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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

From: Lieutenant General James B. Laster, Director, Marine Corps Staff

Subj: WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF THE  
ARMY

General Ham and distinguished members of the Commission, I am honored to represent the Marine Corps and ask that you consider the following as you continue your efforts.

The American people have high expectations for our soldiers, Marines, sailors and airmen and the complex challenges of today demand careful consideration about how we will meet future demands in defense of the Nation.

Looking to the future, the Marine Corps and the Army find common ground in many aspects of what the challenges will be. Today and in the future, a diverse range of threats, including state and non-state actors will employ traditional, unconventional, and hybrid strategies to threaten U.S. security and interests. The accelerating pace of technology presents new opportunities and challenges. The Joint Force becomes accustomed and even dependent on technological advantages, while our adversaries are increasingly enabled by access to highly capable systems and evolving technologies. Increasing urbanization, decreasing state capacity in many parts of the world and the growth of information operations, cyber and anti-access/ area denial capabilities are examples among many of the challenges reflected in both Army and Marine Corps service documents and concepts.

Simply stated, while the nature of war endures, the character of conflict is rapidly changing and the future is unpredictable. With this in mind, it is essential that we continuously assess associated risks and opportunities with a clear understanding of the implications for the separate service contributions to the Joint Force.

For the Marine Corps, our Title X responsibilities and our role as the Nation's expeditionary force in readiness informs how we man, train and equip the force. Our strategic concept is based on readiness. Ready means that our forces maintain a robust and scalable warfighting capability, with the right people, training, equipment and support to respond to the unknown. This construct is supported by our naval heritage and character as well as the central role of the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF). Our force development and force generation processes are therefore designed to meet combatant commander requirements without the benefit of significant lead time and forewarning. Battalions and squadrons are the standard units for deployment.

We respond to crisis today with forces that are forward deployed and forward engaged in order to buy space for national decision makers and fight across the range of military operations. As a naval force, we do this well.

Subj: WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF THE ARMY

Nevertheless, being a ready force is not just about rotational or scheduled deployments. In response to a major contingency, the Marine Corps leverages unique capabilities to gain and ensure access and to fight as a part of the Joint Force. This means building, integrating and maintaining Marine air-ground and amphibious capabilities that will be relevant and ready for future challenges. In the end, when we fight, the Nation expects us to win. Through this lens and with a clear appreciation for our recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan in particular, support from the Army is an important part of how we accomplish this. I would like to provide some specific examples of how Army capabilities directly impact Marine Corps readiness and capabilities.

From an institutional perspective, support from the U.S. Army is an integral part of our force development and force generation. The Army serves as the executive agent for a wide range of capabilities that the Marine Corps and joint force rely on.

In particular, Marine Corps Training Command's entry level training and skill progression is designed to leverage routine inter-service training opportunities. These opportunities create DOD cost savings in equipment and facilities and help ensure interoperability. Approximately 33% of Training Command's entry level and skill progression courses are conducted in inter-service schools, and only the Navy provides more venues than the Army for Marines. Annually, approximately 6900 entry-level Marines are trained through primary Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) producing curriculum, and nearly 3400 Marines are trained in MOS skill progression/non-entry level courses aboard Army installations totaling approximately 10300 Marines.

As examples to highlight the breadth of mutual interest and support, in Fiscal Year 16 more than 4000 Marines will receive consolidated or collocated training aboard Fort Leonard Wood. More than 2000 Marines across 18 different MOSs will train at Fort Lee. More than 1200 Marines will receive armor related MOSs or specialized skill qualifications at Fort Benning. Almost 900 Marines at the U.S. Army artillery school in Fort Sill and more than 200 Marines at the Army Defense Foreign Language Institute at Monterey will receive instruction.

Additionally, the Marine Corps leverages the formal training available at the U.S. Army Cyber Center of Excellence, Fort Gordon, GA across a wide spectrum of disciplines to include the Joint C4 Planner's Course, joint operations planning, network and cyberspace operations, and other doctrinal C4 concepts in the joint, interagency, and coalition environments. Cooperation on these efforts promotes advances in Land Component mission command interoperability and create opportunities for collaboration on use Communications-Electronics Command and Space Missile Defense Command research, development testing and evaluation efforts for multiple C4/I systems fielded by the Army and Marine Corps. These essential capabilities within the satellite community would be greatly degraded if capacity was reduced or eliminated.

Similarly, the Army maintains a capacity for training and doctrine development, operational testing and evaluation, research, range and support facilities which routinely support Marine Corps and combined activities. This provides materiel and non-materiel solutions to support unit readiness for assigned missions, the loss of which would significantly increase costs and create inefficiencies across DOD.

Subj: WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF THE ARMY

Much of our ground systems acquisition and sustainment support is provided by the Army. The Army test centers provide independent and objective technical assessments as systems proceed through development, and the Army provides supply support, asset management and depot repair services for many Marine Corps programs at various facilities. The loss of the various support functions provided by the U.S. Army to the Marine Corps acquisition community would result in a significant and negative impact to the cost, effectiveness and utility of sustainment and modernization efforts.

Marine Corps support from the Army: Operational

Operationally, the Marine Corps and Army have historically had a symbiotic relationship when going to war and in response to major contingency operations. The Army provides the Marine Corps with additive capabilities and depth during sustained operations.

Specifically, the Army provides essential functions, including long term sustainment and theater level logistics among others, to set the theater, establish port and terminal operations, and enable strategic and operational reach of the Joint Force. Army sustainment capabilities continue to provide the bulk of Army support to other services, common user logistics, and other common sustainment resources.

Setting the Joint Operations Area (JOA) includes activities such as theater opening, establishing port and terminal operations, conducting reception, staging, onward movement, and integration, in theater training, and providing Army support to other services and common-user logistics to Army, joint, and multinational forces operating in the JOA. Army sustainment forces also play a significant role in planning, transitioning and utilizing host nation sustainment capacity.

Any rapid deployment from CONUS would require the support of Army railway units. In theater, enemy prisoners of war are handled by Army reserve units. The reduction in capacity across the specific Army capabilities would levy more requirements on the Marine Corps, with a likely increase in further outsourced and contracted solutions. Some of these activities include medical support, ground transportation, pol storage and distribution, conventional ammunition, postal operations, and mortuary affairs.

Beyond logistics support, Army personnel have been force multipliers, when attached, to deployed MAGTFs particularly for low density / high demand specialties. Current specific Operational Plans identify requirements for Army support to the Marine Corps, including airborne and armor units, military information support operations, civil affairs, air defense, and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear capabilities.

Some Army specialties, such as air defense, space support teams, and global command and control infrastructure, simply do not exist within the Marine Corps and would have to be created in order for the Marine Corps to deploy and fight a major contingency operation. If required to build and maintain these capabilities, mission effectiveness would be greatly reduced and possibly compromised, given fiscal realities.

Subj: WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF THE ARMY

The Army's Global Network Operations Centers (GNOC) for Blue Force Tracker (BFT) and BFT-2 provide a satcom based tactical common operational picture to deployed/expeditionary USMC forces. It also provides connectivity for tactical chat and operational overlay exchanges. If this support were eliminated or reduced, deployed and expeditionary MAGTFs would suffer a commensurate loss or degradation in the ability to establish and maintain blue force situational awareness as well as control tactical forces at the company and below. Additionally, Marine Corps Intelligence Activity (MCIA) relies heavily on the National Ground Intelligence Center to provide intelligence support to Marine Corps Title X and deployed MAGTFs.

Most importantly, as the "the Nation's principal land force," the Army must remain organized, trained, and equipped for prompt and sustained combat operations on land. When the nation goes to war, the Joint Force requires an Army with the combat power and logistics required to fight and win over the long-haul.

We have shared interests in amphibious, airborne, and air assault options for joint forcible entry and seizing lodgments ashore which are necessary across the range of military operations. While some have expressed that the Army needs to be better postured for small scale contingencies, this effort should not undercut the core characteristic of the Army as the war winning force. Where modernization efforts meet common capability gaps, the Army and Marine Corps continue to work together on these programs, and for major contingency operations, the Marine Corps looks to the Army for depth and capacity in critical warfighting areas.

Tactically, this is particularly relevant to command and control of ground forces. The Army's Command Post of the Future (CPOF) system is the primary theater mission planning tool for the Land Component, and as executive agent for the Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data System (AFATDS) and Joint Area Deep Operations Coordination Systems (JADOCs), the Army provides the primary automated fire support command and control system for the Land Component and provide the CJTF automated capability to coordinate the employment of air-, land-, and sea-based indirect fire systems to best support the maneuver commander's operations.

We cannot overlook the importance of preserving and improving our expeditionary enablers in all the services. That starts with an understanding that the ability to seize ports and airfields intact may be unlikely or undesirable. We must therefore be capable of mine countermeasures operations, explosive ordnance disposal, and construction engineering in order to conduct rapid repair of existing facilities or to build expeditionary facilities. Cargo handlers, combat logisticians, and security forces will also be required to facilitate the introduction of follow-on forces and other resources, and the Army provides critical capability and capacity for detainee support, military police, and detention operations.

Further, shared experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan provide numerous examples where the Army has been critical to Marine success. As an example, in the second battle of Fallujah, Regimental Combat Team 1 was directly supported by Army infantry, an engineer company from the Oklahoma National Guard, a transportation company, and a platoon of tanks.

Subj: WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF THE  
ARMY

At the same time, Regimental Combat Team 7 was directly supported by tactical psyops from the Army reserves, brigade reconnaissance, engineers and two infantry battalions, including Task Force 2-2, with attached engineers, reconnaissance, armor and artillery.

I would remind the commission that the battle in Fallujah may pale in comparison to possible large scale cities within other COCOM areas of responsibility.

Conclusion

Like the Army, we fully recognize that there is a human dimension to what we are discussing today. Our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and their families should never doubt whether they will be deployed without proper training and equipment, or whether they can trust their leadership. The cost of losing trust, the trust of those who serve and the trust of the American people is incalculable.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your efforts.

v/n  
  
J. B. LASTER