

General James F. Amos, USMC
Commandant of the Marine Corps

Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee (as prepared)

May 6, 2014

Washington, DC

Chairman Levin, Ranking Member Inhofe and Members of the Committee, the current period of fiscal austerity has exacerbated an imbalance across the Marine Corps' budget. I, nor my fellow Joint Chiefs...and more importantly, the men and women who wear our service's cloth...those who have served our nation so faithfully, did not set the conditions for the fiscal calamity that we find ourselves in. As service chiefs, we are obliged to live within the budget and the laws passed by Congress.

Senators...none of us like where we find ourselves today. We've spent the greater part of a year restructuring each of our services under the cold reality of a fully sequestered budget. While the Bipartisan Budget Act provided much needed relief in 14 and 15, I am advised by many of your fellow members of congress to expect to return to full sequestration in 16 and beyond. We've made difficult choices...all of us have, as we've attempted to build a balanced and combat ready force. We have restructured and down-sized our services to live within our means. We have done all of this knowing full well that the world that we live in is a dangerous one...an international landscape that is seemingly getting more challenging as each day goes by. I see no indication that there will be a peace dividend once we complete the mission in Afghanistan later this year...Chairman...we will not do 'less with less in the decade to come...we will do the same with less.'

From a personnel perspective, our men and women have been compensated appropriately for their many sacrifices over the past decade of war. I make no apologies for that; they've deserved every penny that congress has afforded them. They have faithfully fought our nation's battles in some very dangerous places, all while successfully keeping the enemies of America far from our shores. Because of my loyalty to them, there is much about the compensation reform proposals that I don't like...but I'm stuck with them. I'm stuck with them because I have raided every other pot of money available to me to pay for a 'ready Marine Corps.'

As a service chief, I am first and foremost responsible for the defense of our nation. That task comes before all others...it is the sole reason why America has a Marine Corps. To accomplish this, the Marine Corps must maintain a high state of readiness. That's accomplished by having combat units that are highly skilled and highly trained...and it's done by having the right equipment in the hands of warriors who may be headed into harm's way. The most important way that we can keep faith with our men and women is to send them into combat with the best possible training and equipment...and to take care of them when they come home.

My challenge lies in balancing readiness, manpower, and modernization, all under sequestration. Our goal of consistently fielding a highly trained and combat ready Crisis Response Force for America is significantly pressurized by a military personnel account that has grown to 63 cents of every appropriated dollar. Balanced against readiness requirements, and an anemic military construction account, the Marine Corps' modernization & investment accounts comprise a mere 8 percent - 8 cents on the dollar...this is the lowest it's been in well over a decade.

At the end of the day, I am ultimately responsible for taking care of Marines, Sailors and their families. This includes ensuring our people are well compensated for their service, while also afforded the best training and equipment available to fight and win our nation's battles. For

Marines, their quality of service is as important as their quality of life. They understand that they must be prepared for uncertainty, and they must be prepared for their next mission.

Thank you for the opportunity to represent your Marine Corps, and its men and women. I thank the Committee for your continued support and I am prepared to answer your questions.