

Office of the Commandant of the Marine Corps

Address to the National Press Club Luncheon

**General James F. Amos,
Commandant
United States Marine Corps**

28 August 2012

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: You know, after that introduction, I'm reminded of my early days in Idaho, and every spring you'd run out and grab all the young bulls and heifers that had been born the year before, and then you'd gather them all together and some pretty unseemly things would happen to the young bulls. And it would all end up with one humiliating act of branding with a red hot branding iron, and then we'd wish them farewell and good day as we launched them out across the prairie. As I look out in this audience and I think about my introduction, I sort of feel like that young heifer or young bull (Laughing) that you're wishing good day and you're going to launch me out in this audience of everybody here. Listen, thank you very much. I purposely am going to keep my remarks -- my opening remarks -- short so I can answer your questions.

There's no shortage of things going on around the world today. I mean some of it I'm in the middle of, some of it I'm on the fringes of, but we certainly have visibility on all of it. But I'd like to talk to you about a recent visit... Sergeant Major Barrett and I just came back from Afghanistan the second week of last month, and then followed up shortly thereafter... we went to the Pacific to visit Marines in the Pacific, Guadalcanal for the 70th anniversary of the landing on August the 7th... Australia where we have Marines in line with our new strategy, and then all the way up through Okinawa, Korea and Tokyo. And finally, I'd just like to comment on really what the Marine Corps does for our nation. You know, we talked a little bit about implication or the innuendos it's a second land Army, and that's really not why America has a Marine Corps, and I'll talk to you a little bit about that here in just a second.

But my visit to Helmand, I've been going there now for almost four straight years in the various capacity and jobs. My experience on the ground in combat was predominately in Iraq on two tours... so Helmand, I've been paying very close attention to. The culture is different, the landscape is different, and really the war is different. And I will tell you from my early visits four years ago, to the last one just last month, I've watched it steadily progress and turn more favorable and more favorable. I'm aware of -- I'm acutely aware of the green-on-blue. We've -- that was very painful for the United States Marine Corps. I'm aware of the latest headlines today that I saw this morning of the Afghan citizens that had been murdered by the Taliban, so all of this is going on, but I need to tell you that each time I go there I don't just hang around the Marines. I actually hang around the 2/15th Corps Commander of the Afghan National Security Force.

I've known Major General Malook for many, many years. He's a former Mujahedeen fighter for the Afghans, and he is probably the premier Corps Commander, in my estimation, in all of Afghanistan. And I'm out with him as he travels around and visits his soldiers, so while we bring the numbers of Marines down in accordance with the President's drawdown of the surge -- which I support by the way... As we bring those down, don't lose sight of the fact that we've also increased the Afghan National Security Forces 20,000 in Afghan -- just in our zone and all in the Helmand Province, so it's a little bit like a "Teeter Totter." It's not either/or. It's not looks what's happened, there's a vacuum. There actually is a very capable Afghan National Army on the ground in the Helmand Province, and as I visited on this last trip, talked to the Commanding Officers... Sergeant Major Barrett and I would get in that V-22, and we would fly all over the area very safely and very efficiently I might add (Laughter). And we would land at

every -- our goal was to go to every combat outpost where we had Marines, and we did our best... And I came away this time more positive about the change than I have in all the other times.

I know that almost is probably counterintuitive, but the last thing my Regimental Commander said as we got on the V-22 way up in the northern part, up in the area very close to where these -- where the Afghan civilians were murdered by the Taliban yesterday. As we got on the airplane, he pulled me aside and he said -- this is a Marine Colonel -- and he said -- he said Commandant, I need to tell you one thing. I just want you to hear it from me. He said we're going to be okay. Things are going very, very well with the Afghan National Army. Their Commanders have stepped up. Their young soldiers have stepped up. It doesn't mean there's not going to be problems. It doesn't mean there's not going to be some tragedies and challenges, but he said we're actually doing quite well, so I just wanted to pass that to you. There's every reason I think for optimism. It doesn't mean that there are not going to be issues. It doesn't mean that I'm not going to have to look at the moms and dads of my Marines and put my arms around my spouses and family members and hold them dearly because of some great tragedy. That doesn't mean that's not going to happen. But if you step back and look at where this is trending, I think we have every reason for optimism... certainly down in the Helmand Province, and it's well-led by not only our Commanders and our British Forces and our allies but also by -- almost more importantly by the Afghan leadership down there to include the provincial governor, so that was the visit there.

Switch to the Pacific, if you would, for me please. I'll kind of talk -- bear with me for a minute. The trip began in Hawaii and ended up in Tokyo and went for many days. I never stayed in one place at the same time, just continuing on bouncing through the Pacific, down in Australia to talk to the Senior Leadership of -- of the Military part of the government down there about the realignment of forces in the Pacific. What does this mean to the Marines? As you know, I ended up in -- we ended up in Darwin, up in the northwest corner of Darwin, so we went from Canberra down to the southeast corner where it was 35 degrees, to Darwin all in about four hours, four and a half hours, and it was 88 degrees. And yes, we ate some kangaroo; yes, we ate some crocodile and -- and got a little bit of the taste of the culture. But more importantly, we were with the Marines, the 200 Marines that were up -- up in Darwin that were training with their Australian counterparts. I think that's a relationship that's very positive, and our two governments have agreed to that. It should end up somewhere down the road, once the two governments are satisfied with the pace, somewhere around 2500 Marines up in Darwin and that area training with their Australian counterparts.

So the Pacific, more specifically, why? First of all, America is a Pacific nation. Five of our mutual defense -- five of our most important mutual defense treaties are in this region of the world. Here are some statistics that I think will kind of help bring everything into focus. The Asia-Pacific area is home to 61% of the world's population. 15 of the world's 28 megacities are in the Asia-Pacific area. 12 of the top 15 US trading partners for the United States are in Asia-Pacific. Here's a statistic as we'll think about Isaac and the potential for natural disasters. More than 70,000 people are killed every single year, not every decade but every year by natural disasters in the Asia-Pacific area, and that's a little over \$35 billion worth of damage each year. Think about all those opportunities for Marines and US forces to help our partners and our fellow nations in the Pacific as -- as they recover from the natural disasters that are so prevalent. We

are America's expeditionary force in readiness. We're a crisis response force; that's what we do. We get to places very quickly. Ideally, we do that aboard Naval ships. All of this is paid for. The equipment on there is -- it belongs to the Marine Corps. The ships belong to the Navy, and we are forward deployed and ready to respond.

Secretary Panetta said when the realignment is done in the Pacific; we'll have 22,000 Marines west of the International Dateline. That's a backyard that we're very familiar with. We cut our teeth in World War II in the Pacific starting all the way down with the 2d Marine Division down in New Zealand, and so as we worked our way around that part of the world, it became almost a spiritual experience for the Marines that were traveling with me because when you step on the ground, you walk across Red Beach at Guadalcanal and you realize just what landed there, those -- those selfless, great patriots, not only from our country but from Australia as well, and you realize that we do have a lot of experience in the Pacific. It is a backyard that -- that we actually are very familiar with. Yes, our youngsters aren't, but some of us oldsters are, and so we're not the least bit intimidated about the strategy. We think it absolutely makes sense.

Finally, the last point I'd make is back to my -- my point about America's Crisis Response Force. You know, we -- the issue of a second land Army has come up several times, and usually my comments run like this: First of all, I make no apologies for being on the ground in the Anbar Province. We settled right in next door to our allies, more specifically, the United States Army (Laughter), and we fought there pretty hard. Ray, I didn't mean it to come out that way. But our -- but our partners and we've been on the ground shoulder-to-shoulder with the United States Army really for the last almost nine years. But we settled down in the Anbar Province because we were told to do that. We crossed the border in March of 2003; all of us at the head table were there, and that went very, very quickly, then the hard work in Iraq began in February of the next year. And it lasted for a long time, and you know that. So we settled there. It's not why America buys a Marine Corps or funds it or why Congress -- but we did it, and we did it pretty damn well, and I make no apologies to anybody. We left there about two and a half years, later feeling very good about having set the conditions for the greatest opportunity for success in the Anbar Province. So go forward with me to the Helmand the -- Afghanistan now, and we're exactly in the same boat only smaller in number, but, again, I make no apologies for being on the ground in Helmand, shoulder-to-shoulder with our coalition partners. That's what has happened throughout the 237 years of Marine Corps history.

But America buys and funds a Marine Corps to be forward deployed and forward engaged -- to be America's 911 force. We used to say that usually typically before 9/11 by the way. That was kind of the bumper sticker for the Marine Corps in the -- in the 80s and the early 90s, a 911 force. We are. I mean, implies you can get there, you can do something rapidly, you can do it tonight. We say we respond to today's crisis with today's force, today -- not 30 days from now, not four months from now, not 45 days later after I've cobbled together a force and we train. We actually sit at a very high state of readiness, and that's what America wants. America needs a force that can do that. America needs a force that it could either put them on a ship or put them on a plane and can leave tonight, and they have their stuff with them. They don't need to -- they don't need to eat in a chow hall. They don't need to sleep in what we affectionately and you know we call tin cans over in Afghanistan or Iraq. You actually can sleep in some pretty rough conditions, and that's what we do. We respond rapidly, and we have a high state of readiness.

I'll close with just some -- some numbers here on what you get for the amount of money that we -- that you have with your Marine Corps. We're less than -- actually, we're right at 8% of the total Department of Defense budget. That's everything. That includes the -- what we call blue in support of green, the aviation that we get and all we get from the Navy, the United States Naval Aviation. It's 8% of the total Department of Defense budget, and for that, you get a force that sits poised and ready to do just exactly what we did in Libya when the two ships came up and the Marines were poised providing some decision space for our -- for our leadership. You not only get a force that can go down rapidly to the Philippines to help with the aftereffects of a cyclone that has passed through there two weeks ago the way we did, and we've done over and over again. But you get 11 -- for that 8%, you get 11% of the fixed-wing tactical aviation in the Department of Defense. You get 15% of the maneuver brigades for ground forces, and you get 18% of the rotary-wing attack helicopters in the entire Department of Defense, and you get it all for 8% of the budget. And in addition to that, you have a force that sits 24 hours, 7 days a week, 365 days a year -- ready to respond to today's crisis with today's force today.

Thank you very much, and I'll be happy to take your questions. (Applause)

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): Can you please discuss the impact of the sequestration on the Marine Corps.

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: I'll be happy to. The -- lots of discussion, I've been asked the question by Congress and often in the press what -- what's the net effect of that? When you look at the Military today, it's -- you need to think in terms of capacity and capabilities. In other words, we need to have our nation -- whatever capacity our nation agrees to and says we have to have, you've got to have it, and in that capacity comes some given amount of capabilities. As it relates to the Marine Corps, if we end up with sequestration, it will disproportionately affect the Marine Corps. Remember I said that we're only 8% of the DOD budget, by definition, sequestration is somewhere across 10 to 11% across a variety of categories, manpower, procurement, operations and maintenance, so even though it would proportionately be applied to the Marine Corps the same way the -- the effects would be disproportional because our numbers are so small, our budget is so small that the effects would actually in some cases cause us to end up cancelling programs, not being able to reset the Marine Corps after 11 years of straight combat coming out of Iraq and Afghanistan, and -- and quite honestly, would stunt any kind of modernization, so very, very dangerous and disproportionately felt by the Marine Corps.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): An article written by a Marine Captain, Katie Petronio, seriously questions the wisdom of placing females in the infantry, why do you believe this is a good plan and do you intend to go forward with integrating females into the infantry?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Well, a couple of points, first of all, we've had lots of women in combat. I mean that's kind of the big issue to begin with, lots of women in combat, and we've got them in this room right here sitting around the table in uniform, so women in combat have not been an issue. We have had closed -- we've had units that have been closed to females that we've just opened up, artillery, tanks, Amtrak's, light-air defense, some combat engineer, and we've opened those up to Officers and Staff NCOs, so that's in the process right now of filling -- I have every expectation that that is going to be a huge success. Early indications are that that was precisely the right thing to do. As it relates specifically to women in infantry, we have a series of -- we have three things that are going on right now. Number one, we've got a survey

out to all Marines and we're in the process -- and you referenced that in your opening comments, so that is yet to come in. It will come in and it will answer a variety of questions that will talk to us about women in combat, women in -- specifically in infantry.

The second part of this is I need to get -- I need to get past hyperbole and get past intuition and instincts, and I need to get facts, so we are -- next month our Infantry Officer course at Quantico, which is where we train Infantry Officers -- I mean if you're going to be an Infantry Officer in the Marine Corps, you'll spend 13 weeks at Quantico going through some very, very difficult training. So that's the standard, and that's the measure to make an Infantry Officer in the Marine Corps, so when asked the question about how are we going to do this or how could we do this, I said we'll just keep -- I'll do just exactly what everybody's told me to do, just keep the standards the same, and so we have starting next month at least two female volunteers. We only bring in 125 female officers a year, so we're not a very big organization. But it has to be volunteers by law, so we have two coming in next month and maybe some more, and we're going to start that. We'll collect the data, and then the -- and then we'll see where we are in that thing. And I'm glad you made the comment that -- that I'm not the least bit afraid of the data, actually I'm not, and -- and then I'll be able to look at Congress, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Navy and I'll say sir, this is my recommendation when we're all through.

The last thing is we have a series of -- of physical tests that are going on right now, collecting data on -- on certain aspects of -- of physical strength for both male and female, and that's in the process of being included, so I'm optimistic, and we're going to go through this thing, and we're going to do it the right way and set the conditions for success.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): What has been your guidance to the female participants and their Commanders?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Say that again.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): What has been your guidance to the female participants and their Commanders? What guidance are you offering?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Oh, okay. I took, for instance, the -- these units that have been closed that I was telling you about, and I brought all 19 Battalion Commanders and all 19 Sergeants Major in and Sergeant Major Barrett and I probably two months ago, did that with every one of them, looked them face in the eye -- just face-to-face and said listen, you need to do this thing the right way. You need to understand that I don't want anybody in your unit, you know, predominantly all male. I mean they've been male probably for the history of the Marine Corps. Just to understand where we are in life today, and I don't want anybody -- and I specifically looked at the two Senior Leaders, the enlisted and the Officer, Commanding Officer, and said you're responsible for the command climate in that unit, so you set the conditions such that our females can succeed. And that's the guidance I gave them, and I have every indication that -- in fact, I got some early information last week from one of the Battalion Commanders that's got five, two Officers and three Staff NCOs, and I said how's it going, and he said hit it out of the ballpark. He said they're just doing terrific, so my expectations are pretty high.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): How do you think young men Marine Infantry will feel about the female 1st Lieutenant Platoon Commander in a combat zone?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Yeah. I think there's going to be some -- some anxiety. I think I'd be disingenuous if I -- if I said it in any other way. I think, like anything else, they're going to work their way through it, so let's -- let's gather the information. Let's figure out where we're going, what's the best course of action for me to recommend it to the Secretary of Defense, but I think in anything, you know, the -- we're a -- we are, I'm proud to say it, the world's greatest war fighting organization. I'm a little bit prejudice, but change doesn't come easy to the United States Marine Corps, and -- but when it does, when it's rooted, it -- it lasts for forever, so I think we'll work our way through that.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): What is the status of the replacement presidential helicopter since the previous selected replacement, the VH-101, was cancelled due to cost overruns?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Now, I don't have the exact details on it. I know that -- I know that the program has been affected... two pieces of the presidential lift that have come into -- that are being -- into a program. Now, one is the main lift, which would be the 747, and the second one would be the presidential helicopter, so there's been no selection at all. There is a serious of opportunities that are out there. I do know that it's now moved forward and it's a -- it's a priority. I can't tell you where it is with regards to the budget. I just know that's it's not on the backburner anymore. It's actually moved forward, and we need to find a -- we need to find a replacement for the President's helicopter.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): How has the introduction of the MV-22 Osprey to Okinawa and the opposition it has created affected our relationship with Japan?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: You know, if you remember, I said the last stop on my way back from that long trip in the Pacific was in Tokyo, and I'll tell you I've spent a lot of time in Japan. I've never seen the relationship between the United States and the government of Japan stronger than it is today. Again, that may -- that may seem like it's counterintuitive, but I'll tell you what, my sense is when that horrible earthquake followed by the Tsunami and the tragedy of the nuclear reactors hit and -- and our two nations responded immediately and specifically, the Marine Corps down in Okinawa poised and ready and flew out the next morning completely without -- without even having been asked and brought up those old CH-46 helicopters that -- the 44-year-old helicopters that we were replacing with the Osprey -- that, our C1-30s, hundreds and hundreds of Marines, thousands of them at sea on ships to help the Japanese... I think that did more for the relationship between our two nations than probably anything has in decades. So when I was in Tokyo with the Senior Leadership of the Ministry of Defense, I tell you what, I could not have been more warmly received... so I think we'll work our way through the Osprey.

The Ospreys are down in Iwakuni, Japan right now. They're sitting there. I saw them. We flew in there, all 12 of them, they're sitting out there. They're being maintained, but in accordance with the agreement with the Japanese government, we're not flying them, and -- and when that -- when -- you know, the -- the Japanese sent their assessment team to the United States last month -- excuse me -- this month. They were briefed on the mishap. They got the investigation. They saw the video, and they actually flew in the airplanes, so we have given -- we have been completely forthright with regards to that tragedy that happened in Morocco, and I think the Japanese -- my sense is the government of Japan and the people are very appreciative

of our just honesty on the matter. So I think our governments will work through -- work their way through this thing, and when the time is ready, we'll -- we'll fly the airplanes.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): What is the new geography of the Marine Corps going to look like now that Australia and Guam are being built up and Okinawa is starting to drawdown?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Secretary Panetta has said 22,000 west of the International Dateline. If you go to the southern part of mainland Japan, in Iwakuni, we've got a significant amount of Marines there. That's really our -- what we call our tactical aviation, our F-18s, Harriers and the EA-6Bs will find their way in there again probably in the next couple of months. But that's -- that's where the tactical aviation is, and that comprises probably about 3500 Marines and Sailors. That actually would be built up a little bit with the new agreement. We're going to bring C-130s up there from Okinawa. We'll draw the force down on Okinawa down to about 10,200. I think that's the agreement that our governments have worked to. We'll end up with about 5,000 Marines give or take, you know, probably a couple hundred. It will be rotational with the forces on Guam; predominately what we call a unit deployment, units that flow in. They come from the United States, leave their families back home, come at a very high state of readiness, train, rotate in and out of there, train and -- with some of our coalition nations in the Pacific, so we'll have that there. We'll end up with -- down the road when -- and again, the government of Australia is the pacing -- the pacing item on how big and how quickly the buildup is on Australia. But we should end up with about 2500 Marines in Australia. We're going to end up with some more Marines in Hawaii, but -- so we'll end up with rotational forces in and around the Pacific which is -- which really is good for the strategy. I mean it -- it sends a very strong signal that the United States is very interested in the Asia-Pacific.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): With all the budget cuts and everyone screaming that they have no money, why do the Marine Corps still not allow Marines to homestead in a specific region, especially if the Marines are doing their deployments?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Yeah. You know, it's interesting. That came up about two or three weeks ago, and I -- I'm not -- I can't remember how it came up. I've watched this ebb and flow over my 41 years as a Marine. I've seen some Commandants come in and say you're not going to homestead; you're not going to be at a place more than three years maximum, some have said four. You know, I haven't looked at that yet, but as we look at how we live within our means, that's probably not something that -- or probably is something that I'm going to need to look at, so I don't have an answer for you right now. I'm not against it. In many cases, it kind of makes sense. There are needs for the Marine Corps to kind of move Marines around, go to schools, you get promoted, you no longer have a slot in your unit, but I do think there's probably some benefit to longer tours in -- in certain locations but not wholesale. But I think they're probably -- and I think we can save some money with it.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): As a deprived Navy child that only moved twice in 30 years, I appreciate being able to stay in one place.

Can you please address the issue of the former Navy SEAL who has written about the Bin Laden raid, are you concerned about the loss of classified data and the precedent that it is setting for former Special Operation personnel?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: You know, I -- I can't really speculate on that. I -- you know, I -- because I'm reading this -- honest to goodness I'm reading exactly the same thing you are in the daily -- in the press, so I don't know anything more about it than you do. I know a lot of SEALS. I've been out with the Special Ops Forces in Afghanistan, predominately, they do great work. I'm proud as -- I'm proud as can be over what happened in the raid against Bin Laden. I just -- you know, I kind of bust at my seams just thinking about what a -- what an effort that was. I can imagine how difficult, but I can't speak about right, wrong, should they or shouldn't they, so I'm just going to kind of wait and see what happens with our government as it relates to the publisher and the author.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): Are you at all concerned that so few of our citizens and political leaders today have Military experience?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: You know, I get asked that -- I do get asked that question a lot, and I remember being a youngster and the Commandants always kept track of precisely how many members of Congress had served in Military, then how many were Marines. Remember, there's no such thing as a former Marine. You're just a Marine in a -- in a three-piece suit or whatever, but we used to -- and -- and we would -- we did that as if everybody that hadn't served wouldn't love us. And the truth of the matter is that I travel around Congress in -- both in the Senate and the House side and clearly, the majority have not. But I got to tell you what, when I walk in -- I walk into an office, I meet with some of our members of the House and the Senate on both sides of the aisle, you talk about being warmly received, people are interested in what ground truth is. I -- you know, I think we're -- you know, I think we're going to be just fine with it. I don't find it a problem. Quite honestly, maybe in some cases, it's an advantage because -- because a member that's not been in the Military actually is motivated to get ground truth, so I find it's -- it's not refreshing, but I'm okay with it.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): What are you doing to address the alarming suicide rate among our combat veterans?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Boy, three years -- and by the way we've got -- we've got a family member of the Marines in here that -- that's been affected by this a couple of years ago, so about three years ago we hit -- we hit the top of probably the most we ever -- in fact, the most we'd ever had since we started tracking it, and it's 52. We put a full-court press on -- on the leadership and interestingly enough it was the young Corporals and Sergeants that came forward and said let us do this. So we spent no shortage of effort and put together interactive videos with real Marines using the language that real Marines use, which surprised everybody we would actually put something in print like that, and the Marines talked to one another in this, and it was led by noncommissioned officers. The next year the -- the suicide rate dropped I think 39 from 52. Last year it dropped to 32. This year we -- we'd gone back and -- and now we have the same interactive video. I mean that's what the youngsters of today, they're electronic... They learn by that as long as you don't try to throw a bunch of garbage at them, and we've got them for young officers and -- and really our -- what I call our baby Marines, you know, our brand new ones, so we've got that out there. But even at that, even with the attention of the leadership, I think all the services this year are -- are feeling it, and I guess what I would tell everybody here there's -- it is through no shortage of great effort and leadership on the part of all the services to try to abate this. But this year I think is going to be a tough year for all the services.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): Three Marines received no criminal charges but non-judicial punishment for urinating on dead Taliban bodies, why the slap on the wrist?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Actually, it wasn't a slap on the wrist and non-judicial punishment in the -- in the punitive nature of -- of the Military, the Uniformed Code of Military Justice which -- which regulates all punishment and has a series of articles, Article 134, conduct on becoming an Officer, and these kinds. One of the articles is Article 15 and that's non-judicial punishment. That's where the Commanding General or the Commanding Officer has the authority to take a young Marine that has stepped out of line to any degree -- and certainly it's in the best -- you know, the best judgment of the Commander. You can bring that young man or woman into what we call Article 15, non-judicial punishment, and you can award a fairly significant amount of punishment. If you'll notice yesterday, the press talked about all the different -- the Article talked about all the different things that could be awarded at non-judicial punishment, but it didn't say what was awarded yesterday.

So I'll just -- I'll tell the audience here and I'm not really at liberty to talk about that, but -- but it was not a slap on the wrist. Those three Marines -- each instance is a different circumstance. Each -- each instance is a single human being that -- that had different roles to play in this, so I'll tell you that -- that it was not a slap on the wrist. The other thing I'll tell you and I -- and this is the extent I can talk because there is a remaining group of Marines that -- that are also going to be held accountable, and -- and that is forthcoming. So it wasn't a slap on the wrist. I'm confident, and Lieutenant General Mills who's our Commander, Commanding General. He used to command all the Marines in Afghanistan about a year and a half, two years ago. He knows what he's doing. He understands the theater. He understands combatant Marines. He's an infantryman by trade. I've got complete confidence in him. I think when it's all said and done, everybody will look back and go hey, the Marines did the right thing.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): Will the additional soldiers that are yet to be charged, will they be charged with non-criminal or criminal offenses?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: To be honest with you, where I am right now, I can't talk about that because anything I say as the Commandant becomes presumptive. It becomes -- people then interpret that as oh, my gosh, I got to do that because the Commandant wants it done, so I can't really -- I can't really talk about that.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): Can the non-judicial process be career-ending for Marines?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Will it be what?

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): Career-ending.

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: I don't know. It -- I think certainly in some cases it can be. Each -- each case is different, and I -- you know, where I am right now as the Commandant other than the fact that I spent six months traveling around the Marine Corps talking about the Heritage Brief, about ethics and combat ethics and who we are and who we're not, on this matter, I -- I have purposely stayed away from it. I have to otherwise I'll stick my nose in something that the Commanding -- the Commandant has no business in, so I can't tell you whether it's career-ending or not.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): Some have said that the Navy and the Marine Corps plans to convert ships and planes to bio-fuels represents a costly distraction, is this program really worth it?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: You know, there's -- I think it's been in the press, and we certainly -- we even talked about it in testimony not too long ago. There was an effort in the -- a very large effort in the Pacific exercise called RIMPAC, which that brings in all the Pacific rim countries and centers around Hawaii to burn bio-fuels on a certain number of the ships and a certain number of the airplanes. That was predominately -- it was not a Marine Corps initiative, but I'll tell you what, I -- you know, I support the efforts for alternative fuel. We're doing a lot right now in our little small piece of the world, in Afghanistan and combat outposts with regards to alternative fuel, not so much bio-fuel, but battery, solar, wind, natural insulation and this kind of thing, so I'm a big believer in bio-fuels -- excuse me -- of alternative fuels and in our case, alternative energy and its -- but the bio-fuel I think is probably just one step along the way.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): Is the drawdown going to affect the number of new technology, aircraft equipment purchases since not as many are required? If not, are the new pieces and equipment going to be put into preservation status to be used as future replacements?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: I think the plan right now as we know it with the Budget Control Act of last September/October, which is about \$487 billion, levied against it in the Department of Defense over ten years. That there's no question that that's going to have an impact on the amount of things that we're able to buy. Sequestration is as I said at the very beginning. That's really going to change the amount of things, whether it be aircraft or vehicles, recapitalization of ground vehicles and that kind of thing, so I don't think that they're -- at least in my service right now, we've not adjusted the -- the top numbers, what we call the program of record on what we are planning on buying on MV-22s, JSF, but I think probably over time, we're going to have -- especially if sequestration hits, we're going to have to take a look at the total numbers.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): Four months ago you began a campaign to fight sexual assault in the ranks, have you seen any progress yet and what are the biggest challenges and obstacles?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Whoever asked that question thank you. I'll tell you that we have - - we convened last May what we call an Operational Planning Team, and -- and that may not mean -- let me just explain what that means to you. When we were preparing to cross the border into Iraq or do operations in Afghanistan, you bring together the best minds that you have and from a variety of different capable sources and you do the planning, so it's collaborative, it's across -- it's across a Military Occupational Specialty's - talent, everything. And that's the way we do business when we're going to do something really, really important and very difficult and challenging, so I handpicked 20 Marines, Officers and Staff NCOs. The Staff NCOs were all Sergeants Major except for one who was a Mastery Gunnery Sergeant. The Officers were all Commanding Officers led by a General. I brought him -- he'd just come out of Afghanistan, a former Division Commander; a great, great leader in his own right. And I pulled the Regimental Commanders and all these high-priced leaders from across the Corps and for two weeks convened the Operational Planning Team to define the problem of sexual assault in the Marine Corps. In my Corps, what's the problem? Help us all to understand what ground truth is, and

then armed with ground truth, then how do we proceed? How do we turn this around? So they did that.

They gave me -- I sat -- in fact, Bonnie sat with me when I took the second debrief from them, and then they went away for two weeks, they came back for another two weeks and we finished up. They developed a campaign plan against -- to eradicate sexual assault in the Marine Corps. I think it's revolutionary. It's very directive. I think it's all inclusive. It is being led now by the Senior Leadership of the Marine Corps. I've brought all the Generals in. We've only got 85 Generals in the Marine Corps. I brought all -- *all* of them in, with the exception of probably a half a dozen that were deployed, back to Washington the second week in July, and we spent two days going over all the data, all the information from the sexual assault OPT, introduced the campaign plan to them, and then I directed them with their responsibility in this. So now we've got the campaign plan. We've got classes going on, and guess who's leading the classes? It's not -- it's not some young 21-year-old Corporal. It's the General Officers. It's the Colonels. It's the Sergeant Major. So we needed to have buy in from the very top, and I think we've got that.

So where are we headed? We're headed to zero. Will we get there? I don't know. We're a part of society today, and this is probably one of the most challenging things I have to deal with as a Service Chief, but I'll tell you what, my women are just as -- I've only got 13,000 I think 700 females out of 200,000 males -- or 200,000 total. So, again, I've got a small slice of females, but I've looked every single male Marine in the eye that I could while Sergeant Major and I were traveling and I said you need to understand that -- that my females are just as important to me as my males are, and I think they believe me. I think right now they believe me... so this is a fight. This is not going to be won this year or not going to be won next year, and I'll tell you what, I'm -- I'm absolutely bound and determined that we're going to do something about this thing.

One of the things that absolutely has to happen right up front is our females have to be confident enough in the leadership, both the Officer, Commanding Officers, Sergeant Major, their bosses to come forward when something has happened. They have to be confident enough to come forward and say this happened and not be afraid of -- of some type of recompense of being drug through -- through the facts publicly. They need to be able to come forward, so that's what we're trying to do. I'm -- I'm -- this is a personal thing with me and we intend to turn it around in the Marine Corps. (Applause)

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): Of those 85 Generals, how many of them are female?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: I'm sorry, everybody was clapping. Read it again.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): Of the 85 Generals, how many are female?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Goodness, I don't know, probably four -- how many? Four, I think four, yeah.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): Do you think by having more females in Senior Officer positions will help change the culture of the Corps?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Oh, I -- I don't think there's any question about it. I think they absolutely will and I'll tell you the ones we've got are just -- they're phenomenal. We have a young Brigadier General that is down at Parris Island, the head of the Recruit Depot at Parris Island... the very first female. Imagine that. Okay, all the females are going uh-huh, all of you. All you males in here, you know, will go holy smokes. We train infantry -- we train young recruits at Parris Island. It is the most storied Recruit Depot in all of the United States of America. Nobody puts out a tougher product, and we got a young female Brigadier General selected last year in charge of it, and by the way, by all accounts, she's hitting it out of the ballpark, so I think your answer to your question is yes.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): Have you been able to maintain your recruiting goals without lowering your academic or physical standards?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Absolutely. In fact, it's -- it's almost -- it's been interesting. When -- when we were directed by the President in 2007, to grow the Marine Corps from 186,000 at that point, up to 202,000, we set a timeframe; we said five years. The Commandant at the time was Jim Conway, who has spoken here several years ago, and Commandant Conway, said I don't want to do it in five years; I want to do it in four. Well, the Recruiting Command and everybody went whoa, now wait a minute. This is -- this is going to be really difficult. In fact, we actually completed it in about just a little over three years, so you'd think well, how did you do that? You must have lowered your standards. Well, actually, it was just the opposite. The DOD standard, for instance, for numbers of -- percentage of high school graduates for recruits is 90%, so in other words, if you bring in 100 recruits every year, the DOD standard says you have to have 90%. We're sitting at 99.8% high school graduates. When we started that in 2007, we were sitting at about 96.2 as I recall was the figure, give or take a half a percent, numbers of waivers for things that -- you know, small felonies, crimes -- things of that nature -- dropped by probably a factor of about at least a half, maybe even more than that. The kids...yep, I call them kids because they're my young Marines, and it's said affectionately, but they're smarter. Our dropout rates, because of their intellect, is -- have dropped by 50% and both in boot camp and follow-on so physically, mentally, morally and I think spiritually they're probably the finest Marines we've ever seen in 237 years.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): Why has the integration of gays into the Marines gone so well, and are there still some problems?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: You know, I don't think -- I don't think there -- there is a problem. I don't see it. I don't hear about it, and, you know, when I was asked -- and you talked about my position early on. When I was asked during my confirmation hearings what my recommendation would be and -- and I made my recommendation, then I was asked by Chairman Levin, who I think the world of, he said but General Amos, if the law changes, what are you going to do? I said well, shoot, Chairman, that's easy. We're the world's greatest -- you know, we obey orders. We do that better than anybody does, and we have, and so I'm very proud of how the Marine Corps has -- has -- how this has all gone. I don't -- I travel through the Corps. I'm in -- in combat over there as you see, as I've talked about often. I was just through the Pacific. I mean I get in front of the Marines often, as often as I can, so as to can get away from Washington. And -- and I'll be honest with you I never hear -- I don't even get a question. I don't hear anything. I'm not seeing anything at all, so -- and I'm very pleased with how this turned out, and I'm very proud with the Marines.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): What do you see as the biggest challenge facing the Marine Corps today?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: I think -- I think the matter of going from a -- going from a force that ten years of war it's in, all of us, have been in an environment of what I call an environment of plenty where because of the war both in Iraq and Afghanistan, we've been able to not only buy what we needed but to buy what we wanted. There's a difference, and so right now it's -- there's an education going on within my serviced on what's good enough. And it's -- you know, I've got young Lieutenants that are actually Captains today and young Majors that this is all they know. I mean if they needed something, they got it, and it's only us old guys that can remember some of the austere times in the periods, and that's why I've gone back and I've actually read what famous Commandants have said about these periods of what I call period of austerity, and I think we're in a period of austerity right now. We'll come out of it as a nation, and we'll come back into a period of prosperity somewhere down the road. But probably the greatest challenge I have right now is just making sure the Marine Corps gets back to being balanced and understands that we are in a period of austerity, and we need to be asking ourselves what's good enough? And then armed with what's good enough, then what's leftover with regards to modernization, what do we have to absolutely have to modernize? Joint Light Tactical Vehicle is one of those decisions. We're not going to buy 23,000 of them to replace all our Humvees. We're only going to buy five -- 5,000, so that's a matter of our Humvees are good enough, so it's a matter of kind of a culture change and a mental shift. I think that's probably my greatest challenge.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): During your time as Commandant, what do you consider your greatest accomplishment in the Marine Corps?

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Well, it may not be over yet so stay tuned. I think if -- I don't worry one bit. I don't sleep at night -- or go to bed at night worrying about the commandership in combat of -- of the young men and women that are in Afghanistan. I don't worry about the leadership out at the pointy end, and I don't worry about the education. I mean I think we're -- I think we're doing pretty well. I mean I feel good about that. I don't wring my hands. It doesn't mean we're not working it but I don't wring my hands. I think when it's all said and done, I will probably feel the most proud if I could shepherd the Marine Corps through the period of time we're in right now. A time that really started about a year ago last -- really the last summer and shepherd us through these very challenging fiscal times and still be able to give the United States of America, you, a credible crisis response force and to be able to balance all of that and come out the other end so that when the 36th Commandant comes along and he can look back and say, you know, those were tough times, but I'm glad we had the leadership of the 35th Commandant to shepherd us through. (Applause)

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): We are almost out of time, but before that I have a couple of housekeeping issues. First of all, I want to remind you of the upcoming luncheon speakers. On September 6th, we have Kathleen Turner, actress and Chair of Planned Parenthood's Board of Advocates will discuss reproductive rights and the state of women's health. On September 7th, Bruce Allen, General Manager of the Washington Redskins will discuss the team's upcoming season, and on September 12th, Tony Perkins, President of the Family Research Council will discuss the role of values in the November elections. Second, I'd like to present the General with our traditional press club mug and medallion.

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: All right.

THERESA WERNER (MODERATOR): And great for your coffee when you're really working hard on solving some task in the Marine Corps.

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: At 2:00 in the morning, I'll be drinking coffee out of this.
(Laughter)

(END)