

**OFFICE OF
THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS
CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**REMARKS BY
GENERAL JAMES T. CONWAY,
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GENERAL JAMES T. CONWAY REMARKS AT
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GENERAL JAMES T. CONWAY: I have a list of notes here, things I want to cover including Iraq, Afghanistan, and the health of the force. I also want to talk some about the QDR because that is what this session is all about. Then of course, I would like to take some questions.

Let us start with Iraq and Afghanistan. I never talk to an audience without doing that because that is where our Marines are engaged. We are very proud of those folks, and of course, as you know they are doing just a magnificent job. My Sergeant Major and I were last there probably about five, six weeks ago. I would say to you in Iraq it is too early to run up a victory pennant, but we are close. The last transfer of authority that we had there was in February. A new Marine Major General took command of MNFW in the West, and the Army three-star was out from Baghdad. The Corps' commander said, "I think I'm viewing the last turnover of Marines in Iraq."

We tend to agree with that statement. We think that is essentially true because we hope that by 2010 we will be able to turn out the lights, close the door on USMC presence in Iraq. You know, there are probably as many views on the nature of that conflict as there are people in the room. We found no weapons of mass destruction in 2003 when General Hailston and I crossed the line. If you look at what has happened in that country, we have crushed al Qaeda movement there with the help of moderates in the religion. I think that will be the enduring value of the actions that took place in Iraq. That concept, that thought process, has spread to other nations in the region. They are doing essentially the same thing with their security forces. We're on the road to defeating this extremism that is a cancer on the globe.

In Afghanistan, the deployment is going well I would say. TRANSCOM continues to do the magnificent job that TRANSCOM does almost without fail. The southern supply line in Pakistan is working well. General Kayani said he thought it would because the commerce and the trade, produces resources that the Pakistanis enjoy as a result. The Brits are substantially in the South where we intend to go. We have always had good relations with the Brits. The language barrier is not a big deal, and so we are doing some good things with the sharing of the bases. We look forward to partnering with them, yet once again.

With respect to Airspace Command and Control, we're going in as a Marine Air-Ground Task Force, so agreements with the Air Force and the NATO nations who fly have progressed very well and we are very comfortable that our aircraft, both fixed-wing and rotary wing in particular, are going to fit in pretty well. The 10,000 Marines that are going in there are the 10,000 happiest Marines in the Corps. They are right where they want to be and where the other 190,000 want to be. They look forward to the task and know that some work that has to be done.

I do think that our Secretary of Defense got a bit of an unfair question while he was there. He was at Camp Leatherneck not long ago and a Marine said, "Sir, you are here before our equipment." Well, you are a product of your environment, and of course when Marines went into Iraq they fell in on equipment because all our battalions look alike and we tended to leave it there.

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In Afghanistan, that is simply not the case. The equipment is coming from all over the globe, and we want our Marines to be there before the equipment arrives. That is the way you do Reception, Staging, Onward-movement & Integration (RSOI) properly. In Iraq they might check in, see their equipment, get assigned a cot, and go to the Kellogg, Brown, and Root (KBR) facility for evening meal. Here your equipment is going to be arriving in a few days. The gunny will assign you your six square feet of dirt in the tent, and you draw your evening meal in a small plastic bag. That's the difference between Afghanistan and Iraq, and that's **expeditionary**, and we wouldn't change that.

As our Marines do get underway though, we have some concerns. Some are at the operational level, some are at the strategic level, and I will share those with you this morning. First, we would like to see more of the Afghan army in the South than currently exists. We believe very strongly in partnering. Our doctrine is such that when we go into operations, we want to have Afghan soldiers operating alongside us. Otherwise, as one of our colonels said in Kabul, "You're just another invading army to the people of Afghanistan." So, to the extent their army is with us, to the extent they become more professional in the process, and to the extent one day we turn that responsibility over to them, all of these match our employment techniques.

We are encouraging if in fact the heavier fighting is going to be taking place in the South in the next few months, then we really need to re-vector some of the Afghan Kandaks, their term for an infantry battalion, down South. The second concern I think at the tactical level coming from the commanders, is that I think there is common agreement that we need to grow the Afghan National Army. But the Afghan leadership is not confident we can do it in a very expeditious manner primarily because of education levels, and because of literacy levels.

Literacy rate in that country is very low. Clearly to be an effective and competent young military officer, you have to be able to read the operations order, you have to be able to understand the legend area on a map, how to call in fires, and those types of things. It takes a certain level, not of courage and leadership skills, I think they have that, but a certain level of education in order to be able to do those things. You do not turn that crank very quickly. We all understand that. Growth of the army I think is going to be a little problematic to the degree that we might otherwise like to see.

At the strategic level, we're stepping in to probably one of the most dangerous zones on the earth in the Helmand Province and the Garmsir area, specifically the Garmsir River Valley. About 95 percent of the Afghan poppy growth comes from right where we are going. That represents about 93 percent of the worldwide poppy availability. When I was there the estimates range, between \$80 million and \$400 million a year that could be going into the coffers of the Taliban and arguably al Qaeda.

This is going to be a major issue for us. It is more complex than saying, change of the ROE and you can simply go in and destroy "drug facilities." If it has a nexus with the Taliban, it's not going to get the job done. Quite frankly, I'll admit to this audience I was wrong in my initial impressions of what needed to be done here. I really thought that perhaps they didn't

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understand that you need a program of whole cloth that talks about the illegality of drugs, offers alternative crops, provides the seedlings, provides the education that it takes to move to a different crop, provides the infrastructure to get that product to market. They get it.

That is exactly what their program is in Afghanistan. The problem is the drugs are at a 10 and the solution set at this point; in terms of scope and capacity, is about a one or two. We've got to simply increase the volume of the effort to really have the impact that we think it's got to have over time.

We can be wildly successful with our efforts in Afghanistan and not solve our national problem if in fact we do not see parallel progress across the border in Pakistan. Since end state for us is eliminating the threat to our nation. That threat centers on al Qaeda and their movement. We think a large number of those folks live in the mountains in Pakistan.

Now, certainly, we are encouraged by recent events, and we hope that it continues. We hope that the Pakistani government and certainly the Pakistani military realize the existential threat that's associated with the movement and are acting to do something about it. We hope that the success that they see continues. Continues to extend to the south in Baluchistan, opposite where we will be in RC South.

Lastly, we are there to create security so that the Afghan nation can attempt a viable election. We think that a strong representative Afghan government is going to be essential to an exit strategy. It involves a government that is free of corruption and reaches out its tentacles as far as possible. Notwithstanding some of the infrastructure problems and road network problems are part of the history of a country that never had a strong central government.

We realize we are up against some challenges. We hope that through advice and encouragement, we will see that type of government one day soon in Afghanistan.

Our equipment of course remains substantially the same, but there are some differences I want to highlight for you this morning. First of all, the Osprey has been in Iraq now for three tours of duty, three different rotations. Inside my building, it has gone from a frog to a prince in about a 21-month period, and we see that as a good thing. The next deployment of the Osprey will be aboard ship. There are some answers that we need in terms of shipboard light, compatibility, the effects of salt-sea-air, on this platform. It is going aboard a MEU that will go to the central theater, for this next several-month deployment.

At the end of that deployment, the Osprey will be going to Afghanistan, and we think it is going to be a very capable aircraft. It will suit our needs in Afghanistan with the elevation, the heat, with the potential anti-aircraft systems that we are starting to see a little bit in some of the intel. We are excited about getting Osprey there, and we think it is just going to be a great support to our guys on the ground.

We are seeing an increasing sophistication on the part of the IEDs. I think we all knew that until we come up with a way to defeat IEDs, that will detect and destroy at range, it is going

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to be a very effective system on any battlefield. We are starting to see IEDs as the principal means of attack for the Taliban because they do not like direct engagements with our Marines and soldiers. We are providing our people with the equipment necessary to defeat that threat. Some of our MRAPs have already been switched over.

We are looking at an MRAP that has greater off-road ability because you do not have the road network in Afghanistan that you have in Iraq. You become fairly predictable, fairly easy to plot if you're always going to be on those roads. Our MRAPs, and we have about 2,000 of them plus in the Marine Corps, don't do that well off-road. Now the favorite vehicle in Afghanistan today is the seven-ton truck, the MTVR. In an innovative fashion, our engineers and our people at Quantico said, let's put the suspension on the MTVR on our CAT-1 MRAPs and see how it does. Well, it did pretty well. Early tests indicated that it gives the MRAP an off-road capability that it has not enjoyed before.

Now, when we went to blow it up, it did not perform so well because we created additional space and surface area underneath the vehicle. We have now blown it up three times. The third time looked pretty good. Now we are doing some more testing before we send it to theater. If we can do that, it will speed the time of employment. We will have it in the hands of our troops potentially by mid-summer. It will cut cost. For the long-term utility of our CAT-1 MRAPs, which is mostly what we own, we will transition those vehicles so that we have a much more multi-capable vehicle for the long term.

We are not divorcing ourselves from the MATV program at this point. That program is underway to see if there is a better MRAP for Afghanistan's type of terrain. We are going to follow both with interest, and we will see where we want to park our monies and our effort as both these vehicles continue to mature. We have also gotten a good bit of attention paid to our personal protective equipment. There is concern that some of the heavy gear that we have worn in Iraq is causing long-term injury. There is concern that because you are in more difficult terrain in Afghanistan that we simply can't wear the heavy sets and be as effective as we need to be. We subscribe to that 100 percent.

What we have directed Quantico to do is give us a family of protective equipment that starts with something like a soft cover and a utility blouse but goes all the way over to the heavy kit that has been worn in Iraq. With about 10 or 12 variations in between, a vest that simply carries the protective plates, might or might not have the side protection that comes with the cummerbund, might or might not have the groin protection, and the back protection.

We have also downgraded or let us say decentralized the authority as to who prescribes what for their forces. Previously that was held at the two-star command level. It is being pushed down to the battalion commander because of the spread of forces, because of the different variances in terrain that we see, and we think a better understanding of what that requirement might be. We are anxious to see that employed. Quantico is speeding through some of this development, and we think in the end that it is going to be a very good thing.

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What we have found with our studies, and I hope you would find this interesting - is that we have what we call an iron triangle that pertains to both vehicles and personal equipment. It has to do with performance, with protection, and with weight. What we find is that if you emphasize one you sometimes sacrifice the other. We are trying to achieve balance. Right now, there's a marriage between weight and protection.

What we want to get to is a marriage between protection and performance. That is going to require, we believe, a technological breakthrough on the part of industry that gives us lightweight armor for both our personnel and for our vehicles. We continue to evaluate and try to find the sweet spot in the development of both types of protection such as it is today.

What is the future of our forces in Afghanistan? We do not know for sure. If you go back to what General McKiernan has asked for, there is a U.S. two-star headquarters out there that takes a rotation sometime in 2010. There is also yet another brigade. We would say regiment that we think we are on tap for in 2010 if the secretary of defense and the president approve those additional forces. I think the intent at this point is to wait and see when the forces are ordered in, and see what the enemy's reaction to all of that is going to be.

Are we going to have a greater level of stability by the end of the year? We think so. We hope so. I would make the point that we cannot wait until the end of the year to make that decision. There is a fairly significant what we call flash-to-bang between the time the decision is made and the time you have boots on the ground, particularly in Afghanistan because again the supply lines and the distances are so great. We need a good four, five months in order to be able to train those staffs; in order to be able to prepare, and then eventually get those people on the road headed in, if that is to be the decision of the future. We are going to watch that with great interest, and we stand by for orders accordingly.

Let me shift gears and talk about the resiliency of the force in terms of how we measure it. First, let us discuss the indicators and the metrics. We have a dozen factors that I check on a monthly basis, such things as UA rates, unauthorized absence, desertion rates, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, spousal or child abuse, and divorce rates. You might anticipate these factors. I can tell you that largely those factors are all in good shape.

The ones that we see trends with at this point that we are keeping a close eye on are divorces for the seven years of the war. For three of those seven years our Marine Corps statistics have been the best of all the services. Suddenly, last year, the Marine Corps was the worst of all the services. So we never do anything in moderation, okay? It is one extreme or the other. It is the first year we have seen that. We are going to keep track on it and make sure that it does not continue to be a trend that we do not understand and potentially cannot do something about.

There is a resiliency in our force that we are very pleased with, and I will talk more about that. Part of it I believe is because of our culture, as it differs from our other ground force, which is the United States Army. Our culture at this point is such that we keep our Marines in the operating forces for about three years. Then we get them out to what we call a B-Billet where

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they are recruiting, training, in a headquarters, or perhaps working with reserves. Any manner of things out there that they can do that gives them a three-year hiatus away from the operating forces.

Then at the end of that time, they will come back and pick up the deployment routine, whatever it is at that point. If you talk to a soldier and he is in the Third Infantry Division and he says he has had three pumps to Iraq, do the math. Those are one-year pumps, maybe 15-month pumps, so that means he is in the Army operational forces for six, seven, eight years. That is just a difference in culture.

The other thing that we find very suitable to our requirements is the seven-month deployment. Our tradition used to be in peacetime six and eighteen. We modified it slightly to make it seven-month deployments. We find that works really well. Our troops like it, our families like it, as we examine the mental health assessment surveys and so forth it is a major plus in terms of how they see our deployment factors as compared to that of others.

Now, we think that we are still pulling our load. If you take a typical 28-month period, a soldier could be gone for 15 of those months if he is on a 15-month deployment. In 28 months, a Marine is there 14 months. It is just broken up differently. We do not apologize to anybody for the way we do things, and in fact, again, we are very pleased that we think it is a major contributor to this sort of resiliency.

Our families are the brittle portion of this whole equation. We recognize that from the outset. Our force is about 45 percent married. We think that we have to make sure that we are not asking too much of these folks as volunteers. We are showing them that we are concerned about when the Marine is away. The quality of life aboard our bases helps them to understand that we do care.

In testimony yesterday a congresswoman said that she had seen a survey that said in the case of military spouses 94 percent felt like that the country did not appreciate their sacrifice. I think that that would be a very different figure if you were to ask those same spouses, does the service appreciate your sacrifice? We hope we are sending a strong signal that we do, not only through things that we are saying, but also through the amount of money that we are spending. Never before at this level, have we been working to meet, what they say they need, and their concerns.

One final indicator that we think we are doing pretty well is that our reenlistment rates are off the page. We are reenlisting now at a rate like never before to help grow the force and yet this year, halfway through the fiscal year, we have closed out our reenlistment for our first term Marines and for our career force. That tells me that the spouses, the children, are okay when Sergeant Sasquatch says he's going to put his hand in the air and so we think all in all that's a pretty encouraging indicator.

Okay, shifting gears one more time, let us talk about the QDR. We think that again as a Marine Corps, we are going to be scrutinized during the QDR, but in the end, we think we will

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be okay. The reason I say that is that the Marine Corps pulls down about 6 percent of the department's budget. For that 6 percent, you get about 24 percent of the maneuver battalions, you get 15 percent of the attack aircraft, and you get 21 percent of the attack helicopters. We're pretty lean. We are built for a fight. The average Marine costs this country about \$20,000 less than the next closest service member in other services. Our officer-to-enlisted ratio is one to nine; the next closest service is one to five.

In some services, you will have one civilian for every couple of military people. In the Marine Corps, it is one civilian for every 15 Marines. We have a purpose out there. There are Marines who say we have a huge bureaucracy but by comparison, my point to you is that we do not. We are built for one thing, and that is to fight this nation's wars.

Second, the Secretary of Defense has said what he seeks is a balanced force oriented towards the hybrid but able to counter the surprise that we sometimes see in the global development of things. We think that accurately describes what we provide to this great nation. We call ourselves a two-fisted fighter, able to go both ways. One hundred percent of our Marine Corps procurement can be used in both the hybrid kind of environment or in major combat. We are proud of that record, and it is going to continue downrange.

That said, there are probably three issues that we will see come up that will involve Marine Corps equities over the course of the QDR. The first is the global lay-down of forces, and that will play particularly as it relates to our pending move to Guam. We have committed ourselves to the move, as has the department. We also have the personal promise of the Under Secretary of Defense, Michele Flournoy. She is going to help us with some of the issues that have arisen from that potential move. We think there will be some discussion in the QDR in terms of global force lay-down, not only as it relates to the Pacific but also to Europe and particularly Korea.

There will be attack air discussion. There always is. It is one of the repeat performers at QDRs. Once again, I think one of the major portions of the discussion will have to do with attack aircraft shortfall or trends in service procurement of those aircraft. We have a little bit of a different situation. We have not bought a fighter attack aircraft now in 11 years. We have been on what we call a procurement holiday. We chose not to buy the F18-E and F when the Navy did, so that we could await the arrival of a fifth-generation fighter called the Joint Strike Fighter, the F-35-B. Interestingly, we are the first of all the services to get the initial operational capacity out of that aircraft, and it scheduled to happen for us at about 2012.

We have known for a long time about the risk of having lesser aircraft than we might ideally like to have in our squadrons. We are trying to mitigate it through extending our F-18 A through D to 10,000 hours, and we are trying to make sure that our manufacturer stays on target with regard to this 2012 Initial Operational Capability (IOC).

There are also a couple of other countries interested in the very plane. In fact they have contracted for the very plane that we are bringing aboard so that we all move together forward on this thing. All I think are important to the program and to the arrival of this new aircraft.

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The thing I think that we will probably spend the most time with you on, and I don't know how much of the QDR it's going to consume: You have heard the secretary say that one of the things we have tossed into the QDR is going to be the concept of how much amphibious capability do we need? That is a major player as far as Marines are concerned of course, in conjunction with our Navy brothers, because it talks about that niche capability that we provide to this great nation.

The Secretary has said we need to have some, but how much is enough? The problem, if you can call it a problem, which we have seen in the early discussion, there is too much of a tendency to look at amphibious class ships as a high-end capability. When we start talking amphibs, we immediately go to forcible entry landings. I would rephrase the question a little bit and say: How much does this maritime nation and world superpower need for purposes of security cooperation and theater engagement? If you ask that question to the combatant commanders, they will tell you almost uniformly that it is their number one requirement. That is what they want to see in the world in the future.

If you ask the Chief of Naval Operations, what is the best ship to do that, I believe his answer would be an L-class ship. He says, if you put a frigate off another nation's coast, you can train half a dozen midshipmen. If you put an amphib off that coast, you can train the midshipman but you also have a helicopter capability to go to and from the shore. You have sufficient medical and dental capability to offer to the nation you are visiting. You put your Marines ashore either for training with yet another branch of the service or engineers to help with building. There is a great deal more capability underneath that flag on an L-class ship.

We think that the value on a day-in and day-out basis is really with the engagement that this nation has to be able to accomplish over time, and doing it from the sea. What we see increasingly is that nations want the effect. They want what we bring but they do not want our footprint ashore; and that has happened a number of times within the past five or six years.

It reminds me of a sign I remember seeing when I was stationed in California. The governor of Oregon posted a sign at the Oregon/California border so Californians could read it saying: "You're welcome to visit, but don't plan to stay." I think that there is a lot of that same mentality there with some of the nations today that we deal with. That speaks to the value of the amphibs.

There is an interesting intersection out there, of the numbers. When the Global Force Management Board computes the requirements for theater engagement, and works in Navy rotation requirements, they get about the same number of ships that we need for forcible entry, at the two-brigade level. Let us talk about that for just a moment. Let us talk about the high end.

Right now, we are at the point where we can forcibly project two brigades ashore if the nation directs us to do so. Again, the Secretary's question is, how much is enough? My question is, how much is too little? Because at some point you lose the capacity to go across another nation's shore if you do not have the ability to do so. An amphibious operation is very complex;

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it is the most sophisticated of military operations, and it requires a suitable amount of force because you are in a race for time wherever you are going.

The other guy is trying to put you back into the water and you're trying to build up as soon as you can. You need to arrive with a certain amount of force. If we were to drop that capacity, from two brigades to a single brigade, we are talking about a regiment of Marines going across another nation's shore. Now we are good, but we are not that good, okay? I advocate that in time that the risk becomes so great that you would probably not do it.

It gets to the basic question; does this nation need a viable forcible entry capability? Certainly from my perch it does. The EFV is a subset of that. It will likely be discussed under the heading of "amphib capability." The United States Navy does not plan to go 25 miles or closer to the shore, and at this point, we need a capability to bridge that distance to shore.

We have these old AAVs that putter along at about six miles an hour. They will be 40 years old by the time the first EFVs hit the fleet. Quite frankly, if you were to try to put Marines ashore from 25 or 30 miles out in that vehicle, half would step off carrying their helmets and the other half would be very, very angry. I think all those considerations need to be taken into account.

Okay. I need to save some time for questions. Let me stop there, folks, and see what is on your mind this morning that perhaps I might be able to answer. Thank you very much.

Q: I would assert that if we destroyed al Qaeda tomorrow that would not make the world all that much safer because the Taliban, and the Taliban is clearly the key threat in Pakistan and I would say also Afghanistan. How would you react to that assertion?

GENERAL CONWAY: I think the Taliban have to be defeated for us to create a scenario where we preclude safe haven. I think the Taliban in the past has given that to al Qaeda in Afghanistan, but I think our core enemy, I think the people that have sort of the global thought process in terms of attacking western democracies and trying to disrupt their economies are in fact al Qaeda. I think that is the core of this cancer that we have to get to. So, I guess I would disagree with you to a degree in terms of who is our mortal enemy here. I think in many ways we have to go through the Taliban to get to the al Qaeda.

Q: Could you address how MARSOC is doing in relation with SOCOM, some of the deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq, and the length of time we are going to leave folks in MARSOC.

GENERAL CONWAY: First, after a little bit of a rough start they are doing gangbusters. I think it is fair to say, I have constant dialog with our two-star assigned and with Eric Olson. They are very pleased with their fairly broad range of capacity. They have demonstrated an ability to work as a company-sized organization when employed in combat and

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that was thought the initial value. They've also been able to break down and do the ODA thing almost as fluidly.

They have now been asked, and I do not think this is classified information, but we have a 2.0 presence in Afghanistan. They want to see more MARSOC in there, and they are doing good work. That has caused some problems for us with regard to their ability to be aboard ships and give us a special ops capability as we move through other theaters. We're working that through some other means.

Tour length, has also been a topic of discussion as you might imagine. We think as opposed to having special operations types who are Marines we have Marines who are in a special operations billet. We want to get the value of all their training, experience, and combat experiences as well brought back into the Marine Corps after a period of time.

Now, there's a fairly extensive work-up that is required to deem you a special operator. We have acknowledged that and said, okay, those guys ought to do five-year tours, well outside our normal three years, to take advantage of that. It is going to be a secondary military occupational specialty (MOS) for us, so that we can identify who those folks are in case they want to go back to MARSOC at a later point in time with additional rank and responsibilities.

We think we have reached a fairly equitable solution with MARSOC without creating a sort of a special operations cadre in the Marine Corps but at the same time taking advantage of their experiences and their involvements.

Q: General, the wars of these nations are asymmetric wars now. Do you think that the Marine Corps is ready to fight these asymmetric wars? What kind of lessons did you draw from this incident in the Farah province in the west of Afghanistan where the Marines were fighting and they called for a strike? Apparently, air power is not very useful in these kinds of wars. I mean it is counter-productive. We had already a huge incident on a wedding last year and now this new incident. So can you tell us, how do you prepare your men to work on these asymmetric wars, and what happened in Farah? Were the Marines wrong to call for air strike?

GENERAL CONWAY: To answer your last question first, sir, we do not think so. We believe that there were families who were killed by the Taliban with grenades and rifle fire. They were then paraded about and shown as casualties from the air strike. I think the evidence in time will prove that true because casualty after casualty has said in the hospitals what they saw and what really took place.

What that should show us all is that our enemy is expert at the use of information operations and knows how to turn our tactics back on us. At that time, President Karzai was in the United States meeting with our president and the Pakistani leadership. The timing of it was exquisite. The understanding of what it took to escalate to the degree that we would drop a bomb was complete and precise. What it tells us is that we are up against a vicious, first of all, but very intelligent enemy.

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I think the lessons we need to draw from it are the lessons of information warfare. Now, the use of the aircraft and use of destructive fires in this kind of fight as in any other fight, I believe, remain to be essential. The options are not very attractive. Our country is sensitive to casualties. For us to simply say, well, that building has 15 bad guys in it but we can't drop a bomb so we're going to assault it, is also not the answer.

What we have found is that because our people are very good at the use of the air, we have dropped bombs in a place called Now Zad. In fact, it happened just days before the Sergeant Major and I conducted our last visit. What those people did, understanding the enemy tactics, was keep their target areas under observation, in order to understand the patterns of light for several days. Then when the fight got underway, they knew exactly where the bad guys were, where the families were, and which targets could be struck and which were not.

I do think it tells us that we are going to have to be even more precise and concerned about our employment of air. It is a vital tool on the battlefield. We hold over this enemy the asymmetric advantage. I would certainly not want to see it go away.

Q: Could you comment on the future of Naval Surface Fire Support? Given our current guns only go about 13 nautical miles, the Navy is going to stay 25 nautical miles, and the DDG 1000 has been truncated to maybe two or three ships.

GENERAL CONWAY: Naval gunfire support is a deficiency right now. I do not think there is any question that if you are a theater commander or a MEF commander, you have sufficient accuracy with missiles and rockets to take out precise targets that you want to hit to the 10-digit grid degree of accuracy. What is missing, we found in our fire studies at Quantico, are volume fires that a battalion commander or a company commander needs, especially in the early hours where you might need the naval gunfire support or if it is something similar to a raid ashore where you are not intending to take your organic fire support.

The agreement that I have with the CNO is that we are going to expand on the concept of the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) as a firing platform with what we would call a "box of rockets." We think that we can get back to volume fires, good range, low cost, high level of accuracy and volume that the rockets would tend to offer. We have examined the storage capacity, the elevator capacity to get them up to the flight deck. We do not have the box yet that we need. The ones that have good range do not have quite enough firepower. The ones that have the firepower do not have enough range. So once again, technology needs to help us here. That's how we think we may fix the problem for the long term, because we just don't see the sufficient amount of volume of guns out there that are going to solve our problem anytime in the near term.

Q: At a previous conference, you talked about precision strikes with the use of potentially making Marine Corps AC-130s. Can you tell me about your status of that issue?

GENERAL CONWAY: We are developing a program called Harvest Hawk. You know, Marine commanders have lusted for years over the AC-130s that the special ops communities have. Again, because we consider air to be an asymmetric advantage, we want to

GENERAL JAMES T. CONWAY REMARKS AT
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take it to the wall in terms of what our capacities are. We know that our KC-130Js have long loiter capability that they can generally stay outside the envelope of air defense fires. We've created a roll-on, roll-off package that takes about six or eight hours to transform an aircraft that might be hauling men and equipment to become an aircraft overhead with ISR and with sting.

Now, it is not on the plane of the AC. That is a very expensive airplane with some very sophisticated systems. Our ISR we think is sufficient for the battlefield we face. We think 30-mm cannon out the side of that aircraft, a Hellfire capability that can be launched from that aircraft, and the other things associated with it then are what we need. I think you are going to see it in the theater before the end of this calendar year. We are pretty excited about it.

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