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Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Thanks Mackenzie for the introduction and for the opportunity to speak today.

It's good to be back here at AEI. My last visit was on February 14 of 2013...on Valentine's Day. When I was here last year, we discussed wrestling with Sequestration. In fact, as I recall, my fellow service chiefs and I had just finished testifying before the SASC, HASC and the HAC-D along with Bob Hale, Ash Carter, and Chairman Dempsey about the likely impacts. Despite our best efforts, Sequestration remains a reality. I don't like it, but it's here among us!

We've had a lot of developments since last year, so I'll begin with a few thoughts as both a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and then as a service chief.

First, let me state up front that I believe that our nation is at a strategic inflection point in history. After 12 years of war, we are drawing down our forces in Afghanistan, resetting our military, and strategically re-posturing to the Pacific. We are doing this in a fiscal environment that is forcing us to sacrifice our long-term health for near-term readiness...all being done in a world that is clearly getting thornier.

We are witnessing the uglier side of the human condition in places like Iraq and Syria now. Throughout the world, we are seeing increased competition for scarce natural resources, increased prevalence and severity of natural disasters ... more social unrest, more cyber-attacks, more violent extremism...more regional conflicts, human trafficking, and a disturbing proliferation of military hardware and weapons of mass destruction.

This chaotic brew of events is becoming our new normal...as a result...my sense is that there will be no "peace dividend" following the conclusion of combat operations in Afghanistan later this year.

In fact, given our current fiscal realities Ladies and Gentlemen, we will not be expected to do less with less...we will do the same with less...all done in a world that remains very dangerous.

You have heard me say it before...and I am going to say it again here this morning...while our Nation may be done with the thorny and nasty entanglements of this new normal...they are likely not done with us. There will be no shortage of work for America's Marines. Both here in the Beltway, and across the nation, there is a dialog beginning about what the American people want their military to do in the future. After 12 years of war, some believe that it's time for America to furl the flag and come home.

I understand that sentiment, and the sense of fatigue behind it. While wariness of foreign entanglements is a healthy American instinct, almost a pastime...ladies and gentlemen, we cannot afford to disengage from the world. In many critical areas, only the United States has the ability and the will to lead the world through some of its thorniest challenges.

Given the fiscal realities of our budgetary challenges, the matter of priorities then takes center stage...where do we engage...and how much?

I believe that the United States must retain a global presence that deters aggression, underwrites a stable global economy...and builds trust amongst our allies and partners...part of building that trust centers on forward presence. Forward presence allows us to build strategic relationships that truly matter when the chips are down...when time is short...and when lives are on the line – just like we saw last year in the Philippines and in South Sudan earlier this year...and just like we're seeing today off the coast of Libya and in the NAG.

The fact is...forward-deployed naval forces are our nation's insurance policy - a hedge against uncertainty in an unpredictable world. The Navy-Marine Corps team provides power projection from the sea, responding immediately to a crisis ...when success is measured in hours, not days.

When trouble brews, expeditionary naval forces provide our leaders with options, rapid response capabilities, and the decision space to make wise choices in often murky circumstances.

You've seen this in action just in the last couple of weeks. When our interests in Iraq were threatened, the President moved a carrier and Marines aboard amphibious warships into the Persian Gulf, and then sent a FAST Plt of Marines in to reinforce our embassy in Baghdad.

I don't know how events in Iraq and Syria will play out, but I do know that U.S. Marines will be ready to answer the Nation's call – at a moment's notice, anywhere around the globe. Now, I'd like to talk a bit about Afghanistan. Your Marines are coming out of Afghanistan about as well as can be expected. Last year when I was here, we had about 7,000 Marines in Afghanistan, mostly in Helmand Province.

Today we have a little less than 4K' and are on a glide slope to have all of our units out by December 2014. As far as the mission goes, I feel that we've exceeded expectations. None of us know how the future will turn out...there are simply too many variables.

The entire world is watching now to see how Afghanistan's Presidential election run-off turns out. Afghans have cast their ballots against a backdrop of relatively few incidents of violence.

This is a moment of truth for the people of Afghanistan, and for the region as a whole...as it has the potential to usher in the nation's first peaceful, democratic transfer of power.

I know my good friend General Joe Dunford has his hands full at this moment. We're all wishing the best for Afghanistan and eagerly await the official results of the runoff election.

Ladies and gentlemen, over the past decade, our presence in Afghanistan and the extraordinary efforts of the Coalition...have made a difference...

I'm proud of the young men and women who wear our nation's cloth, and the Coalition and Afghan National Security Forces that have done the heavy lifting over the past decade.

After a decade at war in the most morally and physically bruising of environments...the arena of human combat...we are resetting the Marine Corps physically...mentally...and morally.

One of the most visible examples of our physical reset is our recent decision to press forward with our Amphibious Combat Vehicle program...which will replace our ageing fleet of Amphibious Assault Vehicles.

This is my Number One procurement priority and will remain so for the duration of my tenure. Nearly two decades ago, the Marine Corps unveiled the groundbreaking concepts of *Operational Maneuver from the Sea*, and *Ship-To-Objective Maneuver*.

Since then we have endeavored to field enabling capabilities to realize the full potential of these concepts.

The proliferation of anti-access/area denial weapons demand greater standoff out-to-sea, and greater survivability ashore. This, coupled with declining fiscal resources, led us to make some significant decisions regarding our overarching vehicle strategy.

Our intent, from the beginning, was to replace our 40+ year old AAV fleet with a modern tracked vehicle that would have the speed, range, lethality, and protection necessary to meet tomorrow's threats.

Given the forecast threat, our concept called for the initial elements of a future amphibious assault to be launched well out to sea to allow for sufficient engagement of anti-ship cruise missiles. A 25 nm range from ship-to-shore was initially believed to be sufficient.

Ladies and gentlemen...that assumption is simply not true today. Due to the development and proliferation of integrated Anti-Access/Area-Denial capabilities, both today's, and tomorrow's, contested threat environments require an operational standoff distance much greater than previously considered.

While the Marine Corps worked to develop this capability, neither industry nor our development teams could ultimately achieve an affordable vehicle that met our requirements.

While we focused on the technology and mechanics of the tracked high-speed vehicle concept, industry continued to make strides in wheeled vehicle maneuverability and protection...recognizing this, altered our view, and opened our aperture for alternative solutions.

These technological advancements, coupled with the realities of the A2/AD threat environment and the extreme budget cuts of sequestration, led us in a new direction. The harsh realities of budgetary restrictions necessitated a complete reassessment of our ground tactical vehicle strategy, as well as the capabilities and numbers of the Navy's future surface connectors.

I have leaned heavily on the analysis and feedback of our working groups of active duty, civilian and industry advisors that have approached this from all angles.

Our senior retired and active duty leadership, some with differing opinions of the correct replacement vehicle, have uniformly agreed that the factors that have driven us to this decision are sound.

With their recommendations in mind, we will execute a phased approach to replace the AAV with the Amphibious Combat Vehicle. The first phase of this approach, called ACV 1.1, incorporates the procurement of a COT's wheeled ACV. Because this is a COT's solution, we are able to move out relatively rapidly on our way-ahead.

This shift from a high water speed tracked solution is not the result of a single issue, but rather a combination of tactical, technical and budgetary components that all highlight the reasons for our chosen course of action.

While the decision to proceed with a wheeled platform may seem like a paradigm shift, I am convinced that technological advancements ... driven by years of hard fought lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan ... will enable industry to deliver a vehicle optimized for ground combat...where it will operate 90% of the time... while meeting the unique amphibious requirements of our service.

Understanding that the choices we are making now will last for the next many decades, our decision to change how we approach this problem was not taken lightly...we can't afford to get this wrong...I'm confident that we haven't.

As we physically reset, your Marines are also morally resetting...rededicating themselves to the values of honor, courage, and commitment that have defined the Corps for the past 238.5 years...

We are rededicating ourselves to those same values that carried us through German machine gun fire at Belleau Wood during WWI...those same values that enabled the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division to persevere and win on Guadalcanal...that same sense of who we are and what we do for our country that enabled our success in grinding battles against insurgents at Fallujah in Iraq...and again at the Taliban strongholds of Marjah and Sangin in Afghanistan.

As an institution, we are rededicating ourselves to the timeless attributes of:

*persistent discipline*  
*faithful obedience to orders*  
*strict adherence to standards*  
*and...concerned and engaged leadership....*

These attributes, and our values of honor, courage and commitment have defined our Corps for more than two centuries...they will serve us well as we prepare for missions to come.

Lastly, I'd like to take a moment to mention two Marines.

First, I'd like to remember Lieutenant General Earnie Cheatham who we will lay to rest tomorrow...many of you knew him or knew of him.

Earnie Cheatham was a larger-than-life figure in the Corps...a great bear of a man...one of the oldest former professional football players who served in our Corps, and a hero in the Battle for Hue City during the Tet Offensive in 1968. He was the embodiment of the institutional values I just spoke about.

We lost a living legend last week, and I just wanted to publically honor his service to our nation.

Secondly, I had the honor last week to be at the White House when President Obama awarded the Medal of Honor to Corporal Kyle Carpenter for shielding a fellow Marine from a grenade blast in Afghanistan in 2010. Kyle is a remarkable young man...a true testament to resilience. The Taliban grenade cost him an eye, most of his lower jaw, collapsed his lung, mangled his hand, but could not destroy his spirit. With all the news of Iraq and elsewhere, I don't feel that the story of his heroism got all of the attention it deserved last week, so I'd encourage you to check out his story this week. He's one of my personal heroes.

Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen for indulging my opening remarks... Mackenzie, I think this is a good time for us to open the floor to questions.

[1,956 words, 13.5 mins]