

Remarks (as prepared) by General James F. Amos, USMC

at

The Atlantic Council

September 18, 2012

Thank you General Punaro... good evening Ladies and Gentlemen...

It's a pleasure to be here with you all this evening. I'm particularly pleased to be able to spend a few moments talking about our Nation's Marine Corps...your Marine Corps!!!

Knowing that there is no shortage of news out there I have kept my opening remarks short so that I can get to your questions...

This is certainly an important time for military, and more importantly, for our Nation. Students of history, and those who can remember back 50 some years ago when the Atlantic Council was first formed, would likely say that period helped shape and define the next fifty years for our Country...I would agree.

Back in the early 60's, long before the internet, the headlines from our nation's newspapers spoke of:

- The Soviet Union flexing its muscles...trying to fill a void left from Nazi extremism
- The Cold War and the Soviets threatening nuclear destruction
- The Bay of Pigs confrontation, and the near-nuclear war between the US and the Soviet Union
- President Eisenhower warned America of the "increasing power of the military-industrial complex"
- They spoke of President John Kennedy taking office and subsequently sending 18,000 military advisors to Vietnam

It's instructive to remember that in 1961 when the Atlantic Council was formed, the Marine Corps was 185,000 strong...we're now headed to 182K'...and yet the world isn't getting any nicer. And just like then, today's Marine Corps is involved in crises all over the world.

In '61 the Marine Corps was assisting famine relief efforts in the Congo & earthquake disaster victims in Turkey...Marines from Camp Lejeune NC conducted rescue operations in Texas and Louisiana following the devastation of Hurricane Carla...elements of the 2d MARDIV deployed to Guantanamo Bay to reinforce the base as a result of the Cuban missile crisis...all at a time when our Marines were getting their share of introductions to Southeast Asia and a country called Vietnam. A defining period in our history, for sure!!!

Similarly, this past week, Marines rapidly responded to the violent protests at several U.S. embassies in the Middle East. FAST Teams... (Fleet Anti-terrorism Security Teams)...were on scene in a matter of hours, de-escalating the situation, while providing protection of American personnel and property overseas. This happened in Tripoli and it happened again in Yemen. These events occurred while others who wear the cloth of our Nation's Marine Corps continue to conduct counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan, and train with our Allies around the world. As we gather in this wonderful establishment for tonight's Atlantic Council event, there are in excess of 30K' Marines forward deployed...poised...ready to respond to any crisis!

For 237 years, we have fought our Nation's battles, both large and small...we have defeated pirates...hunted insurgents...fought regulars and irregulars...always running to the sound of chaos... always ready to answer America's 911 call.

This is our *raison d'être*. The Marine Corps serves our Nation as its Premier Crisis Response Force. Our Nation has always wanted a Marine Corps...it's always been that way!!

In 1952, in the wake of our Nation's difficult first year of the Korean War, Congress made its intent known by defining the Marine Corps as...

"a ready force, highly mobile, always at a high state of readiness...most ready when the nation is generally least ready...to provide a balanced force in readiness for a naval campaign and, at the same time, a ground and air striking force ready to suppress or contain international disturbances..."

Today, we maintain our forces in a high state of readiness so that when the President needs options to answer a crisis anywhere in the world...we are able to provide a force that can respond to today's crisis...TODAY...not tomorrow or next week...but TODAY. Because the events of the world are not always clear or easily discernable, our forward deployed forces provide our national leaders with options and time ... in short, we create decision space until the required course of action can be determined.

We did this in Japan after last year's devastating earthquake and 600 MPH tsunami. Marines moved immediately from Okinawa to northern Japan, flying in our 44 year-old CH-46 helicopters. Those aircrews flew for 45 days in and out of the radioactive plume of the damaged nuclear reactor while rescuing and providing relief to the stricken Japanese people. We did the same 400 miles deep in northern Pakistan after their epic floods...and we sailed on a moment's notice to the coast of Libya last year to enforce the "no-fly zone" and to rescue a downed American pilot using one of our MV-22 Ospreys. In 2010...after 7 tough years...we left the Anbar Province in Iraq under a victory pennant...and, as you know, we are heavily engaged today in Afghanistan's Helmand Province...

Teamed with the Navy... we come from the sea...it's our maneuver space. Having our Marines embarked aboard amphibious ships and available around the world accomplishes many things for our Nation. The mere presence of an amphibious warship off shore loaded with Marines...or even the knowledge that they're potentially only a few days away...is often enough to help curb the actions of many actors around the world.

While each of our sister services operate predominately in their single domain...the Army on Land...the Navy on Sea...and the Air Force in the Air and in Space...the Marine Corps' role in the Nation's defense is different...we don't operate in a single domain...rather we operate in a 'lane'...a lane that opens up in the early stages of a crisis that most likely transcends all 3 of the domains that I just spoke about. In that temporary lane, we bring a combined arms force that can respond as quickly as required. This force may be needed to 'open the door' for the larger joint force, or to simply enable follow on capabilities from across the elements of our National Power.

Lastly, since we are all concerned about the fiscal challenges facing our nation...I thought you might be interested in knowing what America gets for the low “sticker price” it pays for its Corps.

For only 8% of the total [FY-13 baseline] Defense Budget... for \$23.9B dollars out of an annual Defense Budget of \$525.4B... the Marine Corps provides 15% of all Active Ground Maneuver Brigades...11% of all Fighter/Attack Aircraft...18% of all Attack Helicopters...and 7 scalable and flexible Marine Expeditionary Units which deploy forward around the world on 22 amphibious ships.

When the nation pays the 'sticker price' for its Marines, it buys a triple-purpose-force...one that has the ability to operate in a stabilizing role, one that can immediately respond to a crisis...or when necessary, rapidly scale up to meet the requirements of a major theater war. For fewer than 10% of the defense budget, expeditionary naval forces provide an efficient and effective hedge against the Nation's most-likely and most dangerous security threats.

In today's parlance of fiscal responsibility... that's what I call - “bang for the buck!”

In closing... let me once again thank General Punaro, General Jones and the Atlantic Council for inviting me to speak tonight - I enjoy every opportunity to tell the Marine Corps story...I'm proud as hell of the men and women who wear this cloth!

Lastly...as a member of the Joint Chiefs whose sole mission is the defense of our Nation...I want to thank each of you for all you do to promote international security.

Thank you...I look forward to your questions.