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Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee

on

The impact of sequestration on the Marine Corps

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CMC SASC Sequestration Hearing Opening Statement – 7 November 2013

Chairman Levin, Ranking Member Inhofe, committee members, thank-you for your consistently strong support for your military forces...and for your obvious love of our country and justified concern for its defense. All of us sitting before you this morning are mindful of your collective and individual sacrifices, and are grateful for your unflinching fidelity.

The sequestered defense budget falls short in meeting the Marine Corps' requirements and those of the joint force. Your Marine Corps is ready today, but in order to maintain readiness within the current fiscal environment, we are mortgaging the readiness of tomorrow's Marine Corps to do so.

We are ready today because your Marines are resilient and determined to defend the United States of America. Despite year-after-year Continuing Resolutions, the Budget Control Act, furloughs, and the government shutdown ... the men and women who wear my cloth are patriots first. The defense of their fellow Americans and our way of life is their #1 priority...even over the comforts of self.

Last month's furlough of more than 14,000 of our Civilian Marines was a grave disservice to an honorable and dedicated workforce, who wants nothing more than to advance the security of the American people.

Our Civilian Marines are a vital part of our team...they are the technicians, the experts, the teachers, the clerks in our commissaries and our exchanges...they are our corporate memory...they are our surge capacity in our depots who provide unique skills in support of the Active and Reserve force. They deserve better quite frankly ... I am ashamed about the way they've been treated through furloughs and uncertainty.

During this first year of sequestration, I have realigned funds within my authorities to maintain unit readiness to the highest extent possible. My priorities have remained consistent...first and foremost, the near term-readiness of our forward deployed forces...followed by those next to deploy. But this readiness comes at the expense of infrastructure sustainment and modernization. We are funding today's readiness by curtailing future investment in equipment and facilities. This year, we are spending approximately 68% of what is required bare minimum to maintain our barracks, facilities, and bases. This is unsustainable and it can't continue over the long-term. If we are to succeed in future conflicts, we must modernize our equipment and maintain the infrastructure that enables our training. We must also invest in our people!

To meet the requirements of the Defense Strategic Guidance, we need a Marine Corps of 186,800 active duty Marines. A force of 186.8k allows us to meet our steady state operations and fight a major war. It preserves a 1:3 dwell for our Marines and their families. Under the 2011 Budget Control Act, the \$487B reduction cut our end strength to 182,000. With sequestration, I can no longer afford a force of 182k.

In February, we initiated a parallel study to the Department of Defense's Strategic Choices Management Review. Our internal review determined the force size that I could afford

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under a fully sequestered budget – this was not a strategy driven effort...it was a budget driven effort pure and simple.

Our exhaustive research, backed by independent analysis determined that a force of 174,000 Marines is the largest force that we can afford. Assuming that the requirements for Marines remain the same over the foreseeable future, a force of 174K will drive the Marine Corps to a 1:2 dwell. It will be that way for virtually all Marine units. Six months deployed – twelve months home recuperating, resetting and training – six months deployed. This is dangerously close to the same combat operational tempo we had in Iraq and Afghanistan while fighting in multiple theaters and maintaining steady state amphibious operations around the world.

The 174k force accepts great risk when our nation commits itself to its next major theater war. The 174k force makes significant reductions in ground combat and aviation units available for the fight. Under sequestration we will effectively lose a Marine division's worth of combat power. This is a Marine Corps that would deploy to fight a major contingency and not return until war's end. We will empty the entire bench. There would be no rotational relief like we had in Iraq and Afghanistan. Marines who joined the Corps during that war would likely go straight from the drill field to the battlefield without the benefit of pre-combat training.

We will have fewer forces, arriving less trained, arriving later to the fight. This would delay the buildup of combat power, allowing the enemy more time to build its defenses and would likely prolong combat operations all together. This is a formula for more American casualties. We only need to look to 1950 and the onset of the Korean War, to see the hazard and the fallacy in this approach.

Thank you again for this opportunity to appear before you. I will continue to work with the members of this committee to fix the problems we are faced with today. I am prepared to answer your questions.