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The Marine Corps: America's Expeditionary Force in Readiness**

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Panelist, Session 4, "Supporting and Enabling the Force to Meet Emerging and Future Challenges"

Questions and Answers

DR. CHARLES PERRY: [not using microphone] There's an awful lot on the table and we have used more time than I thought we might, but I didn't want to interrupt any of those presentations. [02:28:32] --as good as the corps has been in preparing the force structure, there needs to be a better integration between the storyboard on its operational concepts, perhaps, and the platforms that it will require to implement those concepts. Let's open the floor to some questions right now. Who would like to be first? Back there?

PETER EPSON: Good morning, gentlemen. My name is Peter Epson. I thank you for your time this morning. In my current position, I work a lot in campaign analysis and it seems like since I've been in the Pentagon, campaign analysis is the basis by which we take the input from OSD guidance, we take the intell threat, we determine what our future or forecast capabilities are. We then have a gap analysis and we program against that.

I've heard a lot over the last two days that anybody that thinks they can forecast the future might be to their folly. But yet in campaign analysis, we try to do just that. It seems like the OSD policy has been focused more on the capabilities of what the Air Force and the Navy bring to the table based on the campaigns they've been shaping for us. It seems like that leaves the Marine Corps and the Army in a position where they would have difficulty in identifying what gaps are out there they can then put resources towards and do up programs. I was hoping the panel could talk about the challenges of the Army and the Marine Corps taking that OSD guidance and being

able to program it against what they see as the threat in the future primarily in 2024 and beyond?
Thank you.

DAVID A. OCHMANEK: Those are great points. And as a former campaign analyst myself, I could go on for a long time about it. Let me try to cut to the chase. The sweetest scenarios we have now for defense planning have been approved by the secretary himself. The first thing we did in QDR in March 2009 was laid before the secretary and the leadership and a D slick [?] a suite of scenarios and they selected those. As such, they reflect the expectations of the leadership about the challenges of the future that are of highest priority for the department. And I think it's a good suite of scenarios. It's certainly a richer, broader set of challenges than we've had previously in the post Cold War era.

I don't see any shortage of challenges in those scenarios for any of the services or any of the domains of combat. Certainly the Marine Corps plays vital roles, I guess in an unclassified role I can't say anything about specific scenarios. But you've got sort of mid-range scenarios of confronting regional adversaries, some of which are assumed to have nuclear weapons, some of which have prolonged post-war stability operations associated with them, and so forth. There are certainly amphibious campaigns, amphibious landings that are called for in those scenarios.

You've got a richer suite of low end scenarios, if I can use that term, to include prolonged, fairly large scale counterinsurgency and stability operations. So, certainly as I look at our scenarios in the analysis of those scenarios, our problem isn't that we can't find enough gaps, our problem is we have a lot of gaps and we have to prioritize among them in a world of increasing pressure on the top line. I hope that's helpful.

DR. CHARLES PERRY: Have another question from the floor? I know everybody's eager for lunch. I have to give-- General Wissler, I don't want to put you on the spot, but I think I have to give you some opportunity, perhaps, to respond to the suggestions and advice that we received from our friends from the Hill and how you see that as a challenge moving forward before we close this panel?

LT. GENERAL JOHN E. WISSLER: Sure, I'll go back over my notes here, a couple of issues. I think what's difficult sometimes, to address the issue about forward presence and partnering, it's sometimes very difficult kind of to go to the question about campaign analysis, how you do campaign analysis about forward engagement. It's a very difficult thing to model. You can't run the model and get an X percent worked and the Y percent didn't and therefore you have a shortfall and a gap of this, that and the other thing. I think that takes a more intellectual approach in terms of we have a fairly good body of data that says what it's been able to produce for us as a service. And we need to be able to translate that to how much of that capability and where we would need to place that in the future. So I think it ties a little bit to the last question and it gets a little bit after the shift.

To address the issue about middleweight force and perhaps I wasn't strong enough on it in my comments, but the Marine Corps's focus is on crisis response, which we think is probably right where you're talking about. It's not in the middle, it is at both ends, depending on which level of crisis you need to go to. We also understand that we are part of the joint force and obviously we partner with the greatest army on the planet, and that's the United States Army. And that they have a much more significant role in the higher end, in the major combat operation.

The natural question, and I think it was addressed by most people, is we agree that we need an expeditionary force in readiness. We know that we're under top line pressure. So the answer is how much expeditionary capability can the nation afford and who should provide that? And can we afford any redundancy in that expeditionary capability? All of the discussions came back to the idea of a naval character being central to that expeditionary capability and so we have a proven naval capability there. So, how much can we afford? General Flynn has said before this nation can afford anything it wants, it just can't afford everything. And so we have to sort out what is the anything that we want, and who should provide it? And it seems to me that we're getting after that in this strategic dialogue that we're about ready to have. So I would offer that.

In terms of the shipbuilding piece, we probably don't communicate the 38 to 33, and as you even mentioned, the 42 to 38 to 33 regression, if you want to call it that. But we're also very aware of the fiscal constraint. We would offer that we have significant issue as a Marine Corps and we are

literally engaged in discussions on that very issue of the design for LSDX. In fact, a cost cap on that ship to define cost-- design to cost instead of design to capability. And it's our opinion that let the AOA sort out the art of the possible, and then we will decide inside the Department of the Navy what we can afford and then where it fits, if you will, in that curve of capability that you showed in the two dips in the end and a little bit of plus in the middle. But we feel that the AOA should define how that ship supports expeditionary capability for the services.

Issue on other platforms, LCS and JHSV, two tremendous platforms. There's no doubt about it, but not replacements for amphib. JHSV is a superb capability that we're using extensively in the Pacific right now, and have used across the Pacific for a number of years. But it is not an amphib. It doesn't have the capability of persistent presence that you get with an amphib. LCS may have a very reduced capability to provide some limited forward presence, but right now there is no marine module, nor a design for one nor money in the budget for one. And so going to your point about you got to be willing to take what you're going to get, not what you want, there isn't anything on the drawing board right now for a marine module. And even if there were, just looking at the size of the ship, the crew configuration, kind of the physics of the ship, given what we know now, the numbers of marines it would be able to deploy on an LCS would be significantly smaller than those we would want to deploy in an amphibious capability.

The force structure piece, I agree we have to be able to define what it is in terms of savings. But the issue with force structure that I think everybody needs to understand is this. We built from a certain capability to 202,000. But we didn't just back down from 202,000 and come back down to a lower level. So it's not as easy to define that what did you save, because we went from a-- you can pick the number wherever you want, 175, 181, 179, we think is the number, to 202. But when we came down, we came down by a separate path to 187 with what we think is a much more capable force than if you had simply backed down the number.

So we agree, we need to do a better job of that. But the DOTMLPF study that's going on at Quantico is really a detailed analysis so that we can describe where we've made those savings and where we will apply those savings in increased capability. As an example, our tactical vehicle fleet roughly around 42,000 vehicles right now. We're going to bring that down to

somewhere around 32,000 vehicles, but it's going to be a different mix of 32,000 vehicles than we have in the 42,000 vehicle mix. So that's one of those complications, if you will, of defining where we're at in force structure.

We know where we fit with regards to amphibians being in third place. We're very aware of that. The real challenge, I think, for the broader context at the OSD level is probably each of the services key procurement capability comes due, if you want to call it that, at the same moment across time. And as I mentioned, it's all right outside the fit. SSBN(X), the ground combat vehicle for the Army, replacement for EFV, whether it's ACV exclusive or with pieces and parts, long range bomber, are all expensive investments that the nation will either determine needs or don't. But they all come at the same time in a period of what we think will be reduced resources.

And then I guess finally, F-35B, F-35B is-- and for a whole lot of reasons, but because F-35 all variance is much more than just an airplane, level of classification we can't necessarily get into in this room. But it's such a game changer and to be able to have that game changing technology in a platform that can operate wherever you want it to operate from, we think-- and we have not obviously done a good job of explaining what the impact would be, and it was touched on a little bit by General Dunford, 22 platforms vice 11 that you can launch it from, airfield, ten times the airfields around the world that you can disperse those aircraft to in order to address that anti-access area denial threat. Those kinds of Chinese capabilities that could, in fact, prevent you from operating at an airfield. And it's proven. It's not technology that we're betting on.

And how is it proven? Two examples. The AV8s that were putting bombs on target in Libya were able to do that because they were STOVL capable. The ability to fly off of those amphibians and support Afghanistan for those MEUs that were in the vicinity of Pakistan, another example. One that's not well known is that in the early days in Afghanistan when we put our AV8s on the ground, we suffered indirect fire damage to the airfield in which those AV8s were flying. None of the other coalition aircraft could fly from the airfield because there were craters in the airfield. The AV8s were delivering ordnance on target by flying off of the taxi ways. Coming back, getting refueled, getting rearmed, and going back and dropping bombs, not solely in support of marines, in support of soldiers as well. But that's that capability. When you look at the area of

denial capability, and it goes exactly to the idea of where do we fit in air/sea battle? How can we affect things in China? And it is, it's those small island chains, it's about opening sea lanes, it's about being able to project power in a wider arc because you can put that platform on the ground.

And then when you combine with it those other capabilities, and I'll just leave it at that, that come with JSF writ large, but certainly with STOVL JSF, it makes it a significantly more powerful capability.

DR. CHARLES PERRY: That's great. Thanks so much for that. Do any of the other panelists have a concluding remark you would like to make? Go ahead.

DR. CHARLES PERRY: Thanks so much, everybody. Wonderful session, and off to lunch.
[applause]

END OF SESSION 4