

Remarks of Gen Carl E. Mundy, Jr. Before Congress

When the Commandant appeared before the various Congressional Committees during February–March 1992 to testify concerning the preceding unified Posture Statement, he made the following preliminary remarks.



It is a privilege for me to represent the Marine Corps before you and give you my sense of where the Corps is today and where it will be in the years ahead.

In 1991, naval forces—your Sailors and Marines—were involved in the evacuation of nearly 20,000 citizens and diplomats, assisted more than 2 million refugees, and deployed 90,000 Marines to combat. When our predecessors met 45 years ago in these very halls to determine what kind of Marine Corps the Nation needed—and what the Marine Corps ought to be expected to do—their foresight ensured we had the capability to do what I just described when our Nation called for it.

In determining the composition of the Marine Corps we will build for the future as part of the Nation's Base Force, we looked to define a strategic concept that describes how, when, and where the Corps should expect to be employed in support of U.S. interests. As we defined this concept, we ultimately came back to the language of this very Committee just over 40 years ago when it articulated the role of the Marine Corps. The report that established the Marine Corps' role described a "balanced force-in-readiness . . . a ground and air striking force ready to suppress or contain international disturbances short of large-scale war . . . an expeditionary force for service overseas . . . with the fleet or on land . . . a force that should be the most ready when the Nation is least ready." There are no better words to describe what the Corps has long been and who and what we are today.

Illustrating this point was an article in the February 23rd *Washington Post* that

“ [L]ast year was . . . typical in terms of what Marines do year-in and year-out to prevent or respond to crises before they become major conflicts. In the last 20 years, we've answered the call 45 times. That activity has been our historic utility. To maintain that kind of capability even in “peaceful times,” we've kept, over time, about 24,000 Marines—nearly a quarter of our operating forces—deployed away from their home bases . . . preventing or responding to crises and fulfilling the obligations of the United States. ”

you may have seen. The article referred to the Marine Corps as the "9-1-1 force." That characterizes, as well as any way I've ever heard, what our predecessors thought the Corps should do: shape events, manage instability, project influence, respond to crises on short notice, and when we have to—fight. That's precisely what the Corps has been used for over its lifetime.

Six times in the last year, Sailors and Marines answered the 9-1-1 call—Liberia, Somalia, the Philippines, northern Iraq, Bangladesh, and Haiti. They were called because they were there; they were ready; they were capable. As you know, Marines also became involved in a shooting conflict last year. About 85 percent of our forward-deployed forces were committed in Southwest Asia.

A critical element in our ability to go to war and maintain our "other" peace-time commitments was the response of our 30,000 reservists who came when

called. Some fought in the desert while others manned other outposts of the Corps. When we withdrew our forces from Southwest Asia, these superb "citizen Marines" stayed on the line until our active units could rearm, resit, and redeploy to their overseas posts. Our reservists were ready; they were capable; they did all we asked, and more. We are extremely proud of them.

But while last year was atypical due to combat operations in the Gulf, it was entirely typical in terms of what Marines do year-in and year-out to prevent or respond to crises before they become major conflicts. In the last 20 years, we've answered the call 45 times. That activity has been our historic utility. To maintain that kind of capability even in "peaceful times," we've kept, over time, about 24,000 Marines—nearly a quarter of our operating forces—deployed away from their home bases and their families for regular 6-month deployments, preventing or responding to crises and fulfilling the obligations of the United States.

Besides answering 9-1-1 calls, last year Marines conducted exercises and trained in over 40 countries around the world. Just one of our Marine expeditionary units (MEUs)—the one in the Mediterranean—will, in 6 months, exercise and train with the Spanish, the French, the Portuguese, the Italians, the Greeks, and the Turks—most on more than one occasion. Multiply that kind of activity and influence by our three MEUs—in the Med, the Persian Gulf, and in the western Pacific—and you begin to get an appreciation for the magnitude and frequency of operations your naval forces are conducting to support U.S. interests abroad. . . . 99

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The cost of this tempo of operations is substantial, but it is one that Marines accept as a way of life. It's what we were created for, and it's our business. The deploying units of our operating forces currently average 43 percent of their time—or about 156 days each year—away from home preparing for, training for, and finally executing deployments.

In other words, the Corps is kept about as busy in peacetime as it is in our Nation's infrequent involvement in wars. We spend very little time at our home bases waiting for the next time we have to send forces off to fight. Instead, we're out there trying to prevent crises from becoming armed conflicts.

But, as we view the future, there is without question a basis for reducing our armed forces. As we develop the new Base Force, the Marine Corps is reducing in size, but restructuring with an emphasis on its long-standing role as a force-in-readiness for crisis response. In the Base Force, the Marine Corps will draw down to the lowest possible level, yet strive to retain the essential capabilities our Nation needs. The result is a leaner, smaller Corps, but one that remains potent and hardhitting. But we should keep in mind what the President said in the State of the Union address: "This deep, and no deeper."

Let me tell you what we intend to do. As you can see in Chart 1, we've built the new Corps from the ground up. Our plan will cut the supporting establishment to the minimum. Further cuts beyond the 4,000 shown here will impact on our ability to train and sustain our forces, on the quality of life for our Marines and their families, on our 16 bases and stations, and on our continued ability to provide the more than 10,000 Marines used outside the Corps to meet national-level or naval security missions.

Next, continuing to build from the bottom up, we looked at our overhead costs. These have been scraped to the bone. You should know that part of the 6,000 Marine savings shown here is achieved only by reducing entry-level training for our

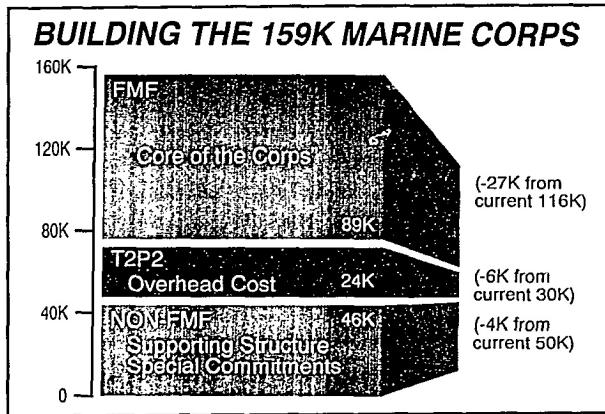


Chart 1

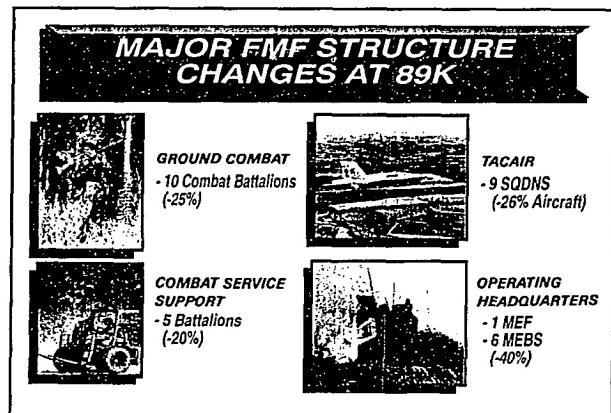


Chart 2

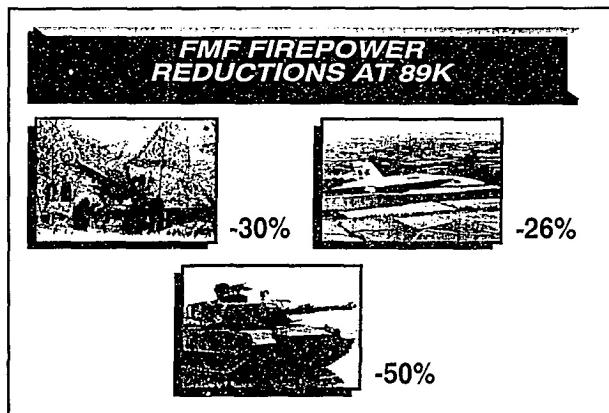


Chart 3

new Marines by one week—a training level we've worked hard to build in the past few years, but a reduction necessary to preserve the maximum capability possible in our operating forces.

That means we will take the remainder of our structure reductions—about 27,000 or 70 percent—from our operating forces, i.e., from the “Core of the Corps.” We are cutting muscle, something I am genuinely concerned about, but there are no other choices for the Marine Corps.

On the second chart, you can see the quantifiable impacts of our drawdown. We've leaned heavily on headquarters reductions, gone light on combat service support so we don't become hollow, drawn down our “flying artillery”—our unique dedicated close air support assets—and drawn down our combat arms battalions because that's where we have to go for large numbers of Marines. Our traditional 27 infantry battalions have already been reduced to 24, and we'll reduce them further to 16 to reach our programmed numbers.

Reductions of this magnitude necessarily result in the firepower reductions reflected on this third chart. Our towed artillery will be reduced by 30 percent; our fixed-wing tactical aircraft by 26 percent; and our tanks by 50 percent.

As we restructure, we'll continue to provide, and will place increased emphasis on, complementary capabilities to those brought by our sister Services. For example, although I pointed out that we're reducing our tanks by 50 percent, we'll still retain sufficient numbers to equip and man the tank battalions and outfit our

maritime pre-positioning ship sets. That will ensure the Corps maintains the capability to rapidly deploy a credible, early arriving, mechanized force just as we did in the earliest days of Operation DESERT SHIELD.

But since the Army will retain its heavy armor formations, we will rely on them to meet any additional heavy armor requirements, just as they provided us with the Tiger Brigade in DESERT STORM. I've talked with Army Chief of Staff Gen Sullivan on this and other matters of complementary capabilities to minimize duplication where appropriate.

We're also integrating our tactical aviation capabilities to the maximum possible with that of the Navy to take advantage of the synergism of both land and carrier-based tactical naval aviation. And our restructured command and control architecture will improve our ability to operationally integrate our forces ashore with both naval forces afloat and the forces of the other Services during joint operations. The advantages of increased interoperability have been clearly demonstrated during Operation SEA ANGEL in Bangladesh and in the ongoing, Marine-led joint task force response to the crisis in Haiti.

But our restructuring and downsizing doesn't come free of the requirement to modernize. In the coming years, we'll also need some additional light armored vehicles to provide the kind of mobility and firepower we're going to need for the restructured Marine Corps. And I know I don't need to remind this Committee about our need for a medium-lift helicopter replacement for our CH-46s. They're rapidly approaching 30 years of age.

It's also important as we downsize that we are careful to minimize the effect on our Marines. The current program reduces our end-strength 18 percent by the end of Fiscal Year 1997. We are presently drawing down the active force by about 6,000 Marines per year. The drawdown has been carefully planned and will be executed with a combination of reduced accessions and normal attrition. This is the pace at which we can ensure both the effective management of, and appropriate sensitivity for, our people as we draw down.

The bottom line is this: We've defined and are restructuring a smaller but still very capable Marine Corps. I cannot overemphasize that our new structure is as low as we can afford to go and still ensure that, in the future, when someone dials "9-1-1," they'll get the same quick response they have come to expect of Marines.

On that point, lest you conclude that Marines are eager to get out of the Corps, let me point out that we offered our Marines the recently approved Voluntary Separation Incentive and the Special Separation Bonus 2 months ago with a goal of separating 265 officers and 700 enlisted Marines. As of 9 March, 4 officers and 150 enlisted Marines have taken the option. There is more to being a Marine than just a paycheck or job security. Marines also serve for the red stripe down their legs. Our Marines simply don't want to leave the Corps.

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Until now, I've focused my talk on Marines, but I must take the time to point out the hazards of cutting our civilian work force as well. Since 1989, our civilian work force has been reduced every year, and by 1995, it will be 22 percent below the 1989 level. Today, the Marine Corps' ratio of 1 civilian to every 11 Marines is the leanest in the Department of Defense. Additional reductions to our civilian end-strength will be crippling. In closing, I'd like to remind the Committee that although Cold War tensions are rapidly fading, there are currently about 20 conflicts underway around the globe. Frankly, I must tell you that as I look out my window, I'm not sure that these crises—crises that seem never-ending—are going to go away. We must maintain the capability to influence world events and manage instability, the capabilities that have long been the stock-in-trade of your Corps of Marines. We have a long tradition of answering 9-1-1 calls. We intend to continue it.

