

TRANSCRIPT

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THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT AND MAY CONTAIN ERRORS. USERS ARE ADVISED TO CONSULT THEIR OWN TAPES OR NOTES OF THE SESSION IF ABSOLUTE VERIFICATION OF WORDING IS NEEDED.

A: [In progress] -- Put yourself in the position of now General Dave Patreaus and look it from how he and the MNC Commander, Lieutenant General Odierno, are planning for use of sources during this surge or plus-up, depending upon your perspective, and we may not know the answer to that yet.

But having been a commander in their shoes, you have a certain amount of resources to accomplish certain missions and certain tasks associated with those. So I would think it would be very disruptive for he and his planners at this point to be planning against a certain force and a certain timeline, to have those forces then not show up for whatever combination of reasons.

I think he would say I'm here for a reason, give me an opportunity to do what is expected of me and to accomplish those things that we think are within first the Iraqi capability and of course as reinforced by our own, and don't jerk the rug out from under me before I've had a chance to do what I've been sent here to do.

In terms of the sustenance of that force and the ability to sustain it over time, obviously it's going to be difficult. We're not starting with a fresh start because General Patreaus has arrived, we're starting from where we are and we've been at this for a while. I will say openly I think that there has been discussion amongst the force providers, the service chiefs and others, in terms of how we do this.

I mentioned to you that we don't know yet whether it's a surge or a plus-up and the

distinction, I think, is important. The military definition of a surge is that you put a larger or more significant force again against a mission for a specified period of time but somewhere down range there must be a payback.

When I was a MEP commander, if I surged my aviation forces I could do that if the timing was right and we were going to get sufficient results from it. But I had to realize that later on, some days downrange, I would be without some of those resources because they would be in a recovery phase. That's the surge. The plus-up is that you simply go to that level and endeavor to sustain it. If we were to be asked to sustain the additional brigades and the additional battalions that we're sending into the Al Anbar over an extended period of time, that becomes difficult because we then start to probably get somewhere beyond a one-to-one deployment to dwell ratio and it's just very difficult for the troops to sustain that kind of tempo over time.

Q: Can you sustain it through February of '08?

A: We can do it. It always comes down to what is the cost.

Q: Can you do it without going to --

A: It's going to be right on the margin. In the past we've been at about one to one-point-something, two or three. That means you're home for eight or nine months. It's going to be putting us right at one to one, on average. Some of our forces are already not enjoying that equal dwell time at home, others have a greater period, but our average is going to go right to one to one is what my planners tell me right now.

Q: I hope this isn't too far in the weeds for you, but General Castella and the aviation crowd are planning a very aggressive electronic warfare capability. They're looking at tying together the radio battalions and the airborne electronic attack efforts.

A lot of that is dependent on getting the ICAP-3, the Advanced Electronic Attack Capability for the EA-6B. Are you going to be able to do that? I also understand you're tying into the Air Force [suiter] programs which are going to give you a very advanced capability to track and to evade enemy communications networks, for example.

A: It is a little bit in the weeds. [Laughter]. I'll tell you what I know. It may not take long. I'm kidding.

At one point I think the flow was headed towards that kind of capability as being a national level capability. We were, during OIF we chopped that capacity to the Air Force in part so as to be able to have centralized control against those things that we thought needed work. At one point I think that was the thought process.

It's since changed some to the degree that we are conducting right now in Al Anbar what we would call grunt-based operations. You've heard of effects-based and you've heard of other types. We think that what we do is grunt-based, and we think that increasingly there is a need to have that capability as one of the functions of Marine aviation.

Now you ask whether or not we're going to get it, I don't know. We have had a very helpful and successful, I would say, warfighting with the Navy on shipbuilding and we have I think narrowed any difference in our perspective. We're going to have another one on aviation. The catalyst for that is obvious. Air lanes are increasingly expensive. There is a consistent drive I would say probably on the part of our department, arguably on the part of the nation to economize. Aircraft today are more capable than they were years ago so can we do the same job with less becomes a question, and it's a fair question. We have to answer that.

But that said, we sense that it is an important capability to our Marines and to our Marine aviation and we would like to have our resident capability with the aircraft to do that and with the systems to do that and we think we can make a pretty good case for it when all is said and done.

It's tough to predict what happens over the horizon, but we're building our case and we'll have that discussion with Admiral Mullen, hopefully gain his support and it will go forward from there.

Q: The idea of being the Marines are going to be the first to actually say platforms are not that important, it's the links and the software that is important and we'll extemporize on the platforms, or at least we don't have to have new ones right away.

A: We can skip generations. We skipped a platform to get to the JSF. The JSF is going to have some significant capabilities that can be built into it.

Q: But to bridge that you've got to have ICAP-3 for the EA-6Bs.

A: Right.

Q: Is that what's up in the air and you've got to find the money for it?

A: Yes. I would not be so strong as to say that platforms aren't important to us. You're right. It's more the function that we're after. The platforms will have to be their support and introduce the function.

Q: So out of the weeds and to Eric Rosenberg.

Q: A couple of questions on helicopter survivability. A few weeks back you had testified that the CH-46 that was shot down, it appeared that the survivability gear had not deployed properly and that was one of the things you were looking into. Can you update us on that? And part B, broadly speaking in the Marine Corps, how has the aircraft survivability gear been working in the desert positions?

A: First of all the initial reports coming from the 46, and these were from two Cobras who were flying escort, was that they saw nothing coming up from the ground, that the first indication of trouble was that they saw the aircraft was on fire and was in a controlled descent. Then at some point above the ground, 100-150 feet, it lost control of that descent and it went in tail first.

We scratched our heads -- and there was no obvious deployment of the aircraft survival equipment, the ASE. Which, by the way, can be done manually but it's normally done automatically based upon sensors and so forth to indicate you've got a missile it may be tracking.

We asked ourselves what could have happened in those opening days. There was an incident some years ago now where 46 had a traumatic fire like that. It had come from oils in the hydraulic fluid spilling onto a hot compressor and then the aircraft ignited and we lost that aircraft too.

What happened in the wake of that was this video that came out and let me tell you, we looked at that thing every way from sundown to try to determine if that was an accurate video of what happened because it clearly showed a missile arcing into the rear of the aircraft. After a good bit of study and probably three or four days of debate we resolved that that video was in fact the attack on the 46 and was the one that we lost.

It matched somewhat the description that had come from the Cobra pilots, but we're still getting after those folks to say how could you not see some of those things, and what was your attitude and distance and some of those kinds of things. Those initial battlefield reports, once again, were wrong. We are convinced now that it was the shoot-down.

That the ASE didn't deploy is also troubling to us. We will probably never be able to do the forensics because we wound up destroying the aircraft on the ground after just an initial review. But we do know that against certain double digit types of anti-aircraft capability that it may not deploy. That's counter to, which gets to the second point of your question. That's counter to the performance that we've seen in the theater thus far. It's been very good. I've been in aircraft where it deploys and you're happy to see those things "pooping out", is the term.

Q: -- the F/18?

A: We don't know for sure. I'll just leave it at double digit. But they're very sensitive. In fact in the early going in OIF they were so sensitive you could fly over a fire in a village below and these things would start pumping out, so we were using a lot of flares. The question came in, should we sort of tighten up the metric on this thing and make them a little less ready to dispense? The answer was no. Let's err to the side of safety here and survivability of the aircraft and leave it like it is, so we have.

Now there are developments, I can't talk about them much here but I can simply say there are developments to further enhance what was state of the art when we first went into this thing, and there instances where we have seen our systems deploy against some of these double digit missiles, so it just depends I think on attitude and range to target, all those types of things. This was a lucky shot -- I guess I'm not prepared to say that, but our systems did not work for whatever kinds of reasons to defeat that particular missile.

Q: The Army, for example, has encountered a lot of, or it had encountered a lot of problems with its ASC on helicopters. What you're saying is you have not --

A: We've been very pleased, I will tell you, to date. We do a lot of other things, though. ASC is sort of the final, close-in defense. We fly, I won't say almost exclusively, but we fly heavily at night. We fly at an altitude that is above the arcing of the RPGs and the ground fire, for the most part. Not so high that we're there in the envelope for a long time, but we think there's good middle ground. We know where the red and black are through experience down in theater where we receive a lot of ground fire, and that's tracked right back to the tactical air control centers on a daily basis. We continue to chart that so we have go, no-go areas by and large. We use escorts. It is unusual to have one of our transports fired on while the escorts are escorting because sometimes there's a price to pay for the guy on the ground when he does that.

All of these things are intended to enhance the survivability of our aircraft, and really to date it's been very good based on the number of flights that we have aloft at any given time.

Q: General, if the surge or plus-up or whatever it is does force you down below or to exceed one to one, talk a little bit about the effect that would have, especially on retention. I know you watch the retention, especially among your mid-career NCOs very carefully. Is there any softness there yet?

A: No, Dave, and it's an amazing thing. I'll offer you two points.

One, it's absolutely amazing to me that the great patriotic young Americans of this country are responding the way they are. If you want to find the absolute best morale in any unit, when you go to an outfit that is either about to deploy, is deployed, or has just returned from deploying. Retention rates, reenlistment rates, morale --

Q: That would be everyone.

A: Well, in time, that's true. [Laughter]. It does kind of run a sine wave in terms of when you approach, but you're right. I would say that based on everybody's response we're doing fine with our retention, we're going to increase it even more. Traditionally we accept about 25 percent reenlistment requests. We're going to bump that up to probably about 33 percent as we grow the force, and that's the second point I want to make. But we can do that because we have great young Americans that want to stay with us. So it's been absolutely amazing to me that our troops have responded the way they have. 're home those eight or nine months your almost exclusive focus is getting ready to go again. So you're going through the five phases of training that are required before a battalion deploys or a squadron deploys. You're going to the desert to do Mojave Vipers. You're not doing amphibious warfare training. You're not getting with the Navy to practice operating aboard ship and going ashore. We're not doing what we used to do annually about ten times with our battalions and that's combined arms, live fire maneuver under artillery and under our aircraft bombs and so forth at 29 Palms. Now we go to 29 Palms to operate in a small Iraqi village and to prepare people for sort of the human dimension of what they're going to experience there. It's great training, but it's not preparing you for those other missions that we have by law assigned to us by the nation.

We used to put eight to ten battalions into mountain warfare training. We'd send battalions down to Central America or South America for jungle training. We're just not doing these things right now.

So it concerns me that we've got a little bit of a blind side there that by law we owe to the nation that we're not prepared for.

Now could we go do those things? Yeah. There's sufficient officers and staff NCOs out there that have that experience that it's within our skill set. But I'm a big believer that you train the way you're going to fight and that includes your newest troops so they're comfortable in that environment. Those are the folks that are missing out on those opportunities today simply because we don't have the time to devote to it.

Q: Is this a long term problem?

A: It's a problem that we see for the foreseeable future. If we were to snap our fingers

today and say we're going to be home for 14 months that would help, but it's going to be with us as long as we face these rotations.

Now it's repairable fairly quickly, I think, once you get into that mode. I don't see us getting into the mode, to a large degree, in the near term. How soon it will chch else.

We didn't get much into the politics in Baghdad. The Ba'athist thing is another one that I've seen cited. I don't know that it affected us much. It's sort of the tactical operational level.

Q: A quick money question. How much is it going to cost to grow the Marines? Just roughly. The 27,000. The Army came in here about three or four weeks ago, General Speaks, and said it was roughly \$70 billion to grow the Army. What's the Marine Corps rough estimate?

A: Ours is, of course, much much less than that. What we've estimated across the board, just a rough cut figure, and my guys and gals are still working to give me what we call the dot-mil PF. I'm not going to try to describe to you what that is, but the analysis. If you looked at about \$5 billion a year for those 5,000 Marines a year that would cover everything. Personnel costs are expensive, but you've got to look at the infrastructure, you've got to look at the training, you've got to look at ranges, you've got to look at equipment. That's what we think is going to be the aggregate cost, plus or minus X amount of dollars.

Q: Roughly \$5 billion a year.

A: Over the next five years.

Q: \$25 billion.

Q: General, for those of us who have been around this table for a long time, we remember going down to Fort Belvoir in 1981 and seeing the XV-15 fly. Then the J VX. Now the V-22. The V-22 community is pretty excited, saying we think we're going to go to Iraq with our aircraft before the end of this calendar year. They also say they need a heads up and a green light six months in advance. Given the fact that they're talking about this happening in September, we're now six months out. Is the V-22 going to Iraq this fall?

A: I'm not ready to make that public statement, Mark, but I can tell you that my fervent desire is to get the V-22 into the fight as soon as we can, and that is probably going to be this year. There are some things we have to do inside the building to touch base, to make sure that we've got green lights from everybody. I've ridden in the aircraft three times.

It's a marvelous aircraft. It's going to revolutionaries I think helicopter flight and the expansions beyond that. I think it's going to prove itself rapidly.

I'll tell you, there is going to be a crash. That's what airplanes do over time. We're going to have to accept that when it happens. We'll hear some of the folks that are not fans of the program I suspect rise up when that occurs. But the fact is it's had some tremendously safe flight in its standup and its preparation now after we've learned certain lessons and certain directions were made and it's going to be a tremendous addition to what Marines do, both in Al Anbar and for decades from now, so we're anxious to allow the opportunity, the aircraft the opportunity to prove itself.

Q: When you say in the fight in Al Anbar, it is going to Iraq?

A: Again, it's too early to say that for sure.

Q: You're not saying that.

A: I'm saying we want to get the aircraft deployed and show its capabilities. I think very soon you're going to be invited to a discussion on that and we'll lay out our plans for you.

Q: General, getting back to the issue of are we in a plus-up or are we in a surge.

A: Do you know? [Laughter].

Q: That's what I wanted to ask you.

A: I was going to say I need somebody to tell me. [Laughter].

Q: That's clarifying in and of itself.

The reason I bring it up is this very reason. We hear the White House, the President in particular say we'll provide the resources and the time needed to complete the mission. But then you have the Secretary of Defense on the Hill saying it's all done by Christmas and everyone's home by the end of the year. There's nothing in the budget for FY08 in the surge.

Can you give us your understanding of where on that spectrum between the White House -- Is there a difference between what the White House is saying and what the SecDef is saying? What is your understanding about where that debate is right now? I guess that's my question. Is there any clarity you can give in terms of whether the White House is right on this or the SecDef is right on this.

A: I don't see as much separation between them perhaps as you do. I think that -- There's a great deal of discussion of course in the Congress in terms of how they might impact that. That's got to be a consideration. That's one of our elements of the government.

I believe there is the intent to let the commander make an assessment and let him tell us what he thinks is an identifiable period of time over which he will need those forces to accomplish the mission. Then there needs to be some thought as to okay, what next? Is it a phased withdrawal at his discretion? Is it a sustainment of what we need now? If it's working we want to keep it working so that the Iraqis can build underneath that overarching tent that coalition forces provide.

I think the simple answer to your question is that the next move is General Patreaus. That will help us all to understand what his commander's intent is and how he proposes to use the forces.

Q: I know you've talked in the past in a similar setting about your concern that the American people are not on board perhaps if we need to sustain it for a long period of time. To have a Secretary of Defense out there setting a marker that December is when it's done and there's no money in the budget, does that hamper Patreaus' ability to say oh, by the way, I want to take it through February, I want to go through --

A: See, I think what the Secretary of Defense is pointing out is the reality of the situation right now. I don't think he's dropping a gate necessarily, at least that's not how I interpreted his remarks in December. He's simply saying it will have to be funded and that will need to naturally follow if in fact there's a requirement for the troops beyond December.

So yeah, I do think to the first part of your question that having visited and talked to the troops, and again having been there myself, there's a certain timeline that's going to be required for us to encourage the incremental progress that we see, the increasingly encouraging progress that we see out west. But there's going to be a certain timeline that it takes to get that done. The troops can chat with you about that at length.

There's another timeline out there that I think the American people and arguably the Congress is prepared to give us, and my concern right now is that they're not matching up especially well because I think we accept that it's going to be a longer term requirement in order to be able to achieve the end state that's been laid down by the commander for Iraq.

So it is troubling and I think given the time we could all walk away very proud of the efforts and with a great deal of credibility. That's my concern.

Q: General, can you talk about where the Corps is on going back to one year unaccompanied tours to Okinawa?

A: I can. I recently completed a trip out to WESTPAC and just to give background to those folks that might not understand completely, I guess within the last two years we've invoked a policy that said that you could either go to Okinawa or to an overseas assignment for three years with your spouse, with your family, or the unaccompanied assignment would go from one to two years. And the rationale behind it came from a complaint on the part of the commanders that there's too much turnover in the staff. One year stayers don't give us the continuity that we need for the long term. So my predecessor resolved that the two year assignment would be better and we would start doing that.

Visiting the folks out in WESTPAC they tell me that it's not working especially well, so we brought that back. I was out there just about two and a half weeks ago now, and returned. So we've got to take a look at that and see. I can understand, certainly, that if it's tough to be in operating forces and gone for a significant period of time, and then if you wind up going overseas, let's say even to a base assignment, but you're there for two years without your family, we're exacerbating that problem. So I think we've got to look at the whole of this and say what is effective, what is compassionate, and what gets the job done best in the balance of those.

Q: Has a decision been made on that?

A: No, there have been no decisions made. All I'm doing at this point is gathering data and looking at at least initial reports that say that the program may not be working as well as we thought it would.

Q: A quick follow-up. Can you give us a preview of some of the retention bonuses and other incentives the Marine Corps plans to introduce to grow the Corps?

A: We have the traditional bonus for certain MOSes that when a Marine enlists, he or she is eligible to receive those monies. What we have looked to do in the Marine Corps, and this is a little bit different from some of the other services, but we look to incentivize after we see proven performance. So by that what I mean is if a Marine has been with us for four years and is a proven performer, this year we're offering a \$10,000 bonus for that Marine to reenlist. That's not including the other MOS bonuses that they might receive. I'm told that there's a great deal of interest out there in the program. We're looking to see just how many people that will involve in order to be able to establish our recruiting quotas and to bring in the 18 year olds to match those, at that point, 22 year old corporals and sergeants. But that's still being defined. Word just hit the streets here

probably within the last couple of weeks now, but I'm told the passageways outside the career planners' officers are full and people are enthusiastic and some of the sergeants majors are saying where were you when I was a pup. [Laughter]. Understandably.

Q: This is the setup that's already been announced.

A: Yes.

Q: General, Congressman Duncan Hunter has proposed a plan to the President whereby all 129 Iraqi Army battalions would rotate into contentious areas for a minimum of three months to get battle hardened, speed the withdrawal of US forces. Do you think that plan is credible? Do you think the Iraqi Army is ready for it? What do you think are the chances it would be adopted?

A: I can only offer you opinion on it. As a field commander you read about these things, you hear these things, you absorb them in, you talk with them, talk with your staff about them to see could we do this, what would be the value of doing this and that type of thing, but I think they're best left there. I would be hesitant to support something coming out of Washington, DC that restricts or directs specifically the employment of forces on the ground with the field commander. That's not the way we traditionally do business. He's a combat experienced officer, he's selected with a purpose in mind, to let us tell him what needs to happen, and we need to fall in and support that. To start adding directives to him that he will do this or he will do that with certain of his brigades or battalions, again, as an officer that's sort of been there although not to his level, I would hope we don't get to that point.

Q: Bad decisions have been made on the ground --

A: Absolutely. He's got his force allocation. He's in consort with the Iraqi government and their IFGC, the generals in charge of the Iraqi forces. They have specific ideas on how their force needs to be trained and used. I think we all agree that the sooner we can get them to a certain level of performance and into the fight the more battle hardened they get, Congressman Hunter's term, it's all very valuable. But I think that needs to be decided in Baghdad, not in Washington.

Q: General [McCray] should make that --

A: Absolutely.

Q: The Army for some time has requested the Air Force for help in moving supplies from theater in Iraq by air to keep trucks off the road. Has the Marine Corps been doing the same?

A: Yeah.

Q: Are you getting full support from the Air Force?

A: Absolutely.

Q: Do you have --

A: Sandra, we have what we call intra-theater assets that move around between our various airfields. The Marine Corps operates airfields at a place called Takatem and a place called Al Assad. Both are big enough to take trans-continental flights, especially Al Assad, is probably one of the biggest airfields in Iraq. And it has been helpful. A lot of the parts and supplies and that type of thing that are being distributed are now being done by air as opposed to putting convoys on the ground. I saw a figure, it's been probably a year or a year and a half ago now. It's dated, so I wouldn't try to get it to you. But we know precisely how many convoys we're saving monthly by using this and it's significant and it's very helpful because that just means you have less opportunity for those people to get hit. You have less visibility of our forces on the road with Iraqis and that type of thing. You lessen the probably for escalation of force incidents if vehicles approach convoys and they're suspicious in their makeup. So it's very much a net gain in order to be able to do this and I think everybody nods that it's just a great program.

Q: Do you have a [inaudible] numbers on that?

A: I don't. They're out there, I'm sure, but the last time I saw them was when I was the J3. But I'm satisfied they're tracking them because it's a metric for the Air Force to understand -- or TRANSCOM -- to understand the value of what they're doing.

Q: General, there have been some mixed messages about whether the requirements, the expeditionary [inaudible] be revised and lowered. SecNav was testifying with you and said the requirements are not going to change. Subsequently Dr. Etter said that she's in discussion with the Marine Corps about making less ambitious [inaudible]. What sorts of compromises have been made?

A: We were asked after the reliability review to go back and take a look to determine whether or not the requirements that were placed on the vehicle were absolute requirements and with this opportunity to modify the vehicle some could help with reliability.

What we came away with was a belief that we could probably trim about 1700 pounds from the vehicle that had to do with fuel loads and some other things. This gets

complicated, but the requirement we're looking at with regard to wave height is the thing that give us some level of flexibility. We want to be able to work through what's called wave height three with the vehicle and we can in about 99 percent of the waters off the world, but there's one certain way. I've got to craft for you the conditions where this wave would even take place and it's hard to imagine it. But if this is your beach and you're approaching the beach. If you've got waves coming at you at a 90 degree angle off that beach, and I don't fly over many islands where I see waves coming off the beach. But if that were to happen and there's a certain separation between the waves then at the speed of the vehicle it starts crashing into those waves and it's problematic.

Now we can simply alter the angle to the beach, we can tack, or we can not land that day if you've got waves coming off the beach. But because that is a limiting feature of the vehicle and the drivers simply are exposed to Gs that would make it very difficult to maintain speed, we have worded that out of the requirement. So that gives us the ability to get after some of this weight and so forth. We consider that a very minor adjustment to the program but one that will help the designer some and make the vehicle more successful.

Q: That's the only change in the requirements?

A: Those are it. The other weight comes from adjusting fuel and there was one other minor thing, eight pounds that was gained through one other minor adjustment. It escapes my memory right now. But essentially there were three, and those were the three that gave us the weight.

Q: So things like the NBC protection system --

A: No, none of the major systems like that have been played with at all. The armor associated with the vehicle, the turret. We looked at the turret. A recommendation came from somewhere, I don't really know where, that said do we have to have that 30 caliber on each of our vehicles? The answer is yes. Does it need to be a 30? Can it be a 25? The answer is it needs to be a 30 based upon the threat that we now see developing. So we've looked at every aspect of it because we were asked to.

And quite frankly I think the designers now are pretty pleased with the 1750 I think is what it comes to. So we'll see what they can do now in rework.

Q: General, what are you seeing in like your desertion and UA numbers and also your numbers for alcohol use and drug use? Have they been fluctuating, going up or down in the last couple of years?

A: I looked at it in the last three weeks or so, but once again, this amazing young

generation that we're working with, virtually all the indicators, the trouble some indicators have been down since 2003. It's incredible to me. But alcohol, suicide, spousal abuse, divorce. Those things that you would think would be indicators of stress on the force are generally down.

Now between 2005 and 2006 there was a slight uptick on some of them, and whether or that's just a normal variation, I don't know. But if you compare right now to where they were in 2002, they are significantly down in almost all categories, so we see that as a very positive indicator.

I'll be honest, at our last general officer symposium this was November, just after I became the commandant. We timed it so that it would go then. The Center for Naval Analysis showed us a stress on the force brief and they said you know, it's kind of incredible but all the indicators that we're assessing out here are net positives. There's nothing we see out there that would indicate that we need to be concerned about it.

We had a number of people in the audience stand up and say we accept your data but we think it's probably trailing edge. We see some leading edge indicators that tell us that we need to do something about this de tempo. This was coming from the commanders, and some of the commanders' wives who have close-in coordination and function with the key volunteers and those things.

We're trying to be rigorous with regard to our analysis, but also accept that the Inspector General of the Marine Corps and the commanders and some wives can also point to things maybe before they become serious problems and give us a chance to work on them now.

Q: You don't see any gun decking or anything like that.

A: No, we wouldn't allow that. That's just drinking your own bathwater. We need to understand where the issues are and we need to get after the issues. So we would not stand for that.

Q: The leading indicators that have been brought up what were some of those?

A: Just dialogue. When the IG goes out he will talk with a certain number of people. They'll make it a point to get around and just have these kinds of discussions. What are the issues, what are people doing about it, how do you see command responsiveness, command climate, those types of things? And I'll say myself now journeying around the Marine Corps in sort of our initial inventory of things, I ask the question when I get before a group. How many people have been to Iraq or Afghanistan? Boom. Sixty percent of the hands will go up. How many people have been twice? About 50 percent.

We get down to the poor lad that's been four times. I invariably ask him, are you still married? Well, I used to be. [Laughter]. It's out there, it's real, and we've just got to understand it and be prepared to deal with it.

Q: General, another question on vehicles. Can you just bring us up to speed a little bit on what the discussions are within the Marine Corps about the MRAP? What [inaudible] as far as getting [inaudible]? To get everyone in theater inside these vehicles?

A: Absolutely.

Q: Is there a reasons we're --

A: We started out, the MRAP, Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicle. It is I think initially a South African design that has a higher chassis off the ground which is an attenuation factor for under-body explosion, but it also has this V-shaped hull which tends to deflect blasts outward. Unlike the up-armored Hummer which retains that blast significantly under the vehicle.

Now the up-armored Hummer has been the gold standard in theater since I was there. We saw these vehicles come in, we wished we could put all the Marines in those things, but it's taken us time. Although we now have done so. But what we've discovered in theater, and the motivation and our enthusiasm for the MRAP is that that vehicle will protect Marines or Sailors 400 percent more effectively against the same blast than will an up-armored Hummer. Ladies and gentlemen, that is significant. That, to our way of thinking, provides us with a moral imperative in spite of the expense, and they're expensive. In spite of the expense to get those vehicles in the hands of our Marines and Sailors and just what you said, to make sure that every Marine or Sailor that goes outside the wire in the Al Anbar Province is riding in an MRAP. We want to do that as soon as we possibly can.

The original requirement for us was about a thousand vehicles, but as General Maddis looked at again the success of the vehicle, what it's done for our people, he has said he'd like to have as many as it takes to provide them to all of our troops that are both in Iraq and about ten percent in training environments here and in the States, you've got more that need to be set aside for MEUs should they go ashore. That's about 3700 vehicles from the Marine Corps perspective. To their credit, the Secretary of the Navy procurement folks have really gone up to the leading edge of the procurement process to say okay, how can we mass produce these vehicles as soon as we possibly can. They've contracted, they have discussed with eight different contractors their ability to speedily produce the vehicle. These contractors have given us two, three, four vehicles each, are in the process of doing so even as we sit here this morning. We're going to blow them up, we're going to drive them hard, we're going to make sure they're the quality vehicle that

has been produced by this little company down in South Carolina, and we're going to go on the mass production rate if in fact we find them successful, and we think they will be because we're dealing with names like Osh Kosh and General Dynamics and BAE, some name brand players who know how to build good equipment.

We're enthusiastic about it. The Congress I think is enthusiastic about it and they're generally supporting the idea of getting these vehicles into theater as soon as we can. It's just a matter of putting all that together now, again, at warp speed in order to be able to make sure our troops are protected.

Q: There is a budget issue here. Given that this is such a high priority thing, would the Marine Corps make trades, for instance, to its EFV production run? Make sacrifices in other programs to --

A: We'll do what we have to do. I have said coming aboard as Commandant that the troops at the point of the spear are our number one priority. What we're asking for from the Congress is supplemental money, is amendment money, whatever it takes to make sure that we can continue to match the production figures that industry is providing us. If in the end we have to reprogram money to get our troops into these vehicles and protected, we'll do what we have to do. And we think we're identifying the requirement up front as much as we possibly can. We'd like not to have to get to the reprogramming because we see where that could actually slow things a little bit if we have to go through that process.

Q: General, on the end strength, two questions. You talked about the cost to get there, 5,000 a year and so forth. When you get to the end state you've got 27,000 bodies. You've stood up the RCTs, you've got the structure you need to support them and so on. Recurring costs run in the US Marine Corps annually, [inaudible] going to be X-plus something. When we get to the end state, what will the additional annual costs be?

A: I don't know that for sure, honestly. It's part of this review that our people are providing for us. It will be more, obviously, than what it is right now. Right now we're at 175,000, arguably 180,000. The sustainment costs will not be \$5 billion a year, we know that. That includes everything. But personnel costs run 60 to 65 percent of our budget so we think you could probably transfix that against what we're getting now versus 180,000 man Marine Corps, work it at 202.

So it will be more than we're getting right now, we know that. We'd like it to be in the top line and Congress has said that, that after '09 it will be top line kinds of inclusions into the budget. But with the nation engaged in a long war we think it's still prudent to grow to that strength.

Q: The force management equation that balances end strength, dep tempo, dwell time, one of the terms of that equation is the number of people you want to be able to keep deployed for an extended period of time. You work backwards from that. What's that number and where did you get it?

A: That's not exactly how we do the math. What we want to be able to do is make sure we have resources to match the strategy. The strategy for instance right now says that we will be involved in a major operation, read Afghanistan and Iraq are considered that major operation, but we still have other war plans, frankly, we have to be able to flex to, to respond to. And we hear clamoring every week, really, from those combatant commands who are at this point economy of force functions to want us to help them engage in presence missions, to exercise with foreign nations, to reach out and make sure that we're not operating with a set of blinders on to what's happening in South America or the Pacific Command or whatever.

And the thing I would point out I guess over time is that those requirements do change so we don't know what it's going to be five years from now totally. We do know that we've got to have X percent of the force deployed. I think we'll have X percent of the force engaged in some form or fashion. My personal belief is that Afghanistan and Iraq are the first battles of this long war on terrorism. We don't know where the rest of the war is going to take us and we've got to have X number of troops that are being trained and ready to go some place else.

That's why I think it is important, at least for as long as we're engaged in this long war, that the Marine Corps will be roughly 200,000 Marines so that we have those kinds of flexibilities and that capability then to go somewhere else and do something that nobody has predicted.

Q: Along with military leaders, folks like Ike Skelton on the Hill have repeatedly spoken about how equipment is worn down to a nub. Now there have been movements to tie readiness to true deployments. I was just wondering about the take on that

A: We are concerned about readiness and training. No battalion goes to Iraq or Afghanistan that hasn't been through the five phases of required training to get them ready to go. We do have units that are experiencing what we call dwell busts. In other words, if you're expected to be home for at least seven months because you've been gone at least seven months, then anything short of that seven months is considered a dwell bust and it attracts our attention and we report that to the Joint Staff and we argue that it should be less or someone else ought to do it or it's not fair to the troops, but we know it's a hollow argument to the degree that the requirement is real and it's going to have to be managed.

There is a certain point beyond which it's not just a dwell bust. For an Army brigade I'm told as a J3, that they needed a full ten months to be able to train a brigade to be ready to go. Their dwell is for a year. So ten months of that year is spent training and getting to C1 status. For a Marine battalion that's about five months. So if you start incorporating dwell bust in excess of 60 days for either Marines or Army, you're running up against a problem then because that unit may or may not be C1. So there's only a certain amount of latitude there that even against our designs that we think we can stand to absorb it.

I think, I guess I would say there are procedures in place to try to mitigate those considerations as much as we can. I think they're being handled at the level of the DoD and not the Congress or even it's below the line, I guess, of the administration. But anyway, I think we should be left to manage it and do the best we can and not necessarily have certain protocols that would dictate to us who we're able to deploy. We have people that work that every day.

Q: And is it your sense you're going to be needing more troops in Anbar?

A: There are more troops headed to Anbar. There's two battalions there right now turning over. We have two battalions that are being extended. I was there at Christmas time and I was more encouraged than I have been and some of your numbers saw the same thing, saw the same briefs I did. I was more encouraged than I have been about events in the Al Anbar Province. What I say when people ask the question is that I believe we're reinforcing success now in that province. That was not the take when I was there. We saw the hostility levels in Al Anbar causing that to be really the last province to come over. When General Casey in his early going wanted to know how soon we could turn everything over to the Iraqis, Al Anbar was dead last on that scheme of things because we thought that animosity would hold and it would just make life difficult over time.

I don't believe that today because if you believe that police are the key to countering an insurgency, the police are probably more effective now, the Sunni police are probably more effective at that in the Al Anbar than any other place in the country and that includes some of the places that are traditionally quiet. I just think they're after it. We continue to recruit those folks, hundreds above the monthly requirement in terms of what we can train. They've got the support of their tribes. They are actively pursuing the al Qaeda of Iraq and that's a good news story.

I would say I think we're reinforcing success with those battalions that are going out west.

Q: General, just to switch back to Afghanistan, the surge versus the plus-up question too. There's another requirement for about 3400-3500 more troops in Afghanistan. Do

you see first of all more Marine involvement in Afghanistan at this point? You're down I believe to small companies, individuals there now. Is that working out to be a surge now or a plus-up?

A: I do not see more Marine involvement at this point in Afghanistan. Never say never, because the requirements there are tending to grow if there's a pattern. Not only do you have the 3500 for an additional brigade of combat troops, you've also got a fairly significant spending requirement out there to provide what we call TTs, the training teams, the police training teams and so forth. We will absorb a good chunk of that I think, to be determined just how many. But there's an equipment issue that's taking place right now in Afghanistan that makes it difficult for us to go in there. We would have to deploy entire battalion sets there whereas the Army right now is able to pretty much fall in on Army equipment that's there.

We've talked about it when I was over at Christmas time, we visited Afghanistan. They love to have Marine battalions because the guys over there before did great work. They almost speak about their activities up in the mountains with a level of reverence based on the great job those battalions did do. But at this point in terms of operational forces in the field I don't see a significant increase in Marine forces.

Q: Do you see the trainers then, you would just see individual or smaller companies of Marines going in to the training --

A: Depending on the size. The folks in Afghanistan have been asking for something akin to about 30. They're smaller than that in Iraq, but they've been asking for training teams up to about 30 in strength. So we would be fielding, again, a portion of those and really we're already doing it with the Afghan Army. The increasing requirement would be with the Afghan police. Once again, to this belief, that it takes an effective police force to curtail an insurgency.

That said, you have a very large NATO presence, ISAF presence in Iraq [sic] right now, so we're going back to some of the ISAF commanders who also happen to be Americans in some cases and say maybe some of the other nations that had caveats on what they could do could easily provide police trainers and that way you can maximize the use, the effectiveness, of some of your American troops by having them not do that particular mission. So that discussion, it's not a debate, but that discussion is ongoing at this point with the commanders to see what the best use of all coalition forces, not just US.

Q: General, I was interested in your comment earlier that Afghanistan and Iraq are kind of the first plateaus in this long war on terrorism as you see it. I wonder if you could expand on that a bit. There's a feeling among some people that if you manage to stabilize those two places in a sense you've achieved that mission and perhaps the war on terror

becomes more of a law enforcement, intelligence operation. Do you see it as a military battle longer term as well? Where do you see it going? How long do you see it lasting?

A: Let me start with some intelligence. We have gleaned from the web sites, we have intercepted from al Qaeda their strategy. We know essentially what their strategy is and it's got five or six parts to it.

One is to declare Jihad and have all the brothers rise up and join us in our extremist movement. That's only been partially successful, but they're there.

Secondly is to exorcise Western influence from the old Caliphate, from what we call the arc of instability or the Middle East. I think that's the phase we're in right now. Some would argue that they're more on plan than we are in that regard, but that's what they want to do.

Third is to, after they have exorcised or eliminated Western influence they want to turn on what they call the apostate governments that have worked with us and reduce them. And oh by the way, in the process securing a stranglehold over the Middle East oil supplies, regulating the cost of oil to the rest of the world, those types of things. They have said when they get strong enough they will destroy Israel. Okay. In the mean time they will be attacking us indiscriminately in Western Europe and in our own country with terrorist attacks, trying to bring us to our knees and to bankrupt us again and our economy through this choking off of the oil supply or at least regulating it according to their design.

Now they have said if that takes 100 years they're prepared for it to take that long. It may not happen in the next 5 or 10 years but they're in for the long fight.

Anyway, to my way of thinking, that's a long war. We may say we're going to walk away from this and we're going to withdraw troops, but the other guy gets a vote. We captured a character out in Ramadi that we moved to Fallujah and questioned and we said, what are you going to do when the United States leaves Iraq? He said in very good English, we will follow you.

So there's an ominous tone to all of this. My concern is if we leave Iraq or Afghanistan prematurely, before we're satisfied that we've created a nation state that can essentially continue this fight, not become ungoverned spaces, and defend itself to a degree, I think we will have a responsibility for a time to defend Iraq against regional players. But it doesn't have to be from within Iraq.

But if we walk away prematurely we will be perceived as having lost, is my personal view, and so I think that has got the potential to inspire even greater levels of this jihad.

And somewhere, by the way, in those phases of the enemy plan, I mentioned at least a couple of national vital objectives. One is to I think ensure the free flow of oil throughout the world market, but also Israel. So my concern is that we ought to do the job right while we're there and walk out again with this level of credibility that we and the other nations have been effective in this global war. Win those first battles, if you will. When you win the first battles the war is shorter. If you lose the first battles, it's just a longer, tougher fight.

Q: Do you see other military --

A: Military, non-military. Increasingly I believe that this is not just about kinetic military power, it's about creating conditions in nations where they understand the danger, but also it's about winning the people over. Sometimes you do that through military force. Oftentimes you do not. But it's conditioning the people to the threats that are out there and give them a better quality of life so this extremist message is not attractive to them.

Q: Do you think the American public and the international public more broadly sufficiently understand that?

A: I don't think that our American public understands the bad guys' strategy. I think we look at it in a shorter term. I think we look at it from our perspective, not his, and that we don't fully understand the movement. I think it's important that we do. That's the reason I took some pains to lay it out there for you.

Q: Last week a Marine in Missouri asked you about the [inaudible] EFV program and you said the Corps is in a period of risk right now in terms of the ship to shore capability. I was wondering if you could elaborate on that and how important is this program to the Corps, and what [inaudible] expect to do [inaudible].

A: It gets back to what I said earlier about the idea of the nation's forcible entry capability. We are soldiers of the sea. We are tied inextricably to the Navy and the Navy and we would do this forcible entry thing if it ever came to that.

The Navy's billion dollar ships will not close closer probably than 25 miles to the beach. If you look at what happened in Lebanon with a sea-skimming kind of anti-ship missile that almost sank an Israeli patrol boat, did sink another ship that was a little further out on the horizon. Those weren't nation states, those were just terrorists using, or a political party I guess better said, some would call them terrorists but I'll call them Hezbollah for our discussion, using that kind of a capability. Pother nations have a much enhanced capability beyond that so the Navy is concerned that whereas we used to run amphibious ships into about 4,000 yards from the beach, they would pop out their

amphibious craft and so forth, we would make our way. That's not going to happen in this day and age because we're not going to risk those ships and the sailors that work inside them.

So we've got to close that 25 miles. Right now we have an amphibious tractor that moves about eight miles an hour, it puts fumes in the back where the troops are, and it can't negotiate those higher sea states that you would find the further you get out to sea. So the time, the condition of the troops, all those things come into play. So yeah, I think we're in a period of risk right now until we get this EFV, that is that rapid closer, to the ability to execute one of those operations in a precise manner.

Q: What do you expect to do with the [inaudible]? Are you upgrading --

A: They've been upgraded. We have what we call the Ram RS Conversion that has given them new life. It's really one of the better conversions that we've done in terms of its ability to handle the additional weight that we've put on them and so forth, and we continue to do that with some of the ones that have not yet been converted. This program won't reach FOC until out in the 20-teens. So we continue to use those. By the way, the difficulty, the science that we're asking industry to do here is give us a vehicle that can actually ride on top of the waves for 25 miles, then gear down and become a very effective armored personnel carrier for the next 200 miles. That's pretty sexy. That's pretty complicated. So we can understand why there have been some burps in the program, perhaps, when you realize that you're asking industry to do something that's never been done before like that. So we continue to push and try to help them on the margins where we can.

I think it's an absolutely essential requirement that we have that kind of capability, and from my perspective, sooner is much better because we shorten that period of risk that we're in right now with the Navy ships not wanting to get close to those anti-access systems.

Q: That's it, General. Thank you.

A: Thank you.

END TEXT