



AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE

**SQUARING THE CIRCLE: GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS
ON AMERICAN MILITARY STRATEGY IN A TIME OF
DECLINING RESOURCES**

INTRODUCTION:

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SPEAKER:

**GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS,
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**

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MACKENZIE EAGLEN: Good morning. Welcome to AEI. I'm Mackenzie Eaglen, a research fellow here. Thanks for coming. We are pleased to host the commandant this morning on behalf of the Marilyn Ware Center for Security Studies at AEI.

I just have one brief administrative note before we get started. We'll be handing out question cards before, during, and after General Amos's remarks, so write down your questions and find an AEI staff member and we'll get them up here for our Q&A afterwards. I'll be sure and take the time to try and go through all of them or at least as many as possible.

I'm going to let the commandant speak and then we'll join him back on stage for that portion of the discussion.

He's been a busy man this week, General Amos, and he's had a lot to say in the public space, two hearings, two days in a row in Congress. He needs little introduction because he's the reason you're here, but I will briefly just remind you that he is the 35th commandant of the Marine Corps. He became the chief in 2010, which I think was quite relevant this week in this eloquent testimony on Capitol Hill.

He served – he's commanded all levels and served numerous tours with distinction, including the air campaign over Serbia and Operations Iraqi Freedom One and Two. He's previously served as deputy assistant commandant for aviation for plans, policies, and operations, and as the 31st assistant commandant of the Marine Corps.

It's my pleasure to welcome him for giving us so much time today and so much love on Valentine's Day. Thank you and welcome. (Applause.)

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Thank you, Mackenzie. What time are you done with the questions?

MS. EAGLEN: We are closing the event at 11:00.

GEN. AMOS: Eleven?

MS. EAGLEN: Yes, sir. Eleven is the point.

GEN. AMOS: OK. I wonder out here, can you hear me in the back? OK. I'm about to launch out on some dangerous ground here. I've got prepared remarks, which are really, really terrific and I think in the interest of question and answers, which is what you'd like to do, what I'd like to do is just make some opening comments. I mean, I've

had plenty of opportunity this week to do prepared comments, put a lot of thought through things. It's been a very, very interesting week as you're well aware.

On Tuesday, we – (off mic.) – all the service chiefs, the OSD comptroller, Bob Hale, Secretary Hale, Deputy Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, Chairman Dempsey, Marty Dempsey, and all five of the service chiefs, all five members of the Joint Chiefs appeared before the SASC and the matter was sequestration, you worry about. So I've been out talking about – (off mic.) – or any questions you want to talk about – (off mic.) – questions and answers.

And then we went to the HASC yesterday – and then we went to the House Armed Services Committee yesterday. And roughly three times the amount of people on the HASC and we were there for three and a half hours. So it was – we've spent a lot of time, the last two days, up on Capitol Hill, and I think rightfully so. That's not a complaint. That's actually what we're supposed to do and make sure our civilian leaders do this.

So I want to – I'll talk about that here in a second, but let me back up to give you a trip report. We landed back on Washington, D.C., late on Monday afternoon, after spending four or five days in Afghanistan. I wanted to get over to see our Marines, our sailors, our allies, our coalition partners in the Helmand Province. And we did that. And so we traveled all around and the purpose of that was not to go out and shake hands with Marines, which is what Sergeant Major Barrett and I love to do. We were there at Christmas. We spent all Christmas – in fact, my wife went with me, the first lady of the Marine Corps, for her first trip in there. We spent Christmas and the holidays there with all our men and women in Helmand. We bounced around every FOB and COP that you could. But this trip, 45 days later, was to look all my commanding officers in the eye one more time and all the senior leaders, you know, the company commanders and the sergeants major, all the folks, my generals, and look them in the eye, and say OK, give me the honest to goodness truth on where we think – where you believe we are today. And they did that.

Now, there was no surprise because I'd done that – sort of – you know, sort of – over the Christmas holidays. I've done it every time I go there. I always try to come back with ground truth. And I report that. I don't – it's not Pollyanna. I don't stand out and just throw much of they love us, it's going great. I actually talk about the truth.

And I've watched it. I've had the advantage of watching the Afghanistan and our – the peace we're in evolve over almost four and a half to five years, going in and out, in and out. When we had small forces there, when the forces grew to 20,000-plus of U.S. Marines and another 10,000 allies in our zone. So I've watched it progress. And I'll tell you. We are down to two infantry battalions in the Helmand Province now. So you might – OK, well what does that mean?

Well, we had seven there last year. So that gives you a frame of reference. That's part of the drawdown, the surge of the 10,000 Marines and our Sailors that are part of the

Marine Corps is gone. They're back home. And so we're down right now to about 7,000, little bit more than 7,000 United States Marines.

Now, we've got about 8,000 British forces on the ground, some Royal Marines and some British soldiers. We've got Jordanians. The Bahrainis just left after being with us there for almost four straight years, the Georgians, not like Atlanta, Georgia, but Georgians, European Georgians, they're on the ground there with us. And they've been – in fact, they've got two battalions on the ground and they've been very strong partners with us. We've got some Estonians there.

So we have quite a collection. We're sitting right now at about – I think somewhere around probably 20,000, maybe a little bit less total forces, probably more like about 17,000 now that I think it. But in that period of time, the Afghan National Security Forces have grown to 27,000. They've got a corps on the ground there, the 215th Corps, some of the folks like the Jim Michaels have met the corps commander before, and he is ferocious. He's got four brigades on the ground now, just stood up the fourth one.

So while we have drawn down, they have grown in strength and in capability. So here is the answer to the question. When I went down south to Marjah and I talked to the battalion commander of 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines, and we sat in his command post and with his senior leadership, and I said, OK, tell me how things are.

Now, you remember, not long ago, you know, but it doesn't seem like it was very long ago, but it's probably about a year and a half, two years ago, we were in a hell of a fight in Marjah. Marjah was the first test of the surge force, when the force went in with an extra 30,000. You remember that. It lasted almost seven months to get ourselves, to get Marjah settled down. Marjah is about the size of Manhattan. It's not one city. It's not one village. It's a bunch of villages, all in a huge agricultural area that USAID long, long time ago went in there and helped to build farms and canals and they raise dates and pomegranates and all that stuff. It was very, very prolific at one time, so spread out.

But so we're in Marjah now, one battalion, and the battalion commander looked at me and he said, General Amos, he said, the ANSF, the Afghan National Security Force, which is the army, which is their police force – they've got two or three different kinds of police, but they're police force. So that's what I'm talking about. He said the ANSF out overmatches the enemy in every single case.

Now, that's pretty significant. I mean, that's the first time I've heard it that just bluntly. It wasn't a function of, you know, they're OK sometimes or not others. And I don't mean to imply that there're not times when it's probably better than others, but he was emphatic. The ANSF overmatches the Taliban in every single instance.

So we flew up north, went up to Sangin. Now, you remember a year and a half ago, Sangin, we were in it up to our necks in Sangin. And we're there with the battalion commander of 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines. And he said essentially the same thing. The

Afghan National Security Force, the Afghan National Army, in particular, in his zone, has grown – it's very strong. It's well-led. We are not doing any – we, the United States Marine Corps, U.S. forces in Helmand – are not doing any offensive operations or planning. It's all being done by the Afghan National Army. In fact, we don't write plans anymore for an operation. We write supporting plans, which means they're doing the planning. It's their plan. And we are the force that will provide support as needed.

Sometimes it's helicopter lifts. Sometimes it's ISR overhead. But – or backup in case something happens.

So I left there feeling good about where it is. The second message I want to give you is when we began the transition and really this past probably last six months, from a mission – and the president announced it – from a mission of offensive combat operations to security force assistance, to training, training and advising the Afghan National Army, when we made that transition, we started shaping the force that was going to come in – it's coming in right now. We call it 13 Tech One, which is the force that comes in in February and March, as we roll the whole – all the new force structure in there. And we shape that thinking that we'd have – the forces that would come in would have about that much combat – you know, offensive combat capability, and maybe about that much training and advising, because we thought, well, we're still going to need to have – we're still going to need to have some punch.

General Gurganus on the ground said that's actually not the case anymore. It's changed so dramatically with regards to the capabilities of the Afghan National Army. What we need now is about that much on about service support, that much ability to help train, help them set up supply systems, help them maintain their vehicles. How do you do that kind of thing? And probably about that much real kind of backup punch in case you needed it.

So we're in the process right now of kind of reshaping the force that will flow in there when it goes into this coming summer. We're going back inside our planning model to make sure that we've got a large – you know, not an overage, but substantive amount of combat support Marines going in there. That is a good news story. That in and of itself is very, very telling.

So I left Helmand on – I left there and flew up. The change of command – I was there when General Allen gave up command to General Dunford. That was a pretty significant emotional event. Both the comments by General Allen were just – were just astounding, a man that passionately love this country – loved that country and loves the people. So we were there for that and then we came straight home, preparation for the testimony.

So I want to report to you that we're on track. You notice I didn't say we're not – we're winning or losing. I didn't say this is nirvana. We've arrived. What I'm saying is, is that the plan, the campaign plan is on track. And I feel – I've always felt optimistic.

I'm probably more optimistic now than I have at any other time while I've made the trip. Ground truth from the commanders on the ground, no Pollyanna.

OK, let me switch gears here for you and then – then we'll kind of get to where I believe we are. I think – you know, there's – you know CR, continuing resolution is here. It's affected us. It's affected our readiness and I'll talk about that in a second. And then sequestration is on the verge of happening here in about two weeks. And having gone through testimony, having talked to a lot of folks, you know, we certainly don't want that to happen. I think it's absolutely disastrous. Interesting, when I talk to members of Congress and to folks – they – even the ones that voted for it – and you got to remember that a majority voted for it and it's law – but the next words are, but we never – we never, ever in – (inaudible) – imagination thought it would happen. It was always – it was always something that was out there and it was a pushing mechanism to force other decisions to be made to avoid the pitfalls of sequestration. So here we are, find ourselves two weeks away from it and we're headed towards it right now.

So let me just give you my sense of the world because I think that plays into this thing because my testimony for the last two days and my opening statement, yesterday and the day before, I mentioned United States Marine Corps twice in my opening statement. That's it. My opening statement was focused on global strategy and where the world is and where the United States of America is with regards to global leadership.

So let me paint the background of how I see the world and then talk a little bit about this responsibility regarding global leadership and then I'll dive into some effects on the Marine Corps with regards to sequestration and continuing resolution.

I spent a lot of time over the last couple of years trying to do a little bit of prognostication on what the world's going to look like over the next decade or two, did that when I was a three-star at Quantico for then General Conway, the brand new commandant, spent about a year and a half working on this. And I tell you. I don't think I'm too far off. I think what you're seeing today is this – is a world full of challenges, a world full of – it's not a world full chaos, but it's certainly a world that has unstable pockets in it all throughout.

You see what's happening in the Northern Africa area. It started in the Tunisia, you know, went over to Libya, went over to Egypt, and it's been back and forth, yet to be seen how all the northern part of Africa is going to finally turn out when everything is done.

We're dealing with Syria right now. Nobody knows exactly what's going to happen in Syria. We don't. And yet, it's a very dangerous situation in there. Not only are there chemical weapons and biological weapons on the ground in Syria of significant quantities, but you've got the Hezbollah right next door to them. And the Hezbollah has a vested interest in that. We've got Israel there. The whole world in last – early part of December turned and watched the Palestinian situation and the Israeli situation, the Gaza Strip play out, nobody knew how that was going to play out, none of us did. In fact, we

had the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, three ships that have been eight and a half months on cruise. They've been in the Gulf of Aden. They've been flying missions in Yemen. They've been flying missions in Afghanistan. And they were finally on their way home. And there was about December the 15th or 16th and families were all excited about it. And they got just outside the Straits of Gibraltar and we turned them around and sent them right off the coast of Cyprus. And they sat out there because the whole world was watching. We didn't – we did not know how was going to turn out.

We also brought the large deck amphibious ship, the Peleliu, from the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, in the Gulf of Aden, sailed it up to the Red Sea and parked it down just south of Aqaba. So we kind of had this thing bracketed while we watched.

So we're not sure what's going to happen in Syria. It's going to affect the things with Jordan, the Palestinians, that whole part of the world needs – you know, we're paying very close attention to it.

Take a look at Iran. Yet to be seen what's going to happen in Iran. I mean, we just – we don't know. You saw it on *Washington Post* today, you saw the email or – where they were trying to get pieces of magnets so that they could, you know, build –you know – when in fact, it was a email that said this is a very reputable country, I think, in Northern Iran, and we need specifically these kinds of magnets. And we want them built for this kind of specifications.

So we don't know how this is all going to play out over there. They certainly have – they certainly have been very vocal.

Well, let's switch over to the other side of the world. Well, now, let me go back. What about Mali? I mean, the French are in Mali. You know, the al Qaeda has migrated from the eastern side of Africa because of all the pressure in Somalia and all that stuff and they just continued to go west until they found a friendly area. And they've sat there and they built and it's very – I think it's very significant. I think it's very dangerous. We need to pay attention to it. And I'm particularly proud of the French. I'm proud that we're a part of helping the French. I think it's the right thing to do. I think if we think we can turn our back – this is Jim Amos personal opinion – on those kinds of threats, then I think we're kidding ourselves. I think the threats will find themselves in Atlanta, New York, San Francisco, Manhattan, Washington, D.C., down the road.

So we can't turn our back on those kinds – doesn't mean we have to do everything unilaterally. That's why we've got great coalition partners. That's why I'm particularly proud of what the French are doing. But it does mean that we can't turn our back on it as a nation, as a lead nation.

So let's swing over to the Asia-Pacific area. And you saw where this weekend North Korea detonated a nuclear weapon up in the northeastern part of their country. And – I mean, that's significant. The world is paying very close attention, while they're trying to figure out, OK, just what is it you can do? And I don't know. Our nation is dealing

with it. The nations in the Asia-Pacific area are dealing with it. Yet to be seen what China thinks about it. They may – I think what we'd all hope is that China would come in and actually bear some influence on North Korea. Yet to be seen if that's going to happen.

But take a look at that. Take a look at the challenges in the South China Sea with regards to territorial waters. We have challenges from North Korea and South Korea, South Korea and Japan, China and Japan, and China and the Philippines with the Scarborough Shoals.

So you think about that and all the potential for that part of the world. And we have great interest in there.

So my sense is, back to the next couple of decades, I think what we're going to see in the world is not large conflagration. It could happen. You know, none of us hope that it will, but I think what you're going to see in the world is you're going to see this kind of instability, this kind of friction, all the way from what we see over in the Africa, Central Command area, to include what we're starting to see a little bit in the Asia-Pacific area. So I think that's what's going to happen.

So what does that mean for us? For us as the United States Marine Corps and a naval officer and a Navy force, a naval force, beyond us – (inaudible) – the only way to mitigate that kind of thing, the only way to provide risk mitigation for our nation is not go over there and build new bases and do a lot of military construction, and plant people on the ground all over. Quite honestly, and I'm pretty – I'm not myopic on this thing, but I'm actually pretty strident on it, is naval forces. Naval forces come in to zones. They have freedom of navigation. They can go anywhere they want to go and they don't have to ask permission unless you're getting inside somebody's international waters, and we don't do that. We don't do that as a sovereign nation. We don't want people to do that to us. But naval forces walk and step very lightly on our friends and our allies.

We've got relationships. We've got – we've got five treaties in the Asia-Pacific area. They're over 50 years old. Starts up with Japan, goes over to South Korea, goes to the Philippines, goes to Thailand, and then Australia and New Zealand, a combined treaty. We've had them since the end of World War II. And in many cases, it's a mutual defense treaty.

So we've got great interest in the Asia-Pacific area. So naval forces are the force, as far as I can see, that need to be forward deployed. They need to be engaged. They need to be building trust and relationships and partners. In time of crisis, you can't surge trust. It doesn't work. You can surge forces. You can say, OK, we're going to go do this. We're going to fly from the United States of America. They're going to go over here. But honestly, relationships count. Relationships count when you're dealing with international nations, dealing with other nations, and you can't surge trust. And you build trust by virtue of presence, by virtue of shared sacrifice, by virtue of consistency in what we do, what we say, and what we do.

In the Asia-Pacific area alone, 70,000 die every year of natural disasters, 70,000 every year. I mean, it's unbelievably. It's \$35 billion worth of damage every single year. I mean, just this year, we were over there with the super typhoon that came in and camped over Manila. You know, we sent forces down there. Everybody here is familiar with what happened in the tragedy up in Sendai, up in Northern Japan, and yet, it was the very next day after the earthquake and the tsunami hit, and ever before we knew what was happening with the nuclear reactors at Fukushima, Marines from Okinawa flew up in their 44-year-old helicopters and our C-130s and we went up and even without being told – nobody – the PACOM commander didn't tell my three-star in Okinawa you need to do this. He just anticipated. He just said they're going to need help, and they did. And for the next 45 days, the Marines lifted something like they – rescued and took care of something like over 8,000 people, hundreds of thousands of pounds of supplies, food, water, blankets, fuel, kerosene, medical supplies, diapers, sanitary products to help the people that were there, that were without their homes. It was complete devastated.

So we do that. We do crisis response. We do HADR. We need to be ready to go in places like – to support our allies like when things happen in the Middle East. That's what we do. That's what naval forces do.

So I'm pretty strident when I say now, as I transition to continuing resolution and sequestration. The net effects of that, and you've already seen it. The CNO has cancelled the deployment of the Truman. There's a very good chance we'll have two Marine Expeditionary Units next year not go on cruise. The Marine Expeditionary Units, what I just described, those are the three ships with 2,500 Marines on board, the full complement of aviation from strike to support, a reinforced infantry battalion, a combat service support element that's second to none. And those are the ones that travel around. We do training. We do engagement. We do crisis response. We do presence missions, like when the 26th MEU went out south of Cyprus and sat there, when the Israeli-Palestinian situation was so tenuous. We do that. And it provides an element of stability to our national power. It provides decision space for our national leaders.

When the Libyan no-fly zone matter was being discussed, I do remember that, it was – it took a while for our country to decide, OK, we're going to do this. That is not a criticism because that's what happens when sovereign nations have to decide what they're going to do. You don't just – you don't just make a quick decision. You actually spend time trying to work with your allies and trying to make sure it's the right one. So that's what we do, the very senior leadership of our country, civilian leadership.

While that decision making was going on, we brought the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit up through the Red Sea, the Suez Canal, and parked it off the coast of Libya. And you remember when the air war or when the actual no-fly zone started, the only airplanes that were flying over there were Marine airplanes off of the Kearsarge. This is not a condemnation of any – it just took a while to get all the rest of the forces down there, the NATO forces, for two days, and then the F-15 pilot – both those pilots jumped out and we rescued one – 300 miles. So that's what we do. Those kinds of deployments, things like the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit going up to Sendai, the 26th

Marine Expeditionary Unit pulling off the coast to Libya, the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit coming back into the Mediterranean, those things are going to be in jeopardy.

So the question was asked yesterday, during the hearings and the day before, was OK, what is it you don't – we're going to have to decide as a nation what is it we don't want to do anymore. Or maybe a better question would be what is it we can't afford to do anymore? Maybe that's the question. So if you go through all the list of things, the noncombat and evacuation out of Tunisia into the Egypt, we did that, the forces were there. We flew 400 miles north in the very northern part of Pakistan off two Marine Expeditionary Units and rescued something like 60,000 Pakistanis up there, all the way up there. This was a year and a half ago and during that – that epic floods. OK, we're not going to do that anymore.

So as I said as a service chief and I really – before I put on my Marine uniform, I put on my Joint Chiefs of Staff hat, and that's pretty important to me because you expect the Joint Chiefs of Staff to think about these things. You expect us to take a longer view than just my service. That's why we have Joint Chiefs of Staff. And that's exactly how I approached this testimony for the last two days. I wanted to take a more strategic view because I wanted to make sure that everybody was thinking about the world and engagement and then what is our role as a United States of America, which kind of brings me to my last point.

You know, the Navy had a great saying about a year ago. It was a kind of a slogan. I remember Admiral Roughead, when he was a CNO, we used to – he used to – he may have coined it. And it said, you know, the Navy is a force for good, a global force for good I think it's what they said it. And you can look at that and go that's kind of corny. Actually, you know what, that's what the United States of America is. And then I realized we've got friends from other countries in here today, and so I'm talking about my country. And yeah, we make some mistakes every now and then. We do some things and we go OK, I wish I hadn't done that or whatever. But the fact to the matter is the United States of America is a global force for good. We actually try to do the right things. We try to help our neighbors and our allies and we try to be consistent.

Now, it may not look that way sometimes, but you can go back in history and you don't have to study very hard to see all the goodness the United States of America has done around. We are a global leader.

Now, there are countries that are emerging. India's emerging. China's emerging. Japan already has. You know, the economies in the southeast – the Asia-Pacific area, some are really, really good and some are struggling just like ours are. We're well-aware of the struggling economies in the European theater. We know that. And then we have the unrest in much of the other world.

So there's ample challenges going around. But I'll tell you what, there's no country, in my estimation, that has the ability to shake the environment, to shake behavior by presence and by engagement and by building trust more than the United

States of America does. And we're going to lose that. We're going to lose part of that. I don't know how much of it because is yet to be seen. But when you start parking Marine Expeditionary Units and carrier battle groups and deployments of units going forward, whether they'd be Army or Air Force, that's going to have an impact.

Our friends and our allies count on us. Those five treaty nations, there's a lot more out there that actually – that we have relationships with and we're dealing with right now. There are friends that count on the United States of America to actually be there. Just by virtue of our presence it has a stabilizing effect on areas. It has a stabilizing effect on behavior of nations.

So I'm very worried about that. As we begin to retrench because of fiscal challenges, we're going to pull away from those global responsibilities and they're going to be filled. Make no mistake. They will be filled by somebody. I don't want anybody in here to think that we'll just all come home and everything is going to be great around the world because it's not. The world doesn't work that way. It didn't work that way. We came back out of World War II – you remember that – we came back and we said that's it. We're done marking around, around the world in Europe, in the Far East, and we slashed the military, and then North Korea happened and the Chinese came across the border. You remember that. And we were ill prepared. And it's just by the grace of God we did as well as we did.

My service cobbled together what is now probably one of the most storied regiments in all of the Marine Corps, 5th Marine Regiment. It was down – normally it sits at about 5,500 Marines. It fought at Belleau Wood. It's one of our great story, probably the most decorated combat regiment in the entire United States Marine Corps. And yet, it was gutted after World War II. And just a short four years later, now, we're cobbling together from across the United States of America reserves, active duty, we brought them in from the East Coast, we brought guys and put them into the Marine Corps that didn't even go through boot camp. They didn't even go through boot camp. And we cobbled them together and they form what we call the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade centered around the 5th Marine Regiment, put them on ships and sailed them to Korea.

So we don't want to – we don't want to be that way again. So there's a real balance right now that the service chiefs are trying to – we understand we're coming down – my force is coming down from 202,000 down to 180,000. And I understand that and I'm OK with it. We don't need a Marine Corps that's 202,000 if they're not tied up on the ground. But we do need a Marine Corps that is available, that's forward deployed, that's engaging and building partnerships, and building trust.

We are the United States of America's insurance policy. Let there be no doubt in anybody's mind in here. We have a Marine Corps not to be a second land army. And by the way, I will never back up to the table or apologize for what we did on the Anbar Province because we settled in there and people said we were a second land army. Well, I'll tell you what, ladies and gentlemen. When we pulled out of the Anbar Province, we felt pretty good about what had happened. We felt really good as a matter of fact. And I'll

ask you this question. When was the last time you saw anything in the press about Ramadi or Fallujah? You can't remember it. We saved a lot of blood and a lot of time in there.

So we felt good coming out of there. I feel good about being in the Helmand Province. So we'll go ashore. We did it in France. We did it all the way through the Pacific. Whenever the president says send in the Marines, we go. So I want to be clear about that. But that's not why America has a Marine Corps. America has a Marine Corps to be its insurance policy, it's shock absorber. When things are uncertain – it doesn't matter whether it's Libya, we're going to do a no-fly zone, what about the Palestinian and Israeli thing, what are we going to do? America – what about Iran? Well, what about what's going in the Asia-Pacific? We're the insurance policy. You buy insurance for health and for your life insurance as a hedge against the uncertainty and the unknown. That's why you buy it. Every one of us has it. We don't know. We don't know when we're going to die. We don't know those – I mean, I got medical care, but if you're a civilian, which is most of you, you don't have it. You got to buy your own. It's a hedge against uncertainty. And that's why we have the United States Marine Corps because we live in an uncertain world. We don't know what's going to happen and you need a Marine Corps to be this crisis response force so that it can go just like that.

I coined a kind of a slogan when I became the commandant. It says we respond to today's crises with today's force today, not a week from now, not 30 days from now, when the president says, hey, Jim, when can you send in the Marines. I go that's very nice. Let me – just give me 30 days. I'll cobble them altogether and I'll train them – no, we go tonight. And I've got examples just in the last two years we're going tonight. That's what we do.

So continuing resolution, sequestration is going to cut into that. We're already, today, a piece of my prepared remarks, and I've told Congress this, is that for the next six months that these units that we've got going into Afghanistan are at the highest state of readiness they can be. The units that are training to go to Afghanistan are at the highest state of readiness they can be. So there'll be no degradation to the readiness of our combat forces going in. But I'm paying for that by eating the seed corn of some of my other accounts because I can't – there's not enough money. I'm going into my operations and maintenance accounts that provide training, education, sustainment of our facilities, and I'm harvesting money. I pulled out about a half a billion dollars just about – I think it was January the 15th. And I put \$300 plus million into the operational forces, so that they could have more – they could have sufficient enough money to train the forces that are going in Afghanistan.

I put about \$200 million into our depots to fix our equipment that's coming out of Afghanistan because that's our reset. That's the equipment we're going to live with for the next 10 years, while we go through this period of austerity.

So that's the effect of what's happening with sequestration. I can do that right now and I am doing it because readiness for the Marine Corps is the stock that we trade

in. We buy readiness. I trade it. I mean, it's important to us because I have to be able to go tonight.

So this is eating into that and I said for the next 12 months, I can – we're going to begin to really feel this thing. Once you get past 12 months, then the – overall combat readiness of the Marine Corps across the board will be somewhere around 50 percent of the forces. Once you get out beyond a year, about 50 percent of our major combat units, our battalions and squadrons, will be at a significantly decreased readiness level. And I said yesterday, about half of our forces will be there. They'll be at a level that we would not want to send them to combating.

Now, rest assured of this, just like Korea, we'll send them. We'll send when something happens. But it's not where we need to be as a nation. So that's what's happening with us. All the services, each one of us has a little bit of a different storyline. Continuing resolution for us is pretty damning. We're a small service. Let me just give you a sense of magnitude. This will help put things in perspective. Because I tell people that sequestration – you take money out of the Marine Corps – and I know this is going to sound self-service, so bear with me for just a second – you take money out of the Marine Corps of any significance and it had – even if it's the same proportional reduction as all the other services – so we got four of us, OK? So OK, everybody's going to take a 10 percent cut. My council is so small that the proportional cut has a disproportional effect on the United States Marine Corps.

They give you some dollars. My budget that I submitted for this year, not including the supplemental or the overseas contingency, was \$23.9 billion to run the entire United States Marine Corps this year, \$23.9. The Budget Control Act was \$487 billion. That doesn't include the Secretary Gates \$200 billion that we already paid. We paid that two years ago, just as Secretary Gates was walking out the door. That's \$687 – that's almost three quarters of \$1 trillion that we've already – you know, we've either paid already or we're preparing to pay over the next 10 years. So think about – so that number is – let's just imagine is that big, \$23.9 billion is down here.

You know what modernization account is? Two point four billion dollars a year to buy all the equipment for the Marine Corps, \$2.4. So you say, OK, we'll just take a proportional cut that's going to cancel programs. For me it's going to – because my numbers are so small. And that's what I'm trying to say. My budget right there, even if you threw overseas contingency on top of it, which was about \$8.5 billion, which got me up to about little over \$30 billion, \$32, \$32 billion – and by the way, I didn't get that this year, OK? Because we're on – to understand that we're on continuing resolution. I didn't get that. I didn't come close. But three quarters of a trillion dollar is the – is what I'm compared against. So for me it's pretty – the impact is pretty significant. I'm very worried about our readiness, all the services are.

And I think that, Mackenzie, I'll be prepared to take your questions. Thank you, everybody, for paying attention. (Applause.)

MS. EAGLEN: Thank you, sir. We're gone and we're working. Are you OK. Well, thank you very much, sir. We have a lot of questions from the audience, as you might imagine. I appreciate the candor of your remarks. I hope Capitol Hill feels the same way in my – along the hearings. You may be – (inaudible) – Marco Rubio friendly pulling strings just for you, but –

GEN. AMOS: (Off mic.)

MS. EAGLEN: I would just remind the audience, as you were talking about the defense cuts that you paid in to date or going to be paying over the next 10 years, the 487 plus – and the other 200 in efficiencies and other cuts, that's pre-sequester. Sequester adds another half trillion to those cuts. So I just wanted to make sure everyone understands the gravity of what you're saying.

You mentioned the recent change of commands, Generals Allen and Dunford to Afghanistan, and later in your remarks, you mentioned that you're not a second land Army, which is fair. What's remarkable in historical sense, however, is the command of Generals Allen and Dunford and Marines leading such a large force of Army forces, a combined force. What does that mean in terms of the long-term implications for the corps, as you seek to return to the sea? How can what's been learned in the last 11 plus years in Afghanistan and Iraq and the Marine Corps specific command of all ground forces, how can that be applied to the future, as you seek a return to your sea roots?

GEN. AMOS: You know, when – when General Allen was designated to be the commander, came in behind General McChrystal. And John Allen – and I don't know how many of you know him, I mean, he is – he graduated number one from the U.S. Naval Academy. He is – so that gives you some sense he's actually pretty smart, probably one of the finest gentlemen, certainly a man of great character and ethics. This whole – the stuff that took place as a result of the Petraeus fall out of that, took a pretty heavy toll on John, just because he's a man of such great integrity and his integrity was being questioned. But I tell you, he was the right man for the job. And General Dempsey uses this phrase and I – and so I'm going to give him credit for it. I think it's – he said, I want to put the best athlete on the field.

So when John Allen was coming out, you know, General Dempsey looks across all the force and he really is the ultimate joint officer. I mean, I realize he's an Army general, but General Marty Dempsey looked across and said, OK, who's the best athlete out there? Doesn't mean that there weren't other athletes, but in his mind, Joe Dunford was the best athlete, and so he put Joe into job. And I don't think it was – it was never a matter of – (inaudible) – two Marines back to back. And quite honestly, it wasn't necessarily something that we set out and said, well, we've got to do this. We want to have parity. Actually, I'm not looking for parity. I'm pretty pleased with where the Marine Corps is and what we've done. I think our reputation is strong.

So I want to clear the air that, quite honestly, this is not something that I'm trying to seek in the future. It's not something that I'm trying to shape the Marine Corps'

engagement with the Department of Defense or the Joint Staff or the chairman or whoever. Actually, we've just got a string of very seasoned combat generals. General Kelly is down at Southern Command and he led all our Marines in Afghanistan – excuse me, Iraq, for 13 months during some pretty tough times. So over the last 11 years, all the services have built up a stockpile of senior leaders, both officer and enlisted, that actually has an awful lot of experience. I mean, they've led Marines, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen in combat in some pretty tough times.

So I think for us, all I want to do is I'm very confident of the leadership that we have. I know who our really strong generals are. And I'll nominate them and – (inaudible) – them as something comes up and I'm confident that our secretary of defense and president will put the best athlete on the field, whether it be in Afghanistan or someplace else. But as we get back to kind of our bread and butter missions, as we finish the mission in Afghanistan, we really do need to get back – we never left naval vessels, but we really do need to get back to having that flexible naval presence, Marines aboard ships, Marines able to fly off and work with a partner in someplace in the world in small penny packets and help train them and advise. And that's where we're headed.

So the other thing we're trying to do – not trying, we are doing right now – is getting – we've been focused on counterinsurgency operations for such a long time. As we are going back to some of kind of what I call the stapled goods of the United States Marine Corps, combined arms, in other words air-ground, maneuver, all the things that were really, really difficult because of coordination in a combat in a chaotic environment, we're going back to that. We're doing – we've already built a couple of very large exercises at 29 Palms, which is in California, our premier training area, and so not only that, more amphibious exercises. So that's where we want to go, but don't lose sight of the fact that we're also reducing steaming days on ships and also parking ships in port.

So there's a tension there. There's a natural tension that's happening and that's part of, in fact, of CR and sequestration.

MS. EAGLEN: Thank you, sir. I'm going to turn to some of the audience questions and we'll have staff continue to grab cards as we chat for our remaining 10 minutes.

If the sequester becomes reality, which as you mentioned, we are heading down that track, the proverbial way, will the Marine Corps have to consider giving up some current capabilities?

GEN. AMOS: When we sat with our team – this was earlier last fall – one of the things I asked – and in fact, the team just kind of broke up here right after Christmas. For almost four straight months, we looked at reshaping the Marine Corps inside that 182 force. In other words, what should it look like as it relates to the world post-2014? Understanding that we may not even be able to afford the 182 force, so how can you afford a 182 force? Can you get inside of it and you shape it? And the answer is yes.

Now, we'll have the final results on that probably around June timeframe, but part of my guidance to the – and this was a group of really smart lieutenant colonels and colonels and headed up by two generals – and they worked six days a week for almost four straight months on this – was is there a capability in the marine Corps that is found in the joint world now that if we can strike a deal with some of our sister services that maybe we can divest ourselves a bit. So I told them – I said, you need to go, as you look at how we would reshape the Marine Corps inside 182, you need to take a look at that and see are there capabilities that we can – are there things that we don't need anymore? And they've been doing that. And I'm not in the liberty to say what they are right now because it'll scare the children. But you know – well, I'll spook the herd, but there are. There are some – and there are ways, by the way, inside of our stapled units, squadrons and battalions, that we can get in and kind of shape some of those, so that we can get the cost down.

The real key, Mackenzie, is reversibility in my mind. And that's what I really, really want to be able to – there're some things that maybe we don't care if you can ever reverse it. There are others that you need to say, OK, we can change the shape of this unit, maybe change the numbers inside of it, but we can always blow that balloon back up if something happens down the road and we start – we have a greater need. So it's kind of a long-term – we're going back to our bread and butter missions of being an amphibious force.

MS. EAGLEN: There's a quick follow up on that occurred to me while you're speaking. Could there be some opportunity in the sort of roles and missions around – to pick up something new, as you reshape the 182? So for example, you mentioned the Kearsarge and the deployment off the coast of Libya, no-fly zone launch in, the rescue of the down pilot. And since every Marine is a lobbyist, we've all been briefed quite eloquently – (laughter) – quite fully on those operations, as well as the 24th MEU recent work around the world, and I applaud you for that education campaign. And I mean it in only good faith.

That is historically Air Force tradition, combat search and rescue, as it's called. Would that be something – an opportunity – and that was with an Osprey, by the way, I'm sure you would want them to know – is that an opportunity for the Corps to reshape itself? The Air Force is short on cash, too, as you know, and they're looking to divest some things.

GEN. AMOS: First of all, for all my brothers and sisters that wear the blue uniform, I'm not poaching on their targets. I'm not shooting on their targets. I – I'm not looking to do that. I think – so although I just get away from the CSAR for second and I'll come back to it – but there may be some things that the Marine Corps could do. There may be some things that – you know, I don't know yet. No one's really talking like that.

The CSAR piece of this thing is Air Force mission, I support it, and I'll continue to support it all the way. There's really no duplicity when a Marine Expeditionary Unit pulls off a coast. It's not that we're trying to become the CSAR. We just actually have

that capability. It's – when you buy – when you buy a Marine Expeditionary Unit, you get a whole – it's like a Swiss army knife. And we use that analogy and it actually is the truth. You get a lot of capabilities. You can do non-combatant evacuations. You can do offensive combat. You can do top down boarding, boarding search and seizure. We got the – and excuse me bottom up and some top down during the daytime, but bottom up. We took the Magellan Star. It was captured by pirates, you know, two years ago.

So you get all these capabilities. You can go hand out food. You can rescue people in Japan. You can rescue an Air Force pilot that goes down. So we're not trying to get into that business. That's really more – which isn't very – they've got a lot of experience. And the other thing they have is they've got the right kind of equipment. I mean, sometimes you have to go in really, really low and really in bad conditions to be safe to go get somebody.

So we could do that, sort of, but that's – so I don't – we're not looking – the services right now aren't looking, OK, how can we take other people's – I think we're all looking right now and is just trying to figure out, OK, what does our nation really want us to do. And that's the point that General Dempsey said yesterday in his remarks to the HASC. He just said what is it – you know, if you ask me – the question was could you take another dollars worth of cut. And General Dempsey said the question should be what is it we want – do we want America's military to do what they're doing today? And if the answer to that question is yes, then the answer to General Dempsey's questions would be no, we can't take another dollar. If the answer is we're going to go back and reshape what we expect of our nation's military, then General Dempsey's exact words were then we're all in, but you're going to have to help us figure out what it is you want American to do for now.

So I kind of answered your question.

MS. EAGLEN: You did, sir. Thank you. Some tough love for the Hill, I think that's a fair point that the chairman made and something they need to be reminded of regularly.

So this one also comes from the audience. How do you think the consolidation of command and control within the special forces under SOCOM will impact the individual services' ability to respond to crises, particularly when you are America's insurance policy?

GEN. AMOS: You know, I think that's actually a good news story. General – excuse me – Admiral Bill McRaven and I are actually very close friends. We've got Marine Special Operations. We stood them up almost six years ago now, actually six years ago down in Camp Lejeune and I was down there when we did it. And they're very, very effective. In fact, we've got Marine Special Operations working under the U.S. Army two stars, ahead of Special Ops in Afghanistan right now. And he's got all the Special Ops. He's got Air Force, Army, Navy, Marines, and coalition. So the consolidation, I think, under SOCOM is fine. I'm very content with that. I like the

leadership. I think it's the way it should be. I'm still the force provider. The Marine Corps has a unique relationship with our Marines. They're Marines first. And they'll tell you that. You talk to them and they'll say we're United States Marines, but we do special operations.

You ask some of the other forces and they'll say, well, I'm a, you know, blah, blah, blah.

Our guys and girls don't do that. So I guess what I'm trying to say is I'm very comfortable with the relationship. I'm comfortable with it being consolidated under U.S. Special Operations Command. They know best how to deploy them, how to employ them, and how to train them. I just provide the equipment and the Marines. And by the way, we take some of those Marines come back out. And our officers come out and they command a regular infantry battalion. And then maybe somewhere down the road, they go back in again.

So we actually have I think a pretty good system we're very comfortable with.

MS. EAGLEN: That's a perfect segue, sir, to our last question that we have time for, and only wished we had time for 20 more. You mentioned the seasoned force of the Marine Corps, including at the command level, but also, of course, you made great NCOs and you field great officer corps. How will the drawdown, as you get to 180, possibly, unfortunately, maybe lower under a CR, affect future commissioning programs that officer admissions use in particular, like ROTC, like OCC, like PLC? How do you see them being altered in what ways as you shape the downsized force?

GEN. AMOS: Well, the percentages – the relative percentages will remain the same as we come down between officers and staff, NCOs and youngsters. That will come down proportionally. So we've been working pretty hard on that.

We're drawing the Marine Corps down about 5,000 a year over a four-year period of time. We sit today about 195. We started at 202, so we're down about 7,000 Marines. So we're – at the height of the growth to 202, we brought in a little over 1,700 officers a year. We're now down somewhere around 1,350 and we're probably get back up somewhere around 1,500 a couple of years now. We're on 1,350.

So we just kind of close the spigot off on the front end. One of the things we've done – we've done the same thing with our enlisted – we used to bring in about 35,000 young men and women a year, enlisted. We dropped it to about 28,000 here about a year ago. Now, we're back up to about 33,000. And so we closed the spigot down on the front end and then what we did was we've made reenlistment more competitive.

So you really have to be a top tier Marine at the end of your four-year enlistment to be reenlistable, so to speak. So what that does is that means that the force itself is re-drawing out and actually becomes a little bit higher quality.

We've done the same thing for the officers. In the early part of 2000, if you were a Marine officer, for the most part, you had what we called regular commission. You were a regular officer and you could leave when you wanted to, but once you filled your obligation. When I came in, I was a reserve officer to begin with, and that's what everybody, unless you're in academy, everybody came in as a reserve. And then you augmented. You became a career designated. And so I did that. We're back to doing that now.

So our – as we manage our officer community, the quality of that, it's like what we're doing at the end of a four-year enlistment with our enlisted. We're only taking the top tier. So now, as our officers' obligation expires and they want to become what we call regular – a career designated officer, they're competing with one another. And so we should end up with a higher quality of officer that's left over.

So we're managing that. The proportions will be the same as they've always been. We've always had fewer officers to enlisted of any other services. We're – you know, and I don't have the number down here, but we are, in some cases, almost twice as many enlisted to a single officer as any of the other services. And we did same way with civilians, by the way. You know, our ratio from active duty to civilians is significantly better in my mind, fewer civilians per military.

So I think we're – I think we're going to be fine force structure-wise, we'll be fine quality-wise, and it'll all sort itself. We'll have the right amount of captains, lieutenants, staff sergeants, gunnies, and all that.

MS. EAGLEN: Also no Pollyanna here, but always an optimist, and I share that sentiment with you. If you'll all just join me in thanking the general for his time this morning. (Applause.)

(END)