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Yesterday, the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Joseph F. Dunford testified before the Readiness Sub-Committee of the House Armed Services Committee on total force readiness. During his testimony, he told the committee that 202,000 Marines are currently on active duty, of which, 30,000 are currently forward deployed. "Even as we work to meet current requirements, we're looking ahead. We've conducted an assessment of the future security environment and of force structure review. Based on our analysis, we have planned for a force with the right capabilities and capacities to provide the nation with an expeditionary force and readiness that meets the vision of the 82nd Congress. Our intent is to reset our forces coming out of Afghanistan and reconstitute an active force of 186,800 Marines..."

The following excerpts were taken from Gen. Dunford's prepared remarks submitted to the committee:

Ready During Uncertain Times

"Being ready when the nation is least ready is particularly important in these uncertain and dynamic times. We have entered a period of austerity in which this Nation will have to make difficult choices and carefully manage risks to our national interests. Maintaining a part of the joint force at a very high state



of readiness - particularly a part of the force that can operate independent of foreign basing - is the kind of insurance policy the nation will need for the unpredictable future. The Marine Corps has historically provided that insurance policy for well less than ten percent of the Total Obligation Authority of the Department of Defense."



Heavy Toll From Decade Of Combat

"Equipment readiness is also a critical element of overall Marine Corps readiness. The last decade of combat operations has taken a heavy toll on our equipment. Congress has been extremely helpful in keeping our equipment readiness up for the deploying units, but for those at home in their training and dwell-time, we are seeing growing shortfalls as time goes on. As we move beyond Afghanistan, we will need continued support to reset our equipment and restore the readiness of our units at home station. We will also need support in modernizing our equipment as we seek to reconstitute the Corps for tomorrow's challenges."

We Provide Exceptional Value to Nation

"With all the Marine Corps has done and continues to do, we provide exceptional value to the Nation. For 8.5 percent of the annual Defense budget, the Marine Corps provides approximately 31 percent of the ground operating forces, 12 percent of the fixed wing tactical aircraft, and 19 percent of the attack helicopters in the Joint Force. The Marine Corps' 1:9 ratio of officers to enlisted personnel is the lowest of all the services. The Marine Corps' 1:6 ratio of civilian employee to supported Marine is also the lowest of all the services."

[Read General Dunford's statement](#)

[Click here to watch video of HASC hearing](#)

HEROES

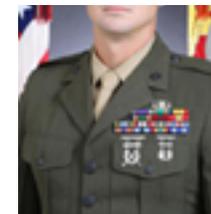
LEXINGTON SGT. EARNS SILVER STAR FOR VALOR

Kentucky native, Marine Sgt. Eric Walker was awarded the Silver Star on June at Camp Lejeune, N.C., for his actions during a firefight in Afghanistan. The battle occurred in Bala Mofghab, Afghanistan, in



November 2009. According to Kentucky.com, Walker rushed through a gunfire and exploding grenades to assist two Marines and two Afghan commandos who had been wounded by snipers. He directed covering fire and pulled one wounded man to safety. The Silver Star is the nation's third-highest military decoration for valor.

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INJURED MARINE FINDS NEW PATH

The explosion of a hidden bomb changed Sgt. Jonathon Blank's life forever. On Oct. 26, 2010, during his final mission in Afghanistan, an unexpected explosion destroyed Blank's legs, tore up his intestines and punctured a hole in his left elbow. Fortunately, he survived, and he is determined to walk again with prosthetics. "Even at my worst, when I got real down and depressed, I realized that a lot of things suck and a lot of things are different," he said. "But I can't give up. I won't give up." Blank has demonstrated his relentless drive and determination throughout his whole life.



On Dec. 5, Blank was transferred to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio for rehabilitation and to be fitted for prosthetics. After spending five days in Brooke Army Medical Center in Fort Sam Houston, Texas, he became was transferred to outpatient care at Center for the Intrepid, a privately funded rehabilitation facility that opened in 2007 next to the hospital. He was on the road to a speedy recovery when he had to have an emergency surgery to remove scar tissue blocking his intestines. Block is trying to get used to wearing a plastic mold on his right side, to serve as the socket for his prosthetic. When he can stand wearing it for four hours a day, the prosthetic will be attached to it. He's up to two hours now. "You always have to keep trying," he said. Blank will remain on active duty with the Marines until it's determined his medical and rehabilitation needs have been met.

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FALLEN HERO HONORED IN ROXBURY N.J.



A stretch of Eyland Avenue in Roxbury N.J. is now also known as LCpl. Don Brown Avenue. The stretch of road is named after the 19-year-old Marine and 2005 Roxbury High School graduate killed in Iraq in 2006. Councilman Martin Schmidt, a Vietnam veteran and former commander of the Morris County chapter of the Disabled American Veterans, said he's been working on renaming Eyland in honor of Brown for three years. "Any kid that gets hurt in combat, or killed like that, they're kind of our own," Schmidt said. "I didn't know him well, but I knew him before he went into the service. ... He was a nice young kid. When he got killed in action, there are no words to describe it." About 80 people attended the unveiling ceremony on July 18 near the home where Brown grew up. An American flag draping the sign was removed ceremonially folded and presented to Brown's

parents.

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HONORING THE VALOR OF NAVY CORPSMAN



Petty Officer 2nd Class Jacob Emmott received the Silver Star on July 14, while serving in Afghanistan, for his actions of tending to the wounded during a firefight in which he suffered a bullet to the head, an injury few survive. The Silver Star recognizes demonstrated valor and is the nation's third-highest military decoration for valor. Corpsmen, an enlisted member of a military medical unit, train locally at Camp Johnson, N.C. and when the few and the proud go to war, they do not go

alone: Corpsmen are there to tend to the sick and wounded, just as Emmott did in Afghanistan. The Marine Corps and the Navy Hospital Corps have a long history of working together, and the respect the two have for one another is legendary.

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NEWS

IED STRIKE BRINGS FATHER, SON CLOSER



On July 14, Lance Cpl. Frank Buchanan Jr. was leading a four-vehicle convoy dispatched by Route Clearance Company to recover two downed vehicles in the desert of Nawa district in Helmand province of Afghanistan. While driving, he spotted an 80-pound improvised explosive device (IED), but was unable to stop in time. When his father,

Master Gunnery Sgt. Frank Buchanan Sr., heard about the strike, he feared the worst. Miraculously, Lance Cpl. Buchanan came away with nothing more than a mild concussion and neck stress. Master Guns found him resting on a green canvas cot, appearing tired but generally healthy. His neck brace, resembling a white foam collar, was the only indication that anything was wrong. He wore it when walking, but moved naturally, without any noticeable signs of pain. According to the Master Guns, Buchanan men aren't much for expressing emotions. The father and son trail off when they get to close words like "love," but according to Buchanan Jr., there was a time when they barely spoke to each other at all. He wryly recalls his father's "drill instructor phase," when his parents functioned as a chain of command, and half seriously remarked that messages for dad had to be routed through mom. "Now, I'm not only his son, but also his brother," said Buchanan Jr. "There are things he can talk to me about now that I wouldn't hear before." Although the Master Guns frequently worries about his son, he is rendered speechless by the swelling pride he feels when he sees a younger version of himself carrying on the Buchanan legacy.

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See Also: [Regional Command South-West weekly news round-up](#)

1ST TANK BATTALION MARINES RETURN TO COMBAT CENTER FROM AFGHANISTAN DEPLOYMENT



Marines and Sailors of the main element from Company D, 1st Tank Battalion, are scheduled to return to the Combat Center in Twentynine Palms, Calif., on July 28 from a successful seven month deployment to Afghanistan's Helmand province. The deployment marked the first time Marines have deployed M1A1 Abrams tanks to Afghanistan. Upon arriving in Helmand, the Marines mission was to provide over-watch security for strategic routes of movement and to escort and support infantry units such as Battalion Landing Team 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment; 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment; and 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment during their operations. The crews used their tanks' highly-

advanced optics systems to spot enemy targets and monitor local area activity during infantry patrols and operations. Thermal and night vision optics enabled the crews to provide critical observation and reconnaissance during all hours of the day and in austere weather conditions for their fellow Marines, Sailors and Afghan partners. Company D had a significant impact on the enemy's ability to emplace improvised explosive devices, a major threat to military personnel and civilians in Afghanistan, according to then-commander of Regional Command Southwest, Maj. Gen. Richard Mills.

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FUEL THE FORCE PROJECT CHARTS NEW COURSE FOR LOCAL FARMERS, MILITARY

On Monday, July 18, 800 gallons of biodiesel that was grown, processed and blended exclusively in North Carolina for the military - was delivered to Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune. The delivery



of the B20 biodiesel was the culmination of years of collaboration facilitated by North Carolina Eastern Region's Military Growth Task Force through a project known as "Fuel the Force." The driving force behind this project are North Carolina's two leading industries, the military and agriculture. This project creates new and more solid foundations for North Carolina farmers, which is necessary for the delivery of renewable



fuels to the military. "This represents the first fruits of our effort to try to get homegrown biodiesel to our military forces," said George Miller, program manager with North Carolina's Eastern Region MGTf. "This is a momentous day for [the Marine Corps and] we didn't get here in one jump," said Maj. Gen. Carl Jensen, commanding general for Marine Corps Installations East. "This is just the beginning of this power of partnerships that I believe in the very near future is going to fundamentally alter the way we do business."

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1ST MARINE EXPEDITIONARY BRIGADE SUPPORTS EXERCISE JAVELIN THRUST



Marines and Sailors of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Brigade command element have mobilized to establish a command center in the mountains of Bridgeport, Calif., to practice for a crisis response. The Camp Pendleton-based unit is functioning as the higher headquarters for elements of 4th Marine Division, Air Wing and Logistics Group training at several locations throughout the western United States during Javelin Thrust 2011, the largest Marine Corps

Reserve exercise of the year. Maj. Gen. Melvin G. Spiese, commanding general of 1st MEB, has tactical control of more than 5,000 reserve Marines and sailors during this exercise.

"Javelin Thrust 2011 is a perfect opportunity for 1st MEB to enhance our expeditionary nature

and gain proficiency in the skills it takes to provide a rapid response force," said Spiese. "Our frequent training keeps us ready for the call when the nation needs us."

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[Also Read: 'Firsts' For Marines During Javelin Thrust](#)

MARINES, SAILORS TAKE ADVANTAGE OF GROWING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES



Off-duty education opportunities are growing aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, offering Marines and Sailors the chance to pursue their educational goals. This year, a total of 24 Marines and Sailors earned degrees ranging from associate to a doctorate. This is an increase compared to last year's nine graduates. As of July, 667 Marines have taken 1,942 courses during fiscal year 2011. To give Marines flexibility and accommodate their busy lifestyles, there are a few different options service members have when trying

to take classes. They can choose online courses, a nearby school, or attend classes in the MCRD classrooms. "These schools are going beyond the basics of just training," said James Brooks, education services officer. Currently, Columbia College, National University and San Diego City College are offering on-base classes to help service members with tight schedules. Brooks hopes to expand on-base opportunities by hosting more schools when room becomes available.

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PARTNERSHIP WITH THE WORLD TRIATHLON CORPORATION



World Triathlon Corporation (WTC), best known for its worldwide



Ironman and Ironman 70.3 races, announced a new partnership with the United States Marine Corps (USMC). The partnership will include the Marine Corps Ironman World Championship 70.3 and the Marine Corps 5150 Lake Lanier, both set to take place on September 11, 2011, as well as the newly launched Marine Corps Primal Challenge, a Mudventure Quest event series. Since the inception of our first brand in 1978, we have had a special tie to

the military and have shared in the common values of excellence, integrity and perseverance, said Mike Pine, Chief Sales Officer, WTC. The new Marine Corps Primal Challenge Series motivates athletes to run, climb, crawl, slosh and jump over and under massive man-made obstacles, such as a cargo net tower that soars three stories above the ground. The Marine Corps will work hand-in-hand with WTC in the design and execution of the unique obstacle courses. Registration for the inaugural Marine Corps Primal Challenge event will open June 22 at noon ET, at www.primalchallenge.com. Athletes will be able to compete on Saturday, Sunday or both, and each day will wrap up with a Stone Age finish-line celebration.

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EVENTS

COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS TO SPEAK AT MONTFORD MARINES CONVENTION IN ATLANTA

The Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. James F. Amos, will deliver the keynote address at the Montford Point Marine Association Convention at the Hyatt Regency (265 Peachtree Street, NE) in Atlanta on July 30, 2011. The Commandant will speak about the importance of the Montford Point Marines to the rich legacy of the Marine Corps and current diversity initiatives within the officer and enlisted ranks. "The Marines who served at Montford Point are a part of the rich legacy of our Corps. They answered our nation's call at a time when our



society was deeply divided along racial lines. As such, many of their contributions went unrecognized and many times they were not given the respect and recognition they deserved as Marines, as Americans, and as patriots. It is important to all Marines, past and present, that we honor their selfless service and sacrifice and fully embrace their storied contribution to the history of our Corps," said General Amos.



[Click here to learn more about the Montford Point Marines](#)

MARINE PLANS 5,000-MILE 'SMILE TREK'

When Sgt. Winston Fiore was on active duty, his unit deployed to Senegal for training with that country's military. For the three weeks his mortar platoon was attached to the Senegalese mortar counterparts, Fiore endured the culture shock of the experience; however, the 26-year-old Indiana native says he was not prepared for the poverty with which Senegal desperately struggles. "It was real common to see women carrying



gallons of water on their heads," Fiore said, "from, you know, water sources that were God knows how far away, just so they could bring potable water into their homes. Kids dressed in rags digging through piles of trash." His deployment brought him to the decision to spend a year walking across an unfamiliar part of the world beginning this September; because of what he saw in Senegal, he decided to tie in a cause that would assist the developing country. This is what connected Fiore to the International Children's Surgical Foundation, a charity that corrects severe cleft palate deformities on children in the developing world, transforming a life of shame and isolation. "It's a really simple procedure that only takes a couple of hours and is very inexpensive, [relative to the United States]," said Fiore, who will call his journey the "Smile Trek." "And it's all that needs to happen to completely turn these kids' life around."

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