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House Armed Services Committee

**STATEMENT OF**  
**GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS**  
**COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS**  
**BEFORE THE**  
**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE ON**  
**STRATEGIC CHOICES AND MANAGEMENT REVIEW**  
**18 SEPTEMBER 2013**

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## **GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS**

### **COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS**



On October 22, 2010 General James F. Amos assumed the duties of Commandant of the Marine Corps. General Amos was born in Wendell, Idaho and is a graduate of the University of Idaho. A Marine Aviator, General Amos has held command at all levels from Lieutenant Colonel to Lieutenant General.

General Amos' command tours have included: Marine Wing Support Squadron 173 from 1985-1986; Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 312 – attached to Carrier Air Wing 8 onboard USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71) – from 1991-1993; Marine Aircraft Group 31 from 1996-1998; 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing in combat during Operations IRAQI FREEDOM I and II from 2002-2004; II Marine Expeditionary Force from 2004-2006; and Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command and Deputy Commandant, Combat Development and Integration from 2006 to 2008. Additional operational tours have included Marine Fighter Attack Squadrons 212, 235, 232, and 122.

General Amos' staff assignments have included tours with Marine Aircraft Groups 15 and 31, the III Marine Amphibious Force, Training Squadron Seven, The Basic School, and with the MAGTF Staff Training Program. Additionally, he was assigned to NATO as Deputy Commander, Naval Striking Forces, Southern Europe, Naples, Italy where he commanded NATO's Kosovo Verification Center, and later served as Chief of Staff, U.S. Joint Task Force Noble Anvil during the air campaign over Serbia. Transferred in 2000 to the Pentagon, he was assigned as Assistant Deputy Commandant for Aviation. Reassigned in December 2001, General Amos served as the Assistant Deputy Commandant for Plans, Policies and Operations, Headquarters, Marine Corps. From 2008-2010 General Amos was assigned as the 31st Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps.

## Introduction

The Marine Corps is the nation's expeditionary force in readiness. We are our nation's hedge against uncertainty; a national insurance policy of sorts. Deployed forces, and units in training alike, are poised to swiftly respond to crisis and disaster, offering immediate options for strategic decision-makers, while simultaneously buying time for the follow on joint force. We mitigate the risk inherent in an uncertain world by being ready to respond to today's crisis – with today's force – today.

The Nation and the Defense Department are faced with unprecedented budget uncertainty. My fellow service chiefs and I are here to talk about the Department of Defense's Strategic Choice and Management Review (SCMR) and the effects of sequestration on the budget. We fill two distinct roles in this discussion—as chiefs of our respective services and as members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In my role as Commandant, I am deeply concerned about our inability to get a budget approved that facilitates the sound management of precious personnel and limited resources from one year to the next. As a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I am equally concerned with our military's ability to support the President's Defense Strategic Guidance and meet the requirements of the Combatant Commanders across the globe.

Your Marines take seriously their sacred oath to defend our nation, our Constitution and the American people. As we speak, Marines are deployed to Afghanistan supporting the transition of security and responsibility to the Afghan government and people. As a naval force, Marines remain afloat on amphibious warships to provide forward presence, while engaging our allies and partners. These naval expeditionary forces are maneuverable, self-sustaining, operate without reliance on host country basing or over flight permissions, and present our nation with flexible force options.

In the Pacific, we are aggressively rebalancing our force posture, to include our Unit Deployment Program in Okinawa. Rotational Marine units are training and strengthening our relationship with Australia. Additionally, Marines stand their posts guarding our embassies, and train diligently at our installations to prepare for the next contingency. Marines stand ready to answer the nation's call to action. We are keenly aware of the global security environment where our collective actions are closely watched, and we share the concern that a disruption of our nation's ability to protect its global interests will have strategic consequences.

In these troubled times, the Marine Corps remains your frugal force. As good stewards of the taxpayer dollar, we will continue to prioritize our requirements, determine what is good enough and only ask for what is essential for our Marines and Sailors to succeed every time they are called into harm's way. For a small portion of the Department of the Defense budget, we continue to provide a strategically mobile, rapidly deployable force. While other nations seek to reinvent themselves for the new security environment, the American people have already invested in a Navy-Marine Corps team that is suited for this environment.

As Commandant, I assure you that we will do everything in our power to ensure the security of the American people and protect the global interests that secure our prosperity. As we have for 238 years, we will meet our responsibility to rapidly respond to crises wherever they may occur. Marines will be *always faithful* to the American people and our nation. We cannot afford to allow

our adversaries the opportunity to seize the initiative and undermine global security. Already a lean organization, your Marines will continue to give you the first and best option for crisis response.

### **Force Structure**

Beginning in 2006, the Marine Corps increased its end strength to 202k to meet global commitments and to reduce the dwell time of Marines in combat zones. Three years ago, the Marine Corps initiated a Force Structure Review (FSR) with the mission of re-shaping the Marine Corps for a post-Afghanistan environment. This review sought to find ways to meet our national security responsibilities in a resource-efficient manner. Our goal was to provide the most ready, capable, and cost-effective Marine Corps our nation could afford as the security environment changed. Balancing the President's Defense Strategic Guidance with our internal review, we designed a force of 186,800 which was the optimal-sized Marine Corps considering the likely global security environment.

As a result of new factors driven by the Budget Control Act (BCA), the 186.8K force is no longer affordable. Accordingly, I reported to Congress last year on our multi-year plan to draw down the Corps below 186.8K reaching 182.1K by the end of FY16. This force structure goal adjusted our end strength, and assumed more risk by making reductions across all elements of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF), while still enabling the Marine Corps to support the President's strategy. A year ago, we believed a budget deal would be made. Today, with sequestration having occurred and current law imposing continued cuts in future years we are planning on reducing the Corps even more. If cuts of this size continue, we will not be able to afford the 182k force structure; the fiscal environment will subsequently put the nation's ability to respond to crisis around the globe at risk.

### **Resources and Readiness**

I am alarmed by the prospect of even deeper reductions in the next fiscal year. There should be no misunderstanding: cuts of this magnitude will have a significant impact on the global security climate, the perceptions of our enemies, and the confidence of our allies. In a so-called "new normal" environment of brushfire instabilities, violent extremism, non-state threats and struggling sovereign entities, the United States will continue to have a role as a leader. Our ability to affect this global environment may be measured in ready crisis response forces, i.e., ships at sea, planes in the air, partnerships on the ground and trust among our allies. In a word, our posture and our stature as a global leader in a challenging world is measured in READINESS. Readiness is the aggregate of the investment in personnel, training, and equipment to ensure that units are prepared to perform missions at any given time. Our ability to project a ready force is gauged and respected by our friends. But make no mistake about it, our foes and those who would challenge us, are measuring our readiness just as closely.

Readiness is directly linked to resources. Sequestration-level cuts in FY14 will force us to forfeit long-term priorities to fund near-term readiness. In FY 2013, the final enacted appropriations bill addressed many of our funding priorities; however, as we enter a new fiscal year, a full year of sequester matched with the likelihood of a Continuing Resolution (CR) provides the context for

our fiscal planning as we move forward. While I think we all can agree that defense resources must be highly scrutinized, the scale and abrupt implementation of prospective resource changes have the potential for devastating impacts on readiness beginning in the very near future. We realize this is not a temporary condition, and are bracing for the continued challenges of these lower funding levels.

The impacts we face in terms of readiness have primary and secondary effects. While the primary effects on short-term readiness will begin to be observable in FY14, the longer-term effects will be even more devastating. We are realigning funds from longer-term activities to protect the short-term readiness of our combat deployed Marines. While these adaptations are necessary, the continued maintenance of the short-term readiness of our current force comes at the expense of those who will follow in their footsteps. We are consuming tomorrow's 'seed corn' to feed today's requirements, leaving ever less to plant for the future.

### **Marine Corps Readiness Degradation**

The Defense Strategic Guidance remains a clear articulation of future threats, challenges, and opportunities - I continue to support its full implementation. Given the continuing threat of sequestration, we face an extended period of severely reduced funding bound by rules that provide little flexibility to efficiently apply the mandated reductions. Analyzing and applying constrained resources requires decisions now; decisions that will have strategic impact.

When we describe our crisis response mandate, we are describing our forward deployed forces as well as those Marines and units training at home. Even when not deployed, Marine units are on a short tether and thus required to maintain high levels of readiness. They must be prepared to deploy on short notice, with the necessary equipment and training to dominate any adversary or confront any crisis. "Tiered readiness" amongst non-deployed Marine units is unacceptable. Over time, tiered readiness creates a hollow force. Degradation in training, equipment and manning underpin shallow, unsustainable combat-ready forces. America expects her Marines to remain most ready when the nation is least ready.

Our Marines on the forward edge of our nation's security remain my number one priority. The forces that currently support the Afghanistan mission, those engaged in countering terrorism globally, and those preparing to go, will receive the full support they need. We also are prioritizing our Wounded Warriors support services; however, our focus on deployed forces, families, and our wounded warriors, comes at a cost. As we move forward under sequestration, I will be forced to reduce activities necessary to the long-term readiness of the force, such as organizational and intermediate maintenance of equipment returning from theater, to ensure the full support to our most engaged units. For forces not deploying to Afghanistan, the fuel, ammunition, and other support necessary for training will be reduced precluding our ability to provide fully-trained individuals and ready units to meet emerging crises – ultimately impacting even Amphibious Ready Groups and Marine Expeditionary Units.

The abruptness and inflexibility of sequestration will force us to mortgage the condition of our equipment and could erode our readiness to dangerous levels. The indiscriminate nature of sequestration is creating its very own national security problem. Within a year, we will see

real impact to all home station units and the beginning of impacts to our next-to-deploy and some deployed forces...the beginnings of a hollow force we have fought so hard to avoid.

### **Mitigating Sequestration**

We have worked diligently to mitigate the effects of sequestration and the likelihood of a CR as we enter into Fiscal Year 14. As we look ahead, our task has been made more challenging by the ever increasing demand for ready Marines. A resumption of the Marine Unit Deployment Program in the Pacific has reestablished a key component of our nation's stabilizing presence in the Asia Pacific region. The establishment of a rotational presence of Marines in Darwin, Australia has already had a positive impact on the confidence of our allies and our ability to respond to crises in the South and Southeast Asian littoral. The planned ramp-up of Marine security forces for our embassies and consulates is a necessary artifact of the "new normal." Marines are in high demand to support the growth of special operations and cyber forces as well.

Maintaining near-term readiness and operational commitments will continue to come at the expense of investment in our modernization, infrastructure and quality of life accounts. As an example of our trade-offs, I am forced to reduce the necessary funding to maintain our facilities onboard our bases and stations to support operational commitments. Unfortunately, reducing funding levels will accelerate the rate of degradation and increase the long-term costs to return these facilities to acceptable levels. Our family housing overseas, where the preponderance of forward stationed Marines and their families reside, will not receive planned renovations. Stateside housing will likely face reduced oversight, which breaches our priority to 'Keep Faith' with our families. Sequestered levels of funding will also cut base operating support funding severely, resulting in funding levels well below the requirement. Overall, degraded quality of life for our Marines, Sailors and their families will impact unit and family readiness, as well as our efforts to recruit and retain high quality people in the all-volunteer force.

While the Marine Corps has a lean civilian workforce with 95% working outside the National Capital Region, sequestration will also result in reductions to this force. Since our civilians play critical roles in ground equipment maintenance, training range operations, installation support services to include police, fire and rescue services, housing maintenance and base utilities support, and all of our family support programs, fewer civilians over time will impact home station readiness. Some essential programs at our bases and stations, such as our Wounded Warrior programs, will continue. Other very important but less critical programs, like morale and family support services, to include the availability of child care, will be reduced or eliminated to fund readiness. Additionally, the specter of further furloughs or reductions-in-force present significant challenges to our ability to attract and retain the talent we need. Sequestration undeniably impacts our individual Marines as well as every aspect of our Corps from the readiness of our next-to-deploy forces to the readiness of our depots, maintenance and stations.

### **Strategic Choices**

The Marine Corps is first and foremost a warfighting organization committed to winning our nation's battles. I do not share the view that as the United States transitions out of Afghanistan, our enemies are through with us. Instead, this world remains a dangerous place. We do not

know what is going to happen in Egypt, Syria and Libya, but we know terrorist organizations will continue to fester in areas of the world ripe for harboring illicit and de-stabilizing actors. We do not know what the future is for North Korea. The Marine Corps is going to have to operate within this reality. Despite sequestration, history has taught us that we must maintain a ready force capable of responding to crises anywhere in the world and at a moment's notice. This is why America invests in the Navy-Marine Corps team.

Four months ago, Secretary Hagel directed the Strategic Choices and Management Review (SCMR) to better inform DoD's preparation for the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). In February, I stood up a working group focused solely on designing a future force based on likely resource constraints. This effort was informed by the realization that, if faced with sequestration, the Marine Corps would continue to face budget shortfalls and lose its ability to maintain its edge as the nation's force in readiness. As such, we rebuilt a force design structure that was based on a reduced fiscal framework that, by necessity, assumed greater risk in supporting the requirements of the President's national security strategy.

Although a significant portion of the SCMR process addressed Major Combat Operation (MCO) requirements, which represent the most dangerous of possibilities, we focused on forward presence and crisis response, which are the most likely...we believe that is what America needs from the Marine Corps. America will always need a Marine Corps that is ready, forward deployed, and able to respond to crisis on a moment's notice.

As noted above, in the past decade with congressional support, we grew to 202K to meet the nation's defense needs as a Marine Corps forward deployed and engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan. As we complete our mission and bring home our service men and women, we are planning to reshape our force size to meet the new national strategy. As current law threatens to further reduce budgets, we proactively initiated an examination of further end strength reductions. Let me be clear, the primary driver behind the development of this new force strength initiative was not the national strategy. The President's National Security Strategy is optimized with a Marine Corps of 186.8K. The BCA forced us to 182.1K. Our examination determined that an end strength of 174K was the best we could do in addressing the operational requirements of steady state deployments, crisis response activities, and potential major combat operations, while preserving institutional health and readiness. As we actively participate in the QDR, this is the force that the Marine Corps will use as the recommended basis for our contribution to the nation's defense. Based on extensive analysis, falling below this force structure number will significantly increase risk in to our steady state security posture, crisis response and major combat operations.

Our working group set out with the basic premise to design a range of possible force structures and subject them to both internal and external risk analysis. In concert with the Defense Strategic Guidance, we designed a force that was also fiscally supportable. We decided to accept risk with MCOs, to ensure adequate capability and capacity remained in the areas of forward presence and crisis response. Great care was taken to ensure that both the strategic landscape and emerging demands were properly balanced against force design risks. We had to make sure our method avoided simple linear reductions of numbers from our current planned end state of 182.1K to achieve a force design that kept the Marine Corps as ready as fiscally possible and relevant to the security challenges of today and tomorrow. At the end of the day, we needed to be modernized,

ready and biased for action, integrated into the Joint Force structure, expeditionary and right sized, while retaining our core combined arms and amphibious structure and competencies.

As a part of our methodology, we began by first looking at what Marines are doing today and then widened our aperture to include those emerging trends that would ultimately frame the future operating environment. Today, Marines are still joined with the international coalition in Afghanistan, providing crisis response in the Middle East, providing a stabilizing presence in Africa and the Pacific, and standing ready to respond to Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief (HA/DR) efforts around the globe. Today's Marine Corps also has the capability and capacity to conduct special operations and cyber warfare. We can foresee an increasing demand for these capabilities in the future operating environment. The bottom line is, we are asking a tremendous amount out of our Marines today--a trend that will likely continue and further bound our future.

Tomorrow's Marines will see violent extremism, battles for influence, disruptive societal transitions, natural disasters, extremist messages and manipulative politics. We will see criminal enterprises wield combat power formerly only associated with nation states. We will see separatism, extremism and intolerance that will lead to terrorism, protests and violence. We will see new technologies place modern weapons into the hands of developing states and non-state actors while the development and proliferation of advanced conventional weapons challenges our ability to project power or gain access. In this security environment, it will be the forward presence, strategic mobility, rapid response, and effective power projection capabilities of the Marine Corps that define those minimum attributes that must endure and frame our future force design. We must maintain a force that can balance a focus on the Asia-Pacific with a sustainable emphasis on the Middle East, combined with a continuous effort to counter violent extremists operating across multiple domains.

Based on the detailed planning of our working group, in conjunction with independent analysis, we have determined that within sequestration-level budgets that our force design of 174K is the lowest temporary level that can retain America's crisis response force. This provides a minimum acceptable level of readiness, while maintaining forward presence as a part of the Navy-Marine Corps team. Further reductions will incur heightened, and in some cases prohibitive risk to the National Security Strategy.

The Marine Corps has faced this challenge before. As was the case in the past, our manpower and investments fluctuated with the onset and conclusion of wars. We are heading down a similar path today. As our nation reduces its overseas forces, Marines will bridge the gap. We will maintain forward presence. We will remain on scene to engage with partners and allies. We will provide our nation access where our adversaries try to deny it. We will respond to crises around the globe. Given a smaller force size our Marines will face a greater operational tempo, and we will plan for reduced dwell time as a necessary measure to meet our global commitments.

For the foreseeable future, there remains a heightened requirement for a very capable crisis response force that can deploy anywhere quickly, provide a variety of response options, and buy time for national decision-makers when the need arises. The Marine Corps is and will continue to be the answer to this need, and through Congressional support, we will retain the capability and capacity to do so.



## **Conclusion**

Since it emerged in the late 19th Century as a great power, the United States has needed a capable and well-trained crisis response force. Now, more than ever, Congress is faced with difficult choices to determine where to appropriate the necessary funds for our national defense. Some of the recommendations being offered present illusory and short-term thrift... America has carefully invested over the years and produced the most agile and responsive military force within the Navy-Marine Corps team. Our foes, cunning and adaptive, watch carefully to take advantage of any decline in American ability or willingness to lead in a partnered global order that supports the common good. The continued prosperity and security interests of our nation are dependent on resourcing long-term success.

The Marine Corps is the most ready when the nation is least ready. It is who we are. Paired with the Navy, we are the elements of the joint force that must be maintained at high levels of readiness. We are the nation's risk mitigation for the additional cuts that will affect other elements of the Department of Defense.

While Congress, and this committee carefully executes its responsibility to validate every taxpayer dollar they appropriate to our nation's defense, I can assure you that the Marine Corps will continue to uphold our share of this sacred trust. Our reputation as the "frugal force" comes from an ethos that values both high combat readiness and careful stewardship. The Marine Corps will ask only for what it needs, not for what it wants. I am committed to building the most ready Marine Corps that the nation can afford. Working together, we can map out a resource strategy that protects our global interests as a nation, keeps faith with our service-members, and provides the greatest value to the American people. I thank you for the opportunity to engage in this dialogue, for your service to our nation, and for your continued support of your Marines. Semper Fidelis.