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House Armed Services Committee

STATEMENT OF
LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILLIAM M. FAULKNER
DEPUTY COMMANDANT, INSTALLATIONS AND LOGISTICS
BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
READINESS SUBCOMMITTEE
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Chairman Wittman, Ranking Member Bordallo, members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to update this committee on the Marine Corps' Afghanistan equipment retrograde and reset actions.

Your Marines take seriously our sacred oath to defend our nation, our Constitution and the American people. In Afghanistan, Marines continue to support 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 and self-sustaining, operate without reliance on host country basing or over flight permissions, and present our nation with flexible force options. As my Commandant testified to this committee just the other day, Marine Corps readiness is directly linked to resources and the enduring impacts of the Budget Control Act of 2011 to include sequestration will force us to forfeit some of our long-term priorities to fund near-term readiness.

In my testimony today I would like to underscore the importance of our Ground Equipment Reset Strategy and its linkage to enduring operational readiness. Reversing the accelerated degradation of our ground equipment, worn over a decade of protracted combat in the inhospitable climates of Al Anbar and Helmand Provinces, is critical to our ability to execute a post-Afghanistan maintenance strategy and posture for tomorrow's challenging security environment. Completing the full reset of our equipment is in line with our fidelity to the taxpayer, and the continued availability of Overseas Contingency Operations or OCO funds is critical to completing our Reset Strategy. The Ground Equipment Reset Strategy signed by the Commandant in 2012 is one example of the

Marine Corps' institutional commitment to remain ready and relevant. It's built on the recognition of tightening budgets and expeditious use of available OCO funds to achieve a properly equipped and ready force capable of conducting the full range of military operations. The Marine Corps is moving with a clear sense of purpose to rapidly restore ground equipment readiness in a fiscally conscientious manner, and we need to maintain the tempo that we currently have underway. In order to avoid enduring reductions to our overall operational readiness, we need continued funding two to three years after the last Marines leave the Afghanistan theater.

When I last appeared before this Committee six months ago, the Marine Corps had recently completed its post-surge recovery. In the year between December 2011 and December 2012, the Marine Corps redeployed its 2009 surge forces and retrograded over 39,000 associated items of equipment. Since that time, Major General Walter Miller, the commanding general of the Marine Corps Marine Air Ground Task Force that is in Afghanistan today, continues to aggressively reduce the Marine Corps equipment and supply footprint in Afghanistan while conducting combat operations. If you had pictures of our major forward operating base Camp Bastion at the height of our surge, and one of the same areas today, in today's picture you would see empty lots that were once stacked with shipping containers and equipment, empty warehouses once filled with supplies and repair parts, and vacant aircraft parking ramps. To put the effort in context, since our first Marine Corps units redeployed at the end of 2011, 67% of the 72,000 equipment items have already been removed from our Marine Corps portion of the joint and coalition Afghanistan battle space. We have reduced 5.35 million square feet of aviation matting to 150 thousand square feet today. Additionally, of the over 42,000 total items retrograded

to date, 60% of those are being inducted for reset actions at our depot maintenance plants in Albany, Georgia and Barstow, California. This underscores the importance of our ability to self-generate readiness through our organic Marine Corps depot maintenance capacity and the successful execution of our Reset Strategy in support of our Title 10 mission. In total, we've completed reset actions on about one third of the items returned and these items are improving equipment readiness today.

Tomorrow's fiscal environment will certainly impact our ability to complete our Reset strategy and we still have much to do. In FY13, the Marine Corps was fully funded for reset to include an additional \$120 million in depot maintenance provided by the Congress in HR 933. However, required maintenance conducted at our depot maintenance production plants was deferred as a result of the six day civilian furlough. It's important to point out that even seemingly nominal cuts compound increasing workload requirements as maintenance is deferred year to year. This will have a detrimental effect on readiness if funding limitations extend into FY14 and beyond.

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. For example, our ground materiel modernization investment accounts comprise a mere 10 percent of our baseline budget. It is the smallest modernization account in the Department of Defense at \$2.67 billion in FY14. Subsequently, the Marine Corps leverages its sister service investment plans to generate opportunities that promise the most operationally effective payoff. Additionally, the Marine Corps, through its investment budget, depends on small businesses to provide critical capabilities to give Marines in combat a qualitative edge over the enemy. These small businesses simply do

not have the flexibility to survive further budget reductions. Even proportional cuts will have disproportionate impacts to already pressurized small investment programs and on operational readiness.

As I close, I want to point out that our readiness is preserved through a careful balance of high quality people, well-trained units, modernized equipment, well-maintained installations and a force level sufficient to accomplish our many missions. The Marine Corps recognizes the realities of the fiscal constraints before us and our responsibility to ensure our reset strategy places the right equipment in the right condition and at the right cost into the hands of the war fighter. With the continued support of Congress, the Marine Corps will remain ready to meet the Nation's next crisis in any clime or place.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address this Committee. I look forward to your questions.