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Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee (as submitted) on the impact of
Sequestration

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The Marine Corps is *the* Nation's expeditionary force-in-readiness. Congress specifically – and uniquely – structured the organization and prescribed the role of the Marine Corps as a “...balanced force-in-readiness, air and ground...to suppress or contain international disturbances short of large scale war.” To that end, Marines serve forward to shape events, manage instability, project influence, respond to crises, and when necessary, serve as the initial response force that enables heavier contingency forces to deploy from the United States. Marines are expeditionary – partnered with the Navy, we come from the sea, to operate ashore, but without dependence on fixed bases or facilities. Our role as America's 9-1-1 force informs how we man, train, and equip our force. It also drives how we prioritize and allocate the resources we are provided by Congress.

Today, there are over 31,000 Marines forward engaged conducting a full range of theater security and crisis response missions. Marine Expeditionary Units are embarked and underway aboard Amphibious Ready Groups as part of a strong Navy-Marine Corps team. These combined arms air-ground-logistics forces, consisting of approximately 2,400 Marines and sailors, are capable of responding rapidly to a wide range of forward presence and stability missions. Marines are currently conducting security cooperation activities in 29 countries across the globe. Marines are deployed to Iraq supporting Operation Inherent Resolve and in Afghanistan supporting Operation Freedom's Sentinel. They are on alert status in Moron, Spain and Sigonella, Italy - ready to respond to crises across Africa and Europe. Over 22,000 Marines are west of the international dateline in the Pacific building partnership capacity, strengthening alliances, deterring aggression, and preparing for any contingency. Marines are routinely serving at 175 embassies and consulates around the globe and currently reinforcing security with additional forces at our embassies in Iraq and Yemen. Your Marines serving today in the operating forces are either deployed, getting ready to deploy, or have recently returned from deployment. Our operational tempo since September 11, 2001 has been high and remains high today. We expect this trend to continue.

Your Marines are proud to be the Nation's ready force. They are proud that they were the force of choice for immediate response during the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan, the earthquake in Turkey, the flood in Pakistan, the devastating tsunami in the Indian Ocean basin, and the Ebola epidemic in West Africa. Marines are proud of their recent role in safely evacuating American citizens in South Sudan and Libya. They are proud of their performance in Iraq and Afghanistan. With the support of Congress, they are committed to remaining ready and continuing a tradition of innovation, adaptation, and winning the Nation's battles.

Maintaining the readiness of our forward deployed Marines during a period of fiscal uncertainty has come at a cost. To meet our responsibilities as the Nation's 9-1-1 force, we prioritized near-term readiness while assuming risk in our home station readiness, modernization, infrastructure sustainment, and quality of life programs. Today, approximately half of our home station units are at an unacceptable level of readiness. Our investment in the future is less than what we believe is required, and we are funding our infrastructure sustainment below the Department of Defense (DoD) standard. We have significantly reduced many of the programs that have allowed us to maintain morale and family readiness through over a decade of war. We are also maintaining a

very challenging level of deployment-to-dwell time. Our operating forces are deploying for up to 7 months and returning home for 14 or less months before redeploying.

While we can meet the requirements of the President's Defense Strategic Guidance (DSG) today, there is no margin. We have yet to fully appreciate the impact of cuts that have been made to date. Sequestration reductions will cut the DoD's 10 year plan by approximately \$600 billion. The Marines Corps' share of this cut has caused us to make difficult decisions that have significantly degraded our ability to respond to a major contingency today and adversely affected our ability to maintain a ready force for tomorrow. The sequestration cuts to date, combined with a sustained high level of operations, will challenge our future ability to be the Nation's force-in-readiness.

The Marine Corps views readiness through the lens of the five pillars of readiness: high quality people, near-term unit readiness, capability and capacity to meet combatant commanders' requirements, infrastructure sustainment, and modernization. The sequestration cuts to date, and the challenges associated with an increasingly dangerous and uncertain world, have precluded us from maintaining balanced readiness even as we stretch to meet the DSG requirements. However, the possibility of an extended period of severely reduced funding as a result of sequestration coupled with the inefficient manner in which those cuts must be applied will preclude the Marine Corps from meeting the requirements of the DSG and the requirements of the geographic combatant commanders. We will continue to protect near-term unit readiness at the expense of other areas, but our capacity for crisis and major contingency response will be significantly reduced. In short, the full weight of the sequestration reductions will preclude the Marine Corps from meeting its full Title X responsibilities and adequately preparing for the future.

The Marine Corps continues to evaluate the long-term impacts of the sequestration reductions. The fiscal challenges we already face today will be exacerbated and significant additional challenges will be forced on all the Services. Through thorough analysis, we have determined that the Marine Corps will assume additional significant risk in long-term modernization and infrastructure sustainment as well as further detrimental impacts to readiness. The Marine Corps' capacity to meet operational requirements in the long-term will be reduced. We expect that we will be forced to further reduce our active component force resulting in an unacceptable deployment to dwell ratio of less than 1:2 for most of our key operational units and their critical enablers. Our non-deployed units will not be ready to fight. Other probable impacts include:

- Further delay of major acquisition programs.
- Forced sustainment of aged legacy systems resulting in increased operations and support costs and higher defense bills.
- Risk to the realignment to the Pacific.
- Infrastructure sustainment funding would be cut well below current standards (less than 70% of the model requirement vice 90%) creating increased costs sooner for the American public.

- Morale and family support services would be further reduced or eliminated including child care and family readiness. This will lead to foreseeable morale issues and quality of life degradation.

As Commandant, I am also sensitive to the impacts that a sequestered budget will have on your Marines, Sailors and civilians. Beyond the specific and tangible challenges described above is the human cost. Sequestration will create great uncertainty in the force. It is important that our people know they will have the resources to get the job done. It is important that they know they will have the training, equipment, support, family services, and quality of life they need and deserve. The impacts of sequestration, in all these areas, will chip away at their confidence. Our service-members should be singularly focused on accomplishing their mission. They, and their families, should never have to face doubts of whether they will be deployed in harm's way without the best training and equipment our Nation can afford. The foundation of the all-volunteer force is trust – sequestration will erode the trust that our young men and women in uniform, civil servants, and families have in their leadership. The cost of losing that trust is incalculable.

The American people have come to expect their Marines to do what must be done in “any clime and place” and under any conditions. They expect us to respond quickly and win. To meet their expectations, I will ensure that the Marine Corps will provide the most ready crisis response forces our Nation can afford. I will do my best to manage the institutional risk we will incur with the resources that are made available. However, the support of Congress and the American people is a critical requirement for your Corps of Marines to remain the Nation's expeditionary force-in-readiness. I most strongly urge that we avoid sequestration.

Lastly, as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I want to reinforce Chairman Dempsey's recent comments related to sequestration. I share his and my fellow service chiefs' concerns that, under the full effects of sequestration, we will have less capability and capacity to bring options to our National Command Authority, our elected leaders and the American people. When our Nation has options, we have strategic flexibility. When our options are limited, we create strategic risk. We want to be forward-engaged to reduce the risk of going to war and don't ever want our young men and women in a fair fight – we want them to have a decisive edge over any adversary. In the context of today's strategic landscape, sequestration will cause great harm to the security of our Nation.