corps Family Team Building (MCFTB). This program provided critical support while commands aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, CA, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGC) in 29 Palms, CA and Marine Corps Air Stations Miramar, CA and Yuma, AZ were deployed. MCFTB programs for educating Family Readiness Officers, Key Volunteer Coordinators, advisors, and spouses provided continuity and sustained Family Readiness. One of the most important services has and continues to be the Return and Reunion Briefs. This is in depth instruction designed to prepare both families and service members, for their reunion through education and reflection on the different experiences each has had during the deployment. Finally, a program known as LINKS—Lifestyles, Insights, Networking, Knowledge and Skills also serves to educate our spouses on what it means to be a military spouse. This has proven to be especially helpful during extended deployments when many new spouses are becoming familiar with the Marine Corps lifestyle.

Even though the operational tempo of the Global War on Terror took the men and women of I MEF to distant lands far from their friends and family, our Marines and Sailors established a little bit of home. They celebrated holidays, set up daily routines and remembered loved ones left behind. To this end, our personnel morale and family support programs included both quality of life and recreation programs in Afghanistan and Iraq. Connectivity through email, mail services and phone calls were a source of constant concern for Commanders throughout Iraq and every effort was made to make these services readily available, as combat operations would permit. To reach across the miles, Unit Family Readiness Hotlines and Websites were established; updated messages from Unit Commanders were routinely recorded and posted; family members had ready access to voice recordings in order to remain informed on the current situation and events; and Family Readiness Websites provided information and access to solutions to challenges before they became problems. Marines were more focused knowing that their families were being cared for on the home front.

**Fighting the war and resetting the force for the future, is the Commandant's focus.**

Lieutenant General James N. Mattis, Commanding General of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command/Deputy Commandant for Combat Development United States Marine Corps testified before the House Armed Services Committee on March 16th, 2005 that while it depends on the individual item of equipment selected, in general, our ground equipment is experiencing roughly eight times the use normally experienced during peacetime operations. The decision to replace, rather than repair, major equipment items is, in most cases, cost-effective due to transportation costs to and from

the Central Command's area of responsibility, accelerated aging due to high operational tempo, environmental degradation and the need to keep up-armored vehicles in theater to support future rotations. In this vein, the Marine Corps will rely on future programs to replace existing legacy systems - such as the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle replacing the current amphibious assault vehicle in use in Iraq and lightweight 155mm howitzer to replace legacy howitzers. The Administration requested funding for Marine Corps reset in the FY 2005 Supplemental. As operations proceed in Iraq and GWOT, we will continue to study requirements to fully reset the force.

As we address the challenges of the current fight, we look to exploit the opportunities of the future. Newly formed active and reserve component units will address conventional and irregular threats as existing units retrain to assume additional duties such as civil affairs, SASO and COIN. The flexibility borne of these changes enhances the effectiveness of the Marine Air Ground Task Force in the Global War on Terrorism and postures the Marine Corps for success in future operations. Marines and their families greatly appreciate the unwavering support of Congress in achieving this end.