

Office of the Commandant of the Marine Corps

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**General James F. Amos,
Commandant,
US Marine Corps**

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Moderator:

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MR. O'HANLON: Well, good morning everyone. It's a real pleasure to have you here and to have General James Amos of the U.S. Marine Corps Commandant in what is perhaps his last think tank appearance of his distinguished tenure as Commandant of the Marine Corps, the 35th Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps. I'm Mike O'Hanlon from Brookings. We want to thank Carnegie for sharing its space with us today, and again, all of you for being here, but especially General Amos who's had, as I say, a remarkable career.

The last time we were lucky enough to have him speak at Brookings, I made a mistake and because of his vigor, I confused myself about the length of his service and said it had been 30 some years, and he later reminded me that it was closer to 40 some. And I think we're knocking on the door of 45 years, which is a remarkable period of service. I still can't quite believe it given how I've been only in recent times flown around the battle fields of Afghanistan by this pilot and watched him go on many tours around the world in support of his Marines, whether those still in Afghanistan today, whether those in the Pacific and elsewhere. He is a native of Idaho and a graduate of the University of Idaho and again, a Marine Corps aviator. Distinguished service in many different dimensions of the U.S. Marine Corps, several tours in Iraq during the intense period of combat there, and again, in support as Commandant of Marines in Afghanistan during much of the most difficult fighting especially, of course, during the last four years.

And so, General, thank you very much for being here and let me ask everyone to please join me in thanking you.

GENERAL AMOS: Thanks, Mike. Thank you. Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: And I know you'd like to begin with a few remarks and then we'll have a few questions and discussion up here before we go to your questions.

GENERAL AMOS: First of all, Mike, thanks. And this is, I think, my third, at least my third time at Brookings and I always find it engaging and I like the questions and the opportunity to be able to tell not only our stories, the joint chiefs, but also our stories, United States Marines.

Couple thoughts that come to mind. First of all kind of starting large and narrowing it down to myopically to the Marine Corps. The world we live in today is very, very dangerous and I think we need to just understand that. And it's not a matter of the sky is falling, I mean, I don't worry about that. But I am concerned about the international arena, I mean, everything from what we're dealing with today between the Israelis and Gaza, not what we're dealing with, what's happening there. Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, what's going on up in northern Pakistan with their military operations. Swinging around to the other side of the world to Africa and what's happening down there in the Sub-Sahara area. What's the latest movement for extremist forces moving from east to west across this Sub-Sahara area of Africa and what's the international community's responsibility as it deals in that. Everything from the just terrible things like the Boko Haram kidnapping young girls that continues to this day...So you look at that part of the world, the instability there and then spin the world around just a little bit more and come over into the Asia-Pacific area. And just last night, I just read a report this morning that North Korea is firing artillery shells certainly within their own area, but there's a signal they're trying to send. And so I think the world needs to be taken seriously.

And in that light, as it kind of comes back to the United States of America, the matter of what's our role in it? You know, what's our responsibility? Do we have one? I'd argue that some of the drumbeat I hear is let's just come back home. Let's just disengage. Let's let the world sort itself out and then we'll just see what happens. And this matter of a world's

policeman, that's probably a bad term. It's used extensively in the press and there'd been people talking about it. But, you know, I believe we have a role. I believe that the United States of America right, wrong, indifferent, good, bad, you know, we don't do everything right. We understand that. And as I travel around and talk to our international partners and our brothers, you know, sometimes they're quick to remind me of that.

But by and large, the United States of America really is a force for good. I mean, our heart is in the right spot. We want to help out and I would argue that we were probably the only country in the world that has the resources and the capability to be able to do some of this that others can't. We're at a point now where our teammates, our coalition partners, and while there are many, there are really only a handful that can be relied on consistently day after day. And some of them are in the audience here today. So the new world, not the new world, the world that we are in, not the one we are projected to be in, but the one we are in, ladies and gentlemen, is real. I think it's dangerous and I think that we as a nation have a role in that world whether we like it or not.

I made the comment for the last three years, mostly at the end of my remarks as I talk about this, you know, we may think we're done with all these nasty, thorny, tacky little things that are going on around the world. And I'd argue if you are in that nation, or you're in part of that, it's not a little tacky little thing for you, we may view it on this side of the Atlantic or the Pacific. It's a big deal for them. But we may think we're done with them, but they're not done with us.

And so what is our role? You know, I think that's something that ought to have, you know, national discussion and dialogue. Because out of that determines things like how much money then are we going to be willing to commit to partake in that world? You know, just

at what threshold is our level of responsibility, and then beyond that it's not our responsibility anymore? And I do think the international community, our partners, that's a dialogue we should have as responsible partners in this world. So that's kind of the world that I see it in. I think that any sense of isolationism and coming back and we're just going to come back to America and it's going to be okay, I think it's naïve in the world that we live in today.

So in that light, as we take a look at things like budgets and money, this is not a play. I don't come to Brookings or any of the other wonderful institutions and talk I need more money. But the reality is that if you take and you agree and think that there are responsibilities, then how does America address those responsibilities? It does it a number of ways, one of which is with its military. Certainly not the only way, and I would argue in most cases, maybe not the most effective way. Certainly diplomacy and all that has in the long run over time, I think, has a greater effect. But as it narrows it down to us in sequestration and budgets, there are decisions that have to be made.

So we are living with sequestration right now. There is a little bit of a happy face out there that says that between '14 and '15, the year we're in and the year we're about to enter, that we're going to be okay. We're about half sequestered. Well, I'll tell you what, my sense is I don't see Congress changing sequestration in '16. I want them to. They need to. They absolutely need to. But I don't see it happening. So what you're going to have is you're going to have the military departments and services that are going to be living under a sequestered budget. And the impacts of that, I think, are significant.

So that's where we are. We've designed a Marine Corps for the future under a fully sequestered budget. We have the option plan, which is the current plan, which is the PresBud plan. But Congress is the one that allocates the money. And beyond '16 and beyond

I'm just not confident, Mike, that Congress is going to fix it. So there's that.

So back now, so kind of large coming down, and now the Marine Corps and we have a role in that world that I talked about and I'll be happy to answer any questions about that if you'd like. We say that just a little over 190,000 marines today, about 190,444 to kind of be exact as of this morning, as of about an hour ago. So we started at 202,000, so we're on our way down. We are just almost 12,000 less than we were about a year and a half to two years ago. We're on our way down and under a fully sequestered budget, ladies and gentlemen, that's 175,000 Marines. So that's the target. That would be at the end of FY '17. If we stay at PresBud levels and we could be at 180,500. So we're on our way down and yet we've got about 33,000 Marines around the world today. Almost 70 percent of the entire United States Marine Corps, that 190,000 plus, are what we call operating forces. We have a very shallow, very small tail, which are all the support, the bases and stations and that, so most of those are operating forces. So of that 70 percent, 33,000 are forward-deployed as we gather in here this morning. We've got almost 6,000 still in Afghanistan. We're on our way down to zero by the end of December of this year.

And the plan is there, the equipment, and we've been very successful in getting our equipment out. So that's a good news story. I'll be happy to talk about Afghanistan as well on the Helmand Province. So we've got that many marines there. We've got the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit is in the North Arabian Gulf right now. That's three ships, the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group. And they're poised to do whatever missions are present and our nation feels are the right ones as it relates certainly in that region, but in particular Iraq. So they're there. We've got 1,200 -- excuse me, 1,100 Marines in Darwin, Australia. We've got almost about 21,500, almost 22,000 Marines west of the international dateline. And they're in

Iwakuni, Okinawa, some in Guam, Australia, and on our ships that are out there. So we are busy.

The last point I'd make here is as we draw the force down to 175,000, I don't see the requirements going away. I don't see them lessening. And that's an important point because if you start with the conversation I began with, with the world and all that, and then you come down. It's construction, ladies and gentlemen. Just ignore it and pay attention to me now. No, I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding you. If you look at that world and you believe it's real, and then you come down to our end and that equals, okay, a certain amount of forward-deployed Marines engaged aboard ships, out and about. Oh, by the way, we've got 1,000 Marines in Morón, Spain, the Special-Purpose Crisis Response Task Force for North Africa.

Then our deployment-to-dwell, if things don't change and we go to 175, the deployment-to-dwell for the Marine Corps, U.S. Marine Corps, for almost all our combat units are going to be about 1:1.6 to 1.7. That means you're going to be gone for seven months. You're going to come home for about 11 and then you're going to be gone again. We've experienced that. We were 1:1 in the height of the war in Iraq and we did that for almost about three years. The ideal deployment-to-dwell for reset, family, you know, just kind of getting your head back in the game is 1:3. So this 175,000 force is going to be deploying Marine Corps. I don't make any excuses or apologies for that. But I just don't see any other way we can do it and meet the requirements of the United States of America.

So I think just the last thing on this, is if you travel around and visit Marines, they are a happy lot. Our retention, our recruiting is off the page. If you want to be a young officer in the Marine Corps, male or female, the requirements to even have your package screened are way higher than probably down this front row and sitting in this chair that would have passed. And

some of you in the audience that are --

MR. O'HANLON: Except your wife.

GENERAL AMOS: Except for my wife.

MR. O'HANLON: And we want to thank her for being here again today. In fact, I'm going to interrupt briefly because I should have recognized her, not only for her 45 years of service to the Marine Corps, but as a representative of all the Marine Corps families. So if you'll allow me to interrupt.

GENERAL AMOS: No, no.

MR. O'HANLON: Could I ask everyone to please join me. I tried not to get you in trouble there either.

GENERAL AMOS: No, you just saved me my marriage here and thanks, Mike.

But so, and the same thing for the young enlisted Marines, if you want to join the Marine Corps today, the wait is about eight months to come in. It's just backlogged. So moral is high. The young Marines, we are a young force. Sixty-seven percent of the Marine Corps is on their first enlistment. They're on their first four years. That means they're somewhere between 18 and about 22 years old. They join the Marine Corps to deploy. So when I talk about deployment-to-dwell, the bulk of them actually really like that. And that's why they're scared to death that we're just going to come home and become a garrison Marine Corps, and that's not the case.

So there's a little bit of two edges on that sword. And the right thing for the commandant is try to find a balance. And on that, I think I'll just leave it there.

MR. O'HANLON: Well, thank you. Fantastic beginning and let's delve into a few of these topics in more detail. I know we'll come back to sequestration in a second. But I'd

like to pick up with your assessment of the dangers of the world because I know, and I certainly agree. I think you were very persuasive. But I also know you're proud of what your Marines have accomplished during your tenure and what the nation's been able to accomplish. And I know right now some of our weariness as a nation is probably because we feel a sense of frustration, a lot of the missions, look at Iraq, you know, the near miss in Afghanistan, and who knows where that's headed, the broader troubles in the Middle East, give a lot of Americans perhaps a sense of a world in chaos or a world in disarray and make them wonder if it's even worth the trouble. So I'm sure that's not the complete story. I wondered if you wanted to say anything about the progress that you've seen in some of these parts of the world and if that's a part of the narrative that you think is important to get out there too.

GENERAL AMOS: I think so. Thanks for the opportunity. There is positive things that are happening and it often gets overlooked as a result of the narrative because of all the stuff that's out there on the landscape. And you lose track of the good news that's happening just on the continent of Africa. If General Dave Rodriguez was in here, Dave would be able to give you, you know, point by point this is what's happening in this nation, this country, this military, this police force. These are the good news things that are happening in that country. It's not all Boca Haram.

And it's the same thing in Afghanistan. If you were to come with us to Helmand Province, and Mike has been there many times and so have many of you in here, you'd have seen the progress down there that it has been significant. I mean, significant to the point where I can look you in the eye and say that at the end of this year, our offensive military building operations mission is complete. What needs to happen now is the next part which is the nation building. All those things that have to take place, you know, continue the police force, get the logistics

systems and supply chain management in place. You know, continue supporting the rule of law in the local governance and the central government. So those things have to continue if Afghanistan's going to have a hope in the future.

But around the world, I see good news that's happening. Our relationship with the Philippines is better than it's been in 25 years. Twenty-five years ago we were asked to leave. Our relationship with the Philippines, probably out of necessity, and that's okay, I mean, there's nothing wrong with a necessity, is better than it's ever been. We're building relationships with Malaysia, Singapore, right now. We've got it with Australia. So there is good news happening around the world, Mike.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. I want to come back to the Asia-Pacific a little bit later because I know it's been a big emphasis for you and for the Marine Corps in general. We have the concept of air-sea battle, the rise of China, a lot going on. I'd like to delve into that in more detail.

First though, I'm going to ask if my Brookings special forces could please try to pursue the source of that construction noise and ask them to politely and kindly wait an hour before they continue if that's at all feasible. We are guests here at Carnegie while our auditorium's being redone. I didn't realize maybe we're causing the construction noise and it's just ricocheting over, but in any event, we'll see what we can do.

If I could now turn to sequestration though because you mentioned it a couple of times, and I think a lot of people would appreciate having their understanding clarified about where we stand. So I know you've been building a budget now and the Congress is now working on the budget for October. And that's a year where the budget's going to come down a lot, right, because the Ryan-Murray Compromise Bill from last December didn't really add a lot

of money for the 2015 budget, the year that's coming right up. And you're sort of trying to some extent, I assume, live off the overseas contingency operations budget to plug some gaps, but I know you're not really allowed to do that for your corps budget. Could you explain just how severe the budget cuts are going to be this October with the new fiscal year and just to give us a little more flavor here?

GENERAL AMOS: I think in '15, which will begin in October, my service, I think we're going to be okay because we moved monies around to maintain readiness. Our focus in the Marine Corps has been on readiness and to maintain because we're America's crisis response force. That's what we do. That's our job. In other words, we go tonight. We don't go a week from now or three weeks from now after we've been trained up. We go tonight. So that requires the forces to be at a high state of readiness and that costs money. That's training, that's fuel, that's ammunition, that's deployment to training areas, you know, things like this, flight hours for airplanes. So we've moved monies around, Mike, from programs. In other words, we've cancelled, I think, 13 programs. We moved money from the supply support for bases and stations and training ranges into readiness accounts. That coupled with the budget that we have, the Ryan-Murray budget that you talked about for '14 and '15, gives us enough to where we're going to be okay in '15.

The programs that we have remaining that are still intact are funded to a level that I'm satisfied with. But it's beyond that. It's '16 that I worry about because we're building '16 right now. That's where we as Americans need to really be concerned about because that's the one I said could very well return back to full sequestration. I mean, just so, you know, so give me an idea what that means. My budget this year is \$23.8 billion with a B, \$23.8 billion. That does not include the overseas contingency, the money to fund Afghanistan and the weapons and

the ammunition and then get the gear back from Afghanistan, \$23.8 billion. A year and a half, two years ago, my budget was \$25.6 billion. So you'll go that's not bad. Well, actually that's a little bit more than \$2 billion. Ladies and gentlemen, my entire procurement account, minus aviation because we share that budget with the Navy because we buy airplanes and all that stuff together, but for what we call the green equipment, which are tanks and vehicles, amphibious combat vehicles, and ammunition, and ground equipment, my entire procurement account is \$2 billion a year. That's it. It's \$2 billion a year. It is the smallest percentage-wise of any of the services. So when you take \$2 billion out of the account, yeah it'll all be balanced across all the other elements of our budget, but that's more than I have to buy, to modernize the Marine Corps for the future. So that just gives you a sense of the magnitude of that thing.

Now, one last comment because, you know, I try to do this just because it's important and we'd forgotten some of this. When Secretary Gates was leaving, his last about six months, he went to the services and said I want you to find \$200 billion worth of efficiencies. And we did. We found them. And they came out of all the services' accounts. It came out of ours and it came out of everybody else's. So remember that, \$200 billion. Then the Budget Control Act was passed and that was \$487 billion. So we're at \$687 billion all within about a year. And then a year and a half ago on March the 2nd when the sequestration law, the Budget Control Act actually became law because Congress didn't fix it, that's another \$500 billion. Folks, that's \$1.2 trillion. So my budget for 23.8 billion is that big. Imagine that divided into 1.2 trillion and stacked on top of one another and that's money that 1.2 is coming of the DOD budget. That's a lot of money. For me, the sequestration has a disproportionate effect on the Marine Corps because our budget is so small, you start taking 2 billion out and that's my entire procurement account.

MR. O'HANLON: One way I think that people try to get a feel for whether our defense spending is adequate is by looking at specific readiness issues and like you've said, that's something that you're riveted on and really focused on. Another dimension is in regard to China. And, of course, I know that you the service chiefs are working very hard to improve military to military contacts with China to do everything possible to minimize the chance this will become a nasty rivalry. But you still have to watch as China rises and, of course, the rebalance to the Asia-Pacific was a result to some extent of China's rise and the recognition we had to remind people that we're still there. And I think that's part of why you're putting more Marines in Darwin. So the question really is do you worry that as we cut and continue to cut and perhaps accelerate those cuts under sequestration, that gives China the wrong message? Is that one of your concerns or is that not really one of your main drivers?

GENERAL AMOS: Oh, I think it does. But I look at it even beyond China. I think it gives North Korea the wrong message. I think it gives the extremist groups around the world. People are paying attention. I mean, they're reading the same newspapers or watching the same news in the evening time, even absent any intelligence reports. The world is paying very, very close attention. That's why our partnerships with our allies is so critically important to add a sense of a unified front. But we are, we're sending a very strong signal. And I would argue that because of budgets and monetary fiscal decisions that impact strategy, as we pull out of things and are no longer present in some areas, don't think for a minute that those areas, those voids are not going to be filled. I mean, they'll be filled. It's human nature. But they may be filled by somebody or some nation or some ideology or whatever that is counter to the western world and western way of thought and peace. So I do think it's sending the wrong message, Mike. And I think it's dangerous. I think people are paying very close attention.

MR. O'HANLON: Is the rebalance itself at risk if we return to sequestration? I know you've got 1,100 Marines now in Darwin, but you're trying to get that to 2,500. You've got a relocation effort for some of the Marines on Okinawa to go to Guam. The Navy's trying to build up its fleet presence in the Asia-Pacific and trying by 2020 to have 60 percent of the fleet in that general part of the world. Presumably if the fleet shrinks too much even if you increase the proportion, you don't really have that effect. You sort of negate the effect. Is there any specific set of these policy proposals that are now on the books that are threatened by sequestration?

GENERAL AMOS: For us, when we sat down before QDR was -- excuse me, before sequestration came into law like I said a year and a half ago, we began to build a budget based on a fully sequestered Marine Corps -- excuse me, began to build a Marine Corps based on a fully sequestered budget. One of the going in assumptions, there were several of them, one was a high state of readiness across the Marine Corps. So we're going to maintain that. The second one was 22,500 Marines west of the international dateline, which is what Secretary Panetta directed the Marine Corps to do. So for deployed high state of readiness, the seven Marine Expeditionary Units that we have, we also built -- so these were attributes of the sequestered force as we began to build it. The other one was we'll have a crisis response special purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force for Africa and we're going to have one for Central Command, which we're building right now.

And so those were kind of the attributes and that defined the left and right lateral limits. And when we gave it to the planning group, we said build me a Marine Corps under basically a 10.2 percent reduction in the budget and tell me how big that force is going to be. And that is the 175,000 force. So for us, you know, a full sequestered budget still keeps our

presence and engagement in the Pacific and it does all those other things. So it's not going to affect us; except, once you get past about 2017, remember we are trading home station readiness and procurement and things and modernization to maintain that level of readiness in that forward-deployed force. Somewhere around 2017 to 2018, the 36th Commandant is going to have to take a pause and say I can't continue to do business this way. I'm going to have to recapitalize the equipment that needs to be modernized. I'm going to have to put money back into home station readiness or buildings or barracks or armories or facilities, otherwise, they're just going to fall down from rot. So I think we're going to be fine for about two or three more years. And if sequester stays, then the 36th Commandant's going to have to look at this and go, okay, I'm going to have to bring some forces back. I can't afford it out there. So it's out there looming. We can't go through the entire budget cycle the way we are under a fully sequestered budget.

MR. O'HANLON: Just to clarify my understanding two of these numbers. When you talk about the 175, the number that you think would be too small, but that would inevitably result under sequestration, are you assuming that you're going to get the base closures and the changes in some compensation policy on things like healthcare reform and maybe some further efficiencies and logistics and maintenance that the Pentagon has requested, but that Congress has refused? Or if you don't get those, is it going to be even lower than 175,000?

GENERAL AMOS: Now, for us 175 is the floor because we did not enfold in the compensation savings in the 175. We don't have any base closures for the Marine Corps because we're pretty small and we'd kind of done away with that years ago, we got rid of the excess. So I think we're going to be okay. The danger, of course, in that sequestered force is that's, as I said earlier, that's less than a one to two dwell. That's somewhere 1:1.6 dwell force,

which will over time, the career force, will begin to have an impact.

MR. O'HANLON: So I've got two more questions before we start to turn to you. One is going to be to come back to Afghanistan and one is going to be on air-sea battle and continue to discuss the broader Asia-Pacific.

On Afghanistan, and thanks to you and other marines and my good fortune I've been able to see much of the progress in Helmand, but a lot of people I know are worried about maybe some of that starting to slip. And I know not least the Commandant of the Marine Corps because you know the sacrifices that your men and women in uniform carried out and suffered in order to bring greater security that's now under threat, especially in northern Helmand. And I realize, you know, General Dunford's going to testify later this week and so we'll perhaps get greater levels of detail from the commander of forces there right now. But can you say anything to paint a broad picture for us about your confidence level that northern Helmand is not going to continue to deteriorate and with that, perhaps the rest of the province and even Kandahar become at greater risk?

GENERAL AMOS: I think, if you remember a year and a half almost two years ago, the northern Helmand area, an area called Sangin and up around Kajaki Dam and that was really pretty contentious. I mean, there was a lot of fighting that took place. That was kind of the last bastion of Al-Qaeda support and really -- excuse me, Taliban support up in that part. That was the last bastion in Helmand Province. Fought pretty hard, a lot of blood both us and our partners to include the Afghans, and things settled down quite well. I mean, quite well, amazingly well in many of the areas.

Then as we began to pull forces down, the force structure was replaced with the Afghan National Security Forces. There was fighting that continued to take place then as a test

of wills, which is exactly what we expected would happen. It ebbed and flowed. Then over the long run, for the most part, those areas like Sangin and Kajaki have held now with the Afghan National Security Forces. They've done a pretty phenomenal job up there in some tough areas. So I'm confident that they'll be able to, given the resources -- if we pulled out lock, stock, and barrel to include the financial support, I don't think they'd be -- there's no question they would not be able to hold, Mike. But that's not the plan. That's not the President's plan. So I'm confident that the 215th Corps in our area, General Malook, who you know, and his four brigade commanders, can handle the Helmand Province and do it well.

There are still areas in the very northern part of Helmand Province there are still areas that are very highly contested. We didn't clear some of those areas, and so they remain today. It's almost as if the clearing and kind of the building took place around an island of people so to speak. Is that a good way to do business? It's not necessarily a bad way to do business. Over time what you hope is they begin to look south and see that roads are paved and markets are open. There's people able to sell their stuff, maybe there's electricity, maybe there's fresh water and there's a sense of peace. Maybe they would put, you know, reach out and touch that themselves.

So I think we're going to be okay. I think now that the President has made the decision, the 9,800, they'll be continued support for those great warriors and leaders. And we've got a great governor down there right now, a great corps commander. Just replaced the chief of police for the province I think within the last day or two I understand. I think we're going to be okay. Is it going to be pretty? Is it going to be the way that we might like it to be nice and clean and scripted? Absolutely not. That's not the Afghan way.

MR. O'HANLON: Out of the 9,800, how many will be Marines? Is there a

rough sense of that?

GENERAL AMOS: Don't know yet. I really don't know because I haven't had a chance to talk to General Dunford about it and I'm not even sure that that's been decided yet. I think that stuff is going on right now.

MR. O'HANLON: So the last question I wanted to pose is on the Marine Corps role in air-sea battle. And just to remind people this is not a formal doctrine or strategy in the Pentagon. It's a concept the Air Force and the Navy developed several years ago partly in response to the spread of advanced anti-ship missiles and other such capabilities. Of course, the Chinese tend to see it as directed at them because they have more resources to buy more advanced anti-ship missiles and such than anyone else. But the Air Force and Navy say it's a generalized program to ensure our access. So here we are, now there's an official Pentagon concept paper and there's an official joint air-sea battle office as I understand it. But I remain a little confused about the Marine Corps role in air-sea battle.

So that's part A of the question. And part B is does air-sea battle as good of an idea as it's been in its early phases, need some refinement at this stage? You know, one thing I've proposed with Jim Steinberg is starting with the name. The name sounds a little overly assertive and maybe air-sea operations, which then allows for a greater role with more countries, as well as other services of the United States, might be a good logical next step, along with a few other changes. So I wanted to put that on the table. How do you feel about air-sea battle and what's the Marine Corps role in it as you finish up your tour as commandant?

GENERAL AMOS: Interesting you talked about the name because there was a couple of us on the joint chiefs and I'll just I'll leave their names out of it, but I'm one of them, that recommended a name change. And you might guess who the other one was. And the idea

behind it is just what you said, it sounds surgical. It sounds almost telescopic and it's really not that. It's designed to be, it's really kind of an honorable concept. It's a matter of how do we address nations that push us offshore, that push us away from their borders when we have to go to their borders or through their borders? How do you do that? It's an anti-access/area denial concept. Because the weapons have pushed ships out, the weapons have pushed forces out, whether it be airborne forces that are coming in, how do you deal with that? And that was the concept behind it. I think it got some bad press early on. There were people that used it as a programmatic tool. It's a way for the Navy and the Air Force to get more money than the Army and the Marine Corps. You know, that's conspiracy theory. I don't think that was the case.

I'll just tell you where it is today for us as the chiefs. It's a concept that we have to address as a joint force. And I'll get to the Marine Corps' role in this, the joint force in an anti-access/area denial situation. So forget about a specific country in the world that, you know, we immediately gravitate to. Think about denial. You know, this has been by the way and you go back in centuries of history, there have been lots of armies, lots of nations, lots of folks that have done their best to prevent the forces of another nation to come ashore or to move across their borders. Now, that's an area denial kind of thing. They've done it a variety of ways. They've done it with mines. They've done it by declaring zones. They've done it with navies. The French did it. The Spanish did it. The British did it. You know, we've done it. The North Koreans did it, and so on and on. But I would argue that the Iraqis did it in Kuwait when they mined all the coast of Kuwait during the first Gulf War.

So how do you deal with that? Those pieces are easy. It's the weapons that push you out and cause you to rethink your strategy. So you can't afford to allow that to dictate your ability to be able to do your operations. You know, we seldom try to force our will on

somebody. You know, we seldom, okay, we're coming ashore, we're going to come to through your borders whether you like it or not. Probably Iraq was the last place that we did that that I can think of. But I'll tell you what, when the time comes we need the ability to be able to operate in that kind of environment.

So how does the Marine Corps fit in that? You know, when you're dealing with a complex problem of area denial and anti-access, you want everything in your tool kit that you can possibly have. It's not just I'm going to fly some hypersonic missiles up through the tropopause and they're going to come down and shwack this things. That's not how you're going to solve this thing. It's to put the force on the other side that's denying you on the horns of a dilemma. I've got to -- what am I going to do? How am I going to possibly guard these 1,500 miles of coastline or these 300 miles of coastline or 2,000 miles of border? How am I going to do that? And you do that by putting them on the horns of a dilemma, by overwhelming his ability to be able to determine and predict where you're going to come in. And you do that with a variety of forces. You do it with the naval ships. You do that with the United States Marines. You go to the Pacific. You know, we bounced all through the Pacific in World War II going island hopping to island hopping. I mean, that was kind of our nom de guerre. And I'd argue that in a campaign where you've got naval forces and naval ships and you've got Marines, you've got F-35Bs that can land on roads and land in parking lots and land in matted areas on some island that heretofore has never even been a part of an anti-access campaign, that puts the enemy on the horns of a dilemma. So it's dispersion, it's all those things that challenge the enemy. And that's how we fit in this thing. I think we've got a great role in this thing. It's more than pointy nose, bright and shiny, highly expensive weapons. It's a thought. It's a little bit like maneuver warfare. It's a state of mind.

MR. O'HANLON: And I'm going to have one addendum and then please prepare your questions, because I did want to ask you to speak about something that's been important in your tenure, the amphibious combat vehicle. And, of course, you had some difficult decisions along the way in handling this question of how to get ashore. You've all had to deal with ups and downs with the F35 program. But on the ACV, as I believe you now call it, you cancelled the earlier vehicle, the expeditionary fighting vehicle for concerns about costs as I recall and how hopeful are you now both from the point of view of the ACV program's performance so far in the R&D phase, but also sequestration and the threat that would come from budget cuts, how hopeful are you about being on the right track now with the ACV?

GENERAL AMOS: Well, I think I'm hopeful with Congress first of all. Everything we do has to begin with our friends in both in the Senate and the House. They understand that the Marine Corps needs some type of vehicle that will come out of the belly of a ship. You only come off of a navy ship one of two ways, unless you're pier side. You come out and you either swim ashore in some type of vehicle or connector, or you fly off of them. We've got the flying off of it pretty well in the can. That's with our V-22's, our heavy lift helicopters and everything else. It's the coming out the belly of the ships in some type of surface, you know, venue that we haven't solved yet. We've got our old 40, they're now 44, almost 45-year old amphibious tractors. We used them in Iraq. We had them up all the way north, you know, three, 400 miles into Iraq. So those are the ones we're replacing. So the expeditionary fighting vehicle was the solution. By the way, it was designed in the eighties. Really kind of got a lot of rigor put into it in the nineties. And came into existence in 2002 and '03, and then it struggled until we cancelled it three years ago with Secretary Gates.

And I recommended cancelling it to the Secretary of the Navy and Secretary

Gates. It was too expensive. The reliability and maintainability on the vehicle was not what it needed to be. And the environment that we're going to operate in in the future with IEDs, shape charges, this vehicle is going to live 90 plus percent of its time on land. The enemy has figured out cheap weapons that can destroy a flat bottom vehicle that's thin skinned. And you can't make it super heavy if it's going to go 25 to 28 knots. It already weighed just an incredible amount. And so we built a vehicle that's optimized to go from ship to shore where it's only going to spend a small percentage of its time. Yeah, it could go 28 knots. Yes, it's going to break the bank. We can't afford it. Yes, the reliability and maintainability on it is not going to be good. And then we're going to expect it to fight ashore for 90 percent of its time with the marines in it in a sub-optimized vehicle ashore.

So that's the point I came to. I mean, I got to the decision point, you know. There was a Rubicon and we crossed it. I said I can't do this. I can't afford it. Let me say this, if we had -- because we just made the decision about four months ago, five months ago, that we're not going to buy that high-speed vehicle. We're not going to do it for all the reasons that made sense. If I had that high-speed vehicle today, flat bottom, thin skin, huge engine on the inside so it could go high water speed, I wouldn't put it inside of Iraq if I had to go back in. I wouldn't deploy it. I wouldn't deploy it in Afghanistan if I were to put vehicles in Afghanistan. I mean, I wouldn't do it today. If I had the brand new vehicle, I wouldn't put it in Iraq today. Why? Because it doesn't have the protection.

Folks, I'll tell you what, when we bought the MRAPS and we spent Congress gave us the first \$5 billion to buy the MRAPS. They did that to protect the sons and daughters of American people. And that vehicle, those MRAPS, as expensive as they were, saved lives and limbs of our young men and women and they've done it for our coalition partners as well.

Congress and the American people are not going to tolerate the Commandant of the Marine Corps sending marines ashore in a vehicle that has about 25 percent of the protection of an MRAP. So the vehicles you asked about how comfortable I am with a program, you know, how it's doing, the R&D and all that stuff, it's not a lot of R&D to it. You know, those four companies that are building this thing right now, they're already in production all four of them, so the first installment on this is a commercial off the shelf. It's affordable. The vehicle has MRAP protection, level protection, in some case, one of the vehicles has even got more. And it's got greater mobility and maneuverability ashore. It's got greater reliability and maintainability. It just doesn't go 28 knots in the water. If we're going to be off the coast in an anti-access area denial in some kind of sea-base that's 25, 50, 100 miles off, you're not going to swim those vehicles. I don't care whether it's an EFV or not, you're not swimming it ashore. You're not going to swim 100 miles. First of all you'd be out of gas and second of all, all of the marines in the back would be dying of nausea. You're going to put it on, you're going to come out and you're going to put it on some kind of connector. And that connector's going to go 30 or 40 knots. And it's going to deliver half a dozen vehicles. And then you're going to swim ashore or you're going, the connector's going to go ashore and you're going to drive off onto the land.

I got a lot of confidence in this thing. There's a lot of myth out there on this thing right now. But this is protection, cost, reliability, maintainability, and applicability ashore on the vehicle that's going to spend 90 plus percent of its time ashore.

MR. O'HANLON: Well, fantastic. I have learned a great deal already. Now, let's get some of the questions from the audience. Otto, please, start with you and I guess so you could wait for a microphone and then identify yourself before the question.

MR. KREISHER: Otto Kreisher with *Seapower* and *Semper Fi* magazines. Your

other priority your whole time as commandant has been the F35. We understand that they've lifted the grounding of it this morning, but it still has slowed down the program and it's raised a lot more questions, particularly in Congress as to whether we ought to go ahead with this thing. You've got the first squadron that's supposed to be operational sometime next year, but those guys have been grounded now for weeks. How do you look at the overall program and your first squadron on its hitting IOC mid-year?

GENERAL AMOS: Thanks, Otto. I read the same reports this morning and I saw some very late last night that came across one of the networks. They're not exactly correct because the grounding has not been lifted. I talked this morning just before I came here with Vice Admiral Dunaway, the head of Naval Air Systems Command. He is within the navy, Department of the Navy, he is the sole individual that has the authority to he's the guy that grounded them and he has the authority within the navy to give them a waiver. And he's got some good news today. I'll just leave it at that. That's his business. So I'm optimistic. I'm very optimistic. I've gone through the brief on all the analysis that's taken place over the last really three weeks. I mean, between the manufacturers both the engine in the airplane, all our engineers, the air force engineers, the UK engineers that have all got a dog in this fight, and there were a total of it's either 95 or 96 engines, Otto, that were in airplanes that had to be inspected. As of going into last night, all but three had been cleared. In other words, they've gone through, they've done this detailed, rigorous inspection through bore scopes and this other stuff. And they expected two of those three to be cleared last night. So I don't have the latest on that thing.

So what we have now is we believe we know what happened. We're just not quite sure why it happened. But here's through all the fault, they do a fault tree analysis, which is painfully detailed, and it's 135 steps in this fault tree analysis as I recall. And what if this

happens and that? And what's the likelihood? And this is engineering science that gives you a pretty high level of confidence that they know what they're doing. And everybody has kind of come to the conclusion that this is just something that happened. They're not, you know, there's people who say, well, maybe the airplane flew out of its envelope. I don't think that's the case. We've got 25 or 26,000 hours on these engines, 25 to 26. We got 17,000 hours, as I recall, airborne. And we've had this one thing. They've inspected all of the engines. They're in great shape. And I'll let Admiral Dunaway make his announcement officially today, but this is what I would call a one off. It doesn't mean it's not significant. It doesn't mean we're not going to pay attention to it. But it does mean that the level of confidence to return back to flight operations is pretty doggone high. And I feel good about it.

The airplane is doing well. I've had this conversation with you a number of times. This is called developmental testing. There's a reason it has that name, you know. Everything whether it is the Ford Pinto or whether it be F35B, went through developmental testing and they found things. That's kind of where we are. But if you go back and take a look at the massive amount of hours on this engine and to include airborne, and then the inspections that have just been done, that should give us a pretty high level of confidence in the airplane.

MR. KREISHER: IOC and first squadron?

GENERAL AMOS: IOC is the late summer of next year. That's the one that's in Yuma. And by the way, that squadron is fully stood up.

MR. KREISHER: You don't think it will be stood down?

GENERAL AMOS: Absolutely not.

MR. O'HANLON: Stay here. The gentlemen in the fifth row or so, gray jacket.

MR. LEVINSON: Hi, Rob Levinson, Bloomberg Government. General, you've

talked a lot about this morning about the top line numbers and the stresses in sequestration, but Mike alluded to the things like compensation reform and things like that. And I know that's a tough sell. You and the joint chiefs, you know, Admiral Dempsey goes -- or General Dempsey, excuse me, goes to a base and they say what are you doing to stop the TRICARE cuts? And he says nothing, I'm for them. I'm curious how you're selling that? You're going to be retired soon and selling that to the retired community, selling that to the active duty community. How do you sell that about the need for compensation change and how that plays out with current marines and former marines? Thanks.

GENERAL AMOS: Yeah, we'll always begin -- that's a good question. And we have had that question in my family, by the way. And so you've got to begin with what you think the problem is to begin with. So in other words, you can't ignore that. That's how it starts. If you just start with a solution, then you lose the sense of impact. In my service alone, 63 percent of every dollar, 63 cents of every dollar goes for compensation. So you bought a Marine Corps and it's your crisis response force. It's America's insurance policy, you know, a hedge against uncertainty. And yet today, 63 percent of every dollar goes to pay compensation. That's pay, that's benefits, that's retirement, that's healthcare, that's unemployment insurance. There's, I don't know, three or four other things all thrown in there. So and it's projected to be 67 percent or 67 cents on every dollar by the end of, I think, the FYDP, as I recall my money guys are telling me. So if I don't do something and we don't take a reasonable approach to this, then you're going to have a Marine Corps that's going to be an entitlements organization instead of a war fighting organization. So then it's going to be send in the Marines. Well, I'm sorry, they're all on, you know, they're collecting their entitlements so they're not ready. So I mean, that's kind of that's where you got to begin this run. So there is a sense of urgency.

The Marine Corps doesn't cost any more. Marines actually cost less and I've got the numbers for all the services. It's not a matter of we're more expensive, but because our share of the budget, we share a budget with the Department of the Navy with the Navy, our percentage share of that is smaller. And it's 17 percent of the U.S. Navy budget, or the DoN budget. And so the cost, relative cost, of Marines are higher percentage wise. And you just got to believe me on that.

So what do you do? Well, I'll give you, you know, BAH, basic allowance for housing. It goes up two to three percent every single year. It's automatic. Now there's little surveys to go out and we do all this stuff and we, you know, I live in -- I don't live in Alexander, but I got in a place in Alexander, and so if I happen to live there, it goes up two to three percent. The minute that goes up, the rents go up. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. But we do that just because we do it. Well, why don't we lower ramp on that to maybe one percent? So is that reasonable? I think it's reasonable. Why don't we take a look at TRICARE for Life and say and TRICARE in a retirement, you know, post-retirement take a look at ages. Is it unreasonable to think that some of the burden costs of a healthcare system that hasn't had a rate increase since I think 1996 -- the only healthcare program in America, by the way, the only one that I'm aware of, so is it unreasonable to think that a marine that joined the corps at 18, retired at 20, so now he or she is 38, and they've got -- and I just saw by the way, just read in my *Money Magazine* last night, life expectancy for a male is now 86, so females is even higher, it's 88, so is it unreasonable to think that during those wage earning years, the 40 years to maybe 65, that they couldn't share a greater percentage of the burden of TRICARE For Life? I don't think that's unreasonable. Now, if you listen to all the veterans service organizations, it's anathema. I mean, you are, you're just, it's terrible. You're breaking faith. Well, ladies and gentlemen, if we don't

do something about compensation, we'll have a bigger problem on our hands. We'll have broken our military's faith with the nation and we're not going to be able to be a war fighting force in my case.

So is that reasonable? I think it is. Did they look at it and say, okay, what is the reasonable percentage rate of increase during those second career kind of years? And I think they did that. In fact, I know for a fact they did. What about beyond? You get 65 or 63, whatever the age is, and you get the kind of guys like me that now are out there and they've retired. I don't think the percentage increase for those folks is that great. We certainly have a higher percentage increase for officers than we do for enlisted. That's the way it should be.

What else? Pay, with general officers and flag officers, zero pay increase. The lower the pay increase for the force out there during the FYDP, during the Future Years Defense Program. Is that reasonable? Well, folks, if we're under sequestration, I think it's reasonable. I think the percentage increase. I mean, hell, I'd like to get a 10 percent increase, but we can't afford it as a nation. You know, so it's all that together. I think it's reasonable. And when I talk to marines about this, by the way, well, let me talk commissaries for a second. And I said at the last hearing when we all sat and all the chiefs were there, I said I think this commissary thing is a red herring. Commissary is important to us, to the average man and woman in the military and their family members. So to think that you're going to go and you're going to tell Congress we're going to have these savings out of commissary and we don't force DeCA, the defense whatever it is, Commissary Agency, and we don't force them to become more efficient so that they can find the savings within their own program and the way they do business instead of putting that burden on the families and taking a 10 percent reduction in savings for the families, I think that's shameful. So that's the reason why I testified then. I said I think we ought to reverse

the dialogue on this commissary. Keep the commissaries. Let the families have their 30 percent savings. I don't think that's unreasonable at all. I think they ought to have it. And let's force DeCA to be a little bit, a heck of a lot more efficient in finding the savings. So you roll all that together, and when I talk to marines you know how many questions I've had across the corps on, hey, sir, what about my TRICARE For Life? You know, sir, I'm only going to get one percent pay. You know how many questions the sergeant major and I have had? Zero. Not one time, not once has a single marine or spouse or family member brought up, not a single time.

So how do I explain it? I explain it just like that. And usually by the time I'm done, they go their ears are bleeding and they're tired of hearing about it. They want to move on.

MR. O'HANLON: Ma'am, right next to the gentleman.

MS. WALSH: General, my name is Mary Walsh from CBS News.

GENERAL AMOS: Hello, Mary.

MS. WALSH: Hi. So has the United States maintained a mil-to-mil relationship with Iraqi armed forces?

GENERAL AMOS: Have they maintained a?

MS. WALSH: Military-to-military relationship with Iraqi armed forces and what is the reaction among the chiefs and general officers at the collapse of divisions of the Iraqi Army in the face of ISIS? And what do you see is the way ahead for the Iraqi people and their military?

GENERAL AMOS: Yeah, Mary, first of all I'll just say it breaks our hearts. There's I think I'm on solid ground to talk for my colleagues, my fellow chiefs, and I think all the senior leaders. It's not just the generals and flag officers, all the Marines, senior enlisted that fought both in Iraq and for us it was pretty expensive, 852 Marines killed in action. Almost

8,500 Marines wounded in Iraq alone. Twelve, excuse me, six, seven years of hard fighting in some of the toughest areas in Iraq out in the Anbar Province. So it breaks our hearts. And to watch this opportunity to really coalesce a nation, people use the term, inclusive, I actually kind of like it in this case. I think it pertains. I mean, inclusive military, an inclusive government inside Iraq that has, I don't think it's being Pollyannaish, has a sense of I guess patience for different cultures and different religions. And so they work together for the greater good of the nation. In other words, this is nation building. When we left Iraq, goodness, I guess it was 2010, I guess 2010, I think.

MR. O'HANLON: You mean the marines or the country?

GENERAL AMOS: Well, we did.

MR. O'HANLON: Yeah, I think you're right, 2010.

GENERAL AMOS: 2010. When we drove out of Anbar Province, I mean, I remember it. There wasn't any Marine that got in the vehicle or got in a airplane and flew out that didn't feel damn good about what they'd done, to include all the ones that had gone before. They felt good about it. They believed that they made a difference and you saw it in places like Ramadi and Fallujah. You saw it in something as simple as a fresh water treatment plant that sucked all that nasty water out of the Euphrates and turned it into clean water and drinking water, and electricity in streets and the lights in schools and markets. And it was time for us to leave. We'd completed. We'd done what we said we were going to do. And actually we'd done what we were told to do. And so you look at that now and it breaks your heart. So number one, that's the first answer to your question.

How's it going to turn out? I don't know. You're aware that the assessment reports have come back in and I have not seen them yet. And I'm sure I'll get a copy. I'll get an

opportunity here very soon to take a look at along with chiefs. And so I can't comment on that because I can't tell you what they said or what the recommendations are. But again, the assessments are designed to provide the President and the senior leadership some sense of what the art of the possible is. I mean, what could we do as a nation that would be the right thing to do? Then we as a nation then have to decide do we have a roll there anymore or not? You know, what do we, you know, we're working right now with the ISR in trying to provide that kind of assistance. How much farther? I don't know where it's going to go. I don't know, Mary.

MR. O'HANLON: Here in the second row and then we'll go to the third and then I'll start working back.

SPEAKER: I just wonder if you can address some issues when people talk about for instance the Military Industrial Complex. Obviously there's a lot of problem is really opportunity to the free market mechanism according to the free bid or contracting job or contractors and behavior has problems or even foreigners they said that you are not really according to their democracy need or they don't want you to stay there to maintain the U.S. military bases. So obviously, there's other problems.

MR. O'HANLON: Ma'am, I just want to make sure I can clarify the question for anybody who didn't hear it. Are you asking primarily about certain countries overseas where the U.S. is partnering? Or are you asking more about the way we do contracting at home?

SPEAKER: Actually, the whole thing is related. I want to see the issues. We hear the people talk about how are we going to save the budget, trim the budget and they really don't you trim, you have the budget, your bid is high and then you want to have a 25 percent higher than previous years and it is not working better or nor have the accountabilities. And they

just said we say we want the U.S. government to maintain a Military Industrial Complex because we want to have freedom. The problem the United States citizens are people they don't even think you are have really achieving the goal. Instead you are destroying the democracy and the freedom, both in the United States and overseas. So I just wondered if you can address this type of issue. Why oversea people they don't want you to U.S. military to help them or to maintain the bases there forever?

MR. O'HANLON: Well, thank you. Let me, I think there are two questions and maybe you can choose which, because they're very different. One, has to do with our overall foreign policy. Are we working in defense of the wrong countries or the wrong partners? Are we losing partners? I think that was one element of it. Another part was, are we being sufficiently accountable to the taxpayer in terms of the efficiency with which the Pentagon is now run? I heard elements in both those questions; maybe you can pick one or the other.

GENERAL AMOS: Okay, well, let me just I'll give it a shot at both of them. First of all, what I didn't say to begin with when I started talking about our share of the budget and \$23.8 billion and all that, there isn't a service chief that's out there that doesn't understand the fiscal challenges that reside in America today, not one. And I'd ask everybody to remember we're taxpayers. In other words, I pay my taxes just like everybody else does. And it's a concern of mine. The very best thing that can happen to our country and to our partners and really global. I've got another brief I give that talks about the value of a robust global economy. Now that in and of itself has a way to solve a whole lot of ilk's and problems. But the best thing taking it home for us would be to have an economy that was robust, the industrial bases moving forward, imports, exports are in balance, and unemployment is low and all that. So I'm, you know, this is not a myopic, this is just a view of the military piece of this thing. We share a piece

of this. But what I'm trying to do in my comments as I speak publically is just to understand there is a piece of our responsibility as a global power that we have to face or we turn our back on. In other words, we have to make a decision. That's all I'm trying to do. That decision could conceivably cost money. And I just want us to make an informed decision on the world that we live in and the U.S. military cannot be the sole provider of the restoration of the U.S. economy. It cannot be the sole engine behind that. And it's easy for the government to look at us. And I understand that because we actually have a lot of money. The question is how much do we need as a nation for its military? So it's easy to come to that. It's easy to go to programs, cancel programs, sell off for structure. And I already, I mean, I described I thought, the requirements on the United States Marine Corps today and I don't think they're going to go away. Are we not going to go the Philippines and help out when they've got another super typhoon that comes through? Are we not going to go to northern Japan and help out when they have another earthquake and typhoon and nuclear disaster? Are we not going to pull ships into the north Arabian Gulf when things are getting hot in there? Are we not going to go off the coast of Yemen? Are we not, you know, on and on and on?

So what is it we're not going to do as the United States Marine Corps? We stay the way we're going, we are going to be on this rapid turnaround force. So I just, you know, I want to say that the military has an appreciation probably maybe even more so than most on how we fit in the national and global economy.

The matter of are we partnering with the right nations and are we turning our back on others on the wrong ones? You know, we work pretty hard to try to determine who we should partner with. We leave that to our combatant commanders and the State Department. It's not the military. We don't sit, not the U.S., not the services, we don't unilaterally say we're going to go

operate with this country or that. I think we're engaging with the right countries. My greatest concern right now is capacity. I mean, if you were to talk to any of the combatant commanders, they would tell you that they've got a requirement that is this high and they've got a resource level that's this high with regards to people being able to go out and train. I'm not talking about doing anything more than helping nations in some cases figure out how they can protect their own borders. Train your own border police. Train your rudimentary military in just fundamental marksmanship and rule of law and crowd control. The requirements are here, the resources are at this level. So I think we're doing that. You know, you could onesy, twosy and say this is the wrong nation and we could probably all take a vote. Maybe we'd agree, maybe we wouldn't. But I think our partners for the most part that are senior leadership picks are the right targets. Are there some we're missing? Maybe. Are there some that we don't even know about yet and that we go forward? Yes. I think we'll find some in the future.

Nobody even knew where Mali was on the map until about a year and a half ago. Nobody did except maybe the French. So I'd argue that that part of the world's become very, very important. What was the other question?

MR. O'HANLON: I think you covered them both. Yeah, so that's great. Let's go to the gentleman here in the white shirt and then we'll try to work back a little bit.

MR. FARMER: Hi, I'm Nick Farmer. You haven't spoken at all about the western hemisphere. And it seems to me with all the increasing instability in Mexico and Central America, parts of South America, do you see any roll that the Marine Corps might be called upon to help the countries in the region establish a better basis of law and order and prevent any potential serious threat to the security of the United States?

GENERAL AMOS: Yeah, we are. Our roll first of all unless we get told to do it,

in which case we'll be happy to say, yes, sir, is not necessarily border security. That's really not why America has a Marine Corps. But if told to do it, we'd do it. But we actually have a pretty close relationship; let's just call our closest partner, Mexico. And we're all aware of the challenges that are down there with the drug cartels and everything that's going on in Mexico. We've been working very closely with the Mexican marines and most of it has been completely below the radar screen. But if you remember when the Mexican military captured, what was his name? The big El Chapo, remember about four or five months ago they captured him? You know who did that? It was the Mexican Marines. You know who are partner is? It's the Mexican Marines. So we're joined at the hip with the Mexican Marines. We trained with them. We operate with them. We trained with them in several different locations in the country. We've got a very close relationship with the Mexican Marines. And at last count, that force was so effective inside that country that they have doubled the government, the government was doubling the size of the Mexican Marines Corps. Imagine that. I'm going down the other direction and they're doubling in size. So this isn't necessarily a function of us, but it's a function of relevance to the force and we certainly are a partner in that.

We trained and we've been training with the Colombian Marines for almost a decade and a half. I'd argue that it's a lot of people that a lot of agencies that have worked very closely with the country of Colombia. But if you want to talk about a nation that has fought a heck of a insurgency inside its own borders, and has come out pretty doggone successful in anybody's measure, standard of measure, it would be Colombia. We've been, you know, a avid partner with them. We continue to be a partner with them today. We're training in other nations in South America. And if General John Kelley was here, the south combatant commander, John, would walk you through. Most of them are in what I call small penny packets. Just gets to kind

of are we engaging with the right nations around the world? So we'll go in with three or four helicopters and maybe a, you know, a dozen or two marines, and we'll train. And we'll be in one country in the deepest, darkest part of a nation down in South America training with them. So we are doing that. Is it what we call an economy of force kind of theatre where we're so busy with everything else, we're just kind of doing enough to kind of hang on? That's probably a good statement. But we are engaged with them.

MR. O'HANLON: Woman here in the black dress, yeah, just right there. Thank you.

MS. HODGE SECK: Hello, Hope Hodge Seck with *Marine Corps Times*.

GENERAL AMOS: Put the microphone up, please, Hope, so I can hear it, please.

MS. HODGE SECK: I'm sorry about that. So the big announcement from the Marine Corps last week was, of course, opening the infantry training for officers to more female officers in the fleet. And that decision was the background for it was that, you know, so far in two years there have been 20 volunteers and nobody has made it through from TBS. So I was hoping you could speak to kind of what the data so far with those statistics I just mentioned, what that communicates to the Marine Corps, to the people analyzing this and what it'll mean kind of at the end of 2015, if there is still no female volunteers who have passed IFC.

GENERAL AMOS: Yeah, okay, I think I understand your question. The infantry officer's course is the course that all marines, infantry heretofore has been males for 238 years, pass through. And once they become a commissioned officer, might go to Pensacola or go to flight school. And infantry officer goes to if you're going to be an infantry officer, you go to the infantry officers' course. Quantico, very, very difficult and very challenging. Probably if you took the toughest courses maybe in even special ops in some of the other services and you said,

okay, that's the standard, I mean, that's really, really, hard. I'd say infantry officers' course is maybe just a notch below that. But it's very difficult. It is not difficult to keep women out. It's long before we ever started doing any of this thing. It's difficult because a young lieutenant that's 22 years old and gets a platoon of Marines that are 28 and he ends up in a combat area all by himself. He is the sole decision maker. The sole individual whose lives those 28 young, 18, 19, 22, 23-year-old Marines rest on. I've seen it again and again. So that young heretofore male, that infantry officer, I'll live it at that, has to be tough. Has to be physically tough, has to be mentally agile. Has to have the presence of mind the ability to be able to make decisions under great duress and under chaos and confusion, and has to be able to more than anybody else in that platoon be able to endure and persist again and again when everybody else wants to quit because it's too hard, it's too cold, or too tired, they're too scared, that lieutenant has to be able to stand up and be able to lead those Marines forward and so the standards are very, very high. They've been high. They've even increased as a result of 13 years of combat, things that we've learned. We never had lieutenants out by themselves in their platoons, you know, 50, 60 kilometers away from their company. That happens all the time today. I mean, there will be no rescue. There will be nobody's going to come and snatch you out of a bad situation more than likely. So that whole platoon resides on the abilities, the intellect, and the skill, the decision making of that lieutenant. So we make it very hard and I make no apologies for it. And it's going to stay that way and what we have done is, by the way, most of our female lieutenants don't join the Marine Corps to be infantry officers. What they do want is the opportunity to compete, and we've done that. And what we've done now is I've just signed a memorandum or a marine administrative memorandum offering our company grade first lieutenants and captains, the females that are out in the fleet, in other words, they've already gone through their logisticians. Some are pilots,

some are Intel officers or in the fleet, they have the opportunity to volunteer to come back and attend the infantry officers' course and be part of our information gathering. So we've just done that and we've actually got a couple of our first volunteers. So yet to be seen, but the one thing I'm not going to do and I've been very clear with everybody, I'm not going to lower the standards. It's not going to happen. It's not going to happen on my watch.

MR. O'HANLON: Let's do final two questions together, if we could and I'll try to keep my promise to go further back in the room. So, yeah, right here, the gentleman in the pink shirt, I guess. And then -- or purple, and then the woman over here holding up her pen. And we'll take those two together if we could and then wrap up.

MR. SARGENT: Hi, sir, Gary Sargent, TS Light. I'm a retired Army Special Forces lieutenant colonel. And I just want to make one quick comment and then I want to go into a question on foreign internal defense and how the marines are sort of rolling into that since we sort of talked about that a little with your South America thing. You can take some more of my TRICARE away. I just want you to get rid of the joint strike fighter. But anyways --

GENERAL AMOS: Well, can we make a compromise? Get rid of one of the services joint strike fighter.

MR. SARGENT: I have no problem with getting rid of all of them. But anyways, but what I do want to ask is sort of just your comments on foreign internal defense. Where is it going with the Marines? It's one of the key pieces to the Marine Corps from years prior, you know, and is that a positive where you going increasing and both in the maritime realm as well as the conventional infantry support type stuff.

GENERAL AMOS: Yeah, well, --

MR. O'HANLON: Okay, I'm sorry, we'll try to take this hopefully there's some

synergy, but we'll see how it goes.

MS. BRANNAN: Hi, Kate Brannan, with *Foreign Policy*. I was wondering, General Amos, if you could tell us what your suggestion was for air-sea battle for a new name? And also looking at the Iraqi security forces and what's happened there, are you concerned that the same thing will happen to the Afghan security forces once we leave? Thanks.

GENERAL AMOS: What was the first part of her question?

MR. O'HANLON: Well, air-sea battle, do you have, can you say what your alternative framing or name would be for air-sea battle, if you're willing?

GENERAL AMOS: Okay, and then the last part would be as it relates to comparing Iraq to Afghanistan and if we did the same thing in Afghanistan that we did in Iraq, pull out that am I afraid that the same thing might happen? Okay.

MR. O'HANLON: Okay, so yes.

GENERAL AMOS: Is that it? Oh, okay.

MR. O'HANLON: Over to you, sorry to bombard you --

GENERAL AMOS: I didn't know whether you were going -- no, I'm just --

MR. O'HANLON: -- with so many pretty harsh questions, but very good ones.

GENERAL AMOS: Okay, I'm going to come back to FID here in just a second, but the second part of your question is, yes, I am concerned about that. Two different nations, I mean completely different cultures, two different educational, you know, cultural educational. It's just two complete nations, different. But I think the common denominator is I just I find it hard to believe knowing how Iraq looked when we left in 2010, when we left, the marines, and then what it looked like when the last U.S. forces left. That we would be in the position we're in today in Iraq had we had the right forces, the right leadership, the right mentoring, the right

government and courage. All the things that you think of that just kind of makes sense. Again, not combat forces. Iraq didn't need combat forces when we left. They'd already had, they were trained up. But I have a hard time believing that had we been there and working with the government and working with parliament and working with the minister of defense, the minister of interior, and the governance and the rule of law, I mean, all of that stuff, that I don't think we'd be in the shape we're in today. That's just my personal opinion.

So I do think that were we to go to the zero option in Afghanistan, which was a possibility until the President made his latest decision, that I think there's a very good chance that the something similar, again, different nations, different cultures, would happen in Afghanistan. So that's the first thing.

And the first part of the question, air-sea battle, no, I'm not going to tell you what we were going to because it may come out a different name. But it is a subject of conversation among the chiefs. But it'll be something that'll make complete sense.

And back to FID, we did, we've done that as you said, all our lives and in the last probably 12 years since we became so focused on Iraq and then so focused on Central Command, and then the growth of the special operations forces, I mean, significantly significant growth, that that became kind of a niche, I guess, capability set that belonged in special ops. And we got away from that, you know, we were pieces of that around the world, South America, Asia-Pacific, but it became that's somebody else's niche. As we kind of pulled back, it's not white collar welfare and it's not job security. But I think general purpose forces, general purpose U.S. Marine forces can absolutely be a part of the foreign internal defense.

I mean, even the name of that makes sense. You know, we go I just talked about penny packets of training marines down in South America, the answer is, yes. And I think

you're going to see this also, General Odierno believes this as well. You know, most of these young soldiers and marines that are trained down at the young level, actually have the skill sets to be able to do foreign internal defense. This isn't something that's really magic. And so I think it's a mission that can be shared across SOCOM. I think they're probably some missions that SOCOM should do in foreign internal defense. I think it would be naïve to think that we couldn't do something like that or the army, some Ray Odierno's soldiers couldn't do foreign internal defense. I think we're going to go that way, by the way. I think we actually are. We're kind of migrating that way right now. As we rebalance roles and missions between SOCOM and kind of the two land forces, which are General Odierno's forces and mine.

MR. O'HANLON: Well, listen, General, thank you so much for all you do for us, for the nation, you and your marines, all your families, what you've done over your career, we're very, very grateful.

GENERAL AMOS: Thank you.

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