

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH COLONEL KEITH MOORE, USMC,
PROGRAM MANAGER FOR THE MARINE CORPS EXPEDITIONARY FIGHTING VEHICLE PROGRAM, VIA
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LIEUTENANT JENNIFER CRAGG, (Office of the Secretary of Defense for
Public Affairs): (In progress) -- welcome you all to the Department of
Defense's Bloggers Roundtable for Wednesday, March 25, 2009. My name is
Lieutenant Jennifer Cragg and I'm with the Office of Secretary of Defense for
Public Affairs. I'll be moderating the calls. A note to the bloggers on-line,
please clearly state your name before asking your questions.

Today, our guest is Colonel Keith Moore. He's a program manager for
the Marine Corps Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle Program. Today, he will discuss
the background, restructuring and current status of the Expeditionary Fighting
Vehicle Program and its importance to the U.S. Marine Corps.

With that, sir, I'm going to turn the floor over to you, if you'd like
to start with an opening statement. COL. MOORE: Sure.

Just, real quickly, I'll hit some of the highlights of our recent
history. The program office was going through the system design- development
stage, which was supposed to culminate in 2006 after a operational assessment.
Based upon some poor reliability results out of the operational assessment, as
well as the Marine Corps overall reassessing the total ground vehicle structure
for the Marine Corps, which resulted in about a 43 percent reduction in the buy
of EFV -- so the need for additional development time for reliability, and the
reduced buy, caused this to become a critical Nunn-McCurdy breach program.

So, we spent 2006, 2007 going through the recertification process,
where OSD has to, sort of, -- (inaudible) -- to the Congress that we represent a
national security critical capability; that there's no other alternative to
providing that capability for lesser or equal cost; and that the rebaselined
costs of the program are acceptable to the Service and the Department. And,
lastly, that there's appropriate management controls in place to continue the
program.

Based upon all that, we went through a redesign for reliability stage.
That's now coming to a conclusion. We held a critical design review for the
redesigned vehicle in December of last year. Based upon that, we predict the
system reliability at just over 61 hours mean time between operational mission
failure, which is significantly above what the requirements were to continue the
program forward.

We're currently building seven new prototypes to that new design. Those vehicles are currently going through fabrication and machining the hulls at Joint Systems Manufacturing Center in Lima, Ohio. They'll begin assembly this summer. The first vehicles will deliver to the Marine Corps for testing in May of next year.

And we'll go back through a reliability growth program of testing those, identifying additional failure modes, and redesigning components to get them up to the required reliability, as well as another operational assessment, where the Marine Corps Operational Test and Evaluation Activity will run the vehicle through 10 to 12 mission-profile scenarios to assess the overall performance, as well as the reliability of the vehicle.

So, that gives you sort of an idea of where we've been in the recent past, and where we're at, and where we're going. And with that, I guess at this point I'll open it up for questions.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir.

Let's turn it over to David, for the first question.

Q Great. This is David Axe, with War is Boring. Can you hear me okay?
COL. MOORE: Yes, sir.

Q Great. Fantastic.

So, EFV is widely considered one of those programs that's most vulnerable to being significantly cut back or cancelled in the current budget, or soon -- if not in the current budget, very soon.

So, is this -- in light of that possibility, how would you defend the program? Would you characterize this as an absolute necessity or are there viable alternatives to EFV?

COL. MOORE: You know, going all the way back to the history of when the program was first initiated in the early '90s, there was what's called a "Cost and Operational Effectiveness Analysis" -- looked at the ways in which the nation might do joint forcible entry, which is considered one of the critical military capabilities for the nation.

They looked at a total of 13 alternatives, which included aviation-only solutions, varying-surface solutions, a wide variety of things. And the ultimate resolution of that was that the best, most cost-effective way to do joint forcible entry is if a component of that has to be a self-deploying amphibious combat vehicle to get the first echelons of an assault force ashore to then prosecute an inland campaign.

All of the assumptions that went into that -- the basic analysis of that, was revisited several times through the '90s; and had to be revisited again during the Nunn-McCurdy process, which ultimately required the secretary of Defense to certify that both the requirements for joint forcible entry and the capability to do that -- that's represented in EFV, was vital to the nation.

Q So, in other words, this is a -- this is an irreplaceable program, in a sense?

COL. MOORE: That's correct.

Now, to get, I guess -- you know, because there was sort of the other part of the question, which is, given then the vehicle, and some of the problems that we've had with reliability, is, part of the restructured program was a very disciplined, knowledge-based approach toward moving through that to ensure that we could deliver the capability. You know, it's one thing to require a capability, it's another thing to be able to actually deliver it.

The first of those knowledge points occurred back in December when we went through the Critical Design Review to show that we, no- kidding, had a design that was capable of meeting the requirements. The next knowledge point will be when we actually get these seven prototypes and are able to do an initial demonstration of what that reliability is. So, the story that we've been, you know, telling everybody within OSD, within the Congress, is, look, each one of these knowledge points that we have represents an off-ramp for "maybe it's just too hard to deliver this capability." We made it successfully through the first off-ramp.

You know, now we just need the time to get to when we had planned this next demonstration of capability, and then we can revisit, "Did it meet the expectations?" If it doesn't meet the expectations, is it because of something that's fixable, or is it because this is just too hard to do?

Q Okay, thank you very much.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, Andrew, next.

Q Colonel, good morning. Andrew Lubin here from the Military Observer. Appreciate your taking the time this morning, sir.

COL. MOORE: You bet, sir.

Q Sir, I'd like to follow up on David's question of this being an irreplaceable program. I understand back in the, back in the '90s and early 2000s -- as a matter of fact, I've got a copy of a September, 2003 Gazette with two advertisements from Raytheon with this thing.

And with things -- you know, times and opponents have changed. If you've got the Navy sitting 25 miles off shore because they're afraid to come any closer nowadays, if you've got to do a forcible entry, what's wrong with the new Ospreys? What's wrong with putting your LAVs and Abrams on an -- you know, on an LCAC? Or take a Bradley and expand it so you can -- so you can fit as many Marines in as you need?

Why is this program so irreplaceable that it can't be done, frankly, cheaper and better, and probably safer?

COL. MOORE: Well, you know, part of the issue is that to be able to lift the entire assault force by aviation assets is, you would need to buy many more ship platforms that are capable of supporting aviation assets than you have to buy to have a mix of both.

Because, make no mistake, the Osprey is a vital part of forcible entry -- is that we expect that we are going to, by aviation means, insert some of the assault echelon, but that we also need that surface assault component to be able to move across the beach, is -- one, is that that maximizes the shipping capability. The second is, while certainly ships are very susceptible to

anti-ship missile systems that can be employed even by very unsophisticated enemies, is those unsophisticated enemies also have various MANPADS, and those sorts of things. I mean, if you think about, you know, a "Black Hawk Down" sort of thing is, if you're trying to do everything by aviation, to have an enemy out there with, you know, with even very crude anti-aircraft capability -- which is widely dispersed across the world, is you make that a very, very difficult and very, very challenging thing to do.

To not just insert those folks, but now, because you don't own the intervening terrain, all of their resupply now needs to be done by aviation means --

Q But, sir -- but --

(Cross talk)

COL. MOORE: -- (inaudible) -- can cause you problems and enemy can cause you problems.

Q But, you've got the LCACs, and you got the smaller versions. You can put -- you know the numbers better than I do, you can put an Abrams, you can put LAVs, you can put awful lot of Marines on an LCAC, which are already on the back of your amphibians anyway.

COL. MOORE: But, again, if you have any enemy presence of any spectrum, whether we're talking about, you know, teenagers with AK-47s, or a determined, organized enemy with, you know, with a number of ground combat systems, that LCAC is an extraordinarily vulnerable target. Even the replacement to the LCAC will continue to be an extraordinarily vulnerable asset. And somebody's got to come out and -- (inaudible) -- that Abrams tank, or that LAV or that Bradley Fighting vehicle while people are shooting at him.

Whereas if the tank, the LAV, the artillery pieces are in the third and fourth wave, after a self-deploying amphibian that's got the ability to dismount infantry to support those infantry as they clear that area, so that you then can land those echelons that are more vulnerable to ground fire -- but that absolutely provide the long-term punch that you need for fighting against, certainly, any sort of organized enemy where you're going to want to have heavier armor, artillery, and those kind of things, you have -- this is, this is a key piece in the middle.

To just say Ospreys and then LCACs is -- you don't, you're not doing joint forcible entry if you have to, in some very administrative way, beach a craft; have guys run out; -- (inaudible) -- stuff; round- guide it off into the sand; and then send it into the fight. Because if there's anybody on that beach they're going to be able to pretty successfully hold that up. Q And you don't -- and you don't think that Cobras or Hueys' overhead close air support would suppress them enough, then?

COL. MOORE: You know, I think that's a part of it. But, I think, you know, again, there's a MANPAD threat out there, and keeping Hueys and Cobras -- (inaudible) -- ; and then, again, it gets, "now I need the Hueys and Cobras to protect your inserted folks; I now need them to patrol the beach area" is, that's a lot of shipping that doesn't exist right now, that's got to carry aviation assets. And, you know, so that's what it gets into the cost-effectiveness.

Could you do it? Yeah. Is the nation, under the constrained assets that we have, willing to buy 10, 15, 20, 30 more amphib ships that are capable of launching and recovering helicopters and rearming them? And, can 20, 30, 40, 50 more LCACs, or LCAC replacements than we currently have programmed, to carry all this stuff to the beach because it's not self-deploying, is, from a cost-effectiveness standpoint, having a couple of waves of a self-deploying asset saves you a lot of money in shipbuilding, in connectors, to get stuff ship-to-shore.

Q Okay, thank you, sir.

COL. MOORE: Yes, sir.

LT. CRAGG: Let's go over to Beth.

Beth?

Q Sir, thank you so much for being with us this morning. This is Beth Wilson, from Homefront in Focus.

I have a question that's a little different from the rest. I'm actually a supporter of the EVF -- EFV. But, I'm also located just north of Camp Pendleton and I wanted to know if I could see one in action?

COL. MOORE: Sure. We could -- we could probably set up the opportunity. We maintain what's called the Amphibious Vehicle Test Branch out there at Camp Pendleton, and so typically we have anywhere from two to six prototypes that are out there at any one time, going through various testing.

And so, from time to time, we are able to, you know, to bring folks from the media, or, you know, Congress, or OSD, that are interested in, you know, getting some first-hand experience with the vehicle. So, we can certainly set that up.

Q Oh, I would really appreciate that. Thank you, sir.

I just wanted to know the time frame. We've seen such slippage in so many contracts recently. Where are you in contract delivery at this point?

COL. MOORE: Right. We actually got through our critical design review about eight weeks later than we had originally planned. Right now, though, is, we were able to manage -- because we did sort of a rolling design release with the build, where we could start building the hulls, and getting a lot of that fabrication out of the way while we were doing the detailed design on many components -- so we were able to manage that through some concurrency of activity.

So, right now we're -- we think that, from a building the vehicle standpoint, today it looks like we're about five to six weeks behind in what General Dynamics had originally planned as their schedule.

But, they're hopeful that, now that they've got that released, and they can work with, you know, their various vendors on expedited lead times, is that we may end up being able to get most of that back.

The way that my program is structured, and the way that we work the baselines with that is, because we know that it's sort of impossible to, years in the future, (call out ?) you know, an exact day, or even necessarily --

Q Right.

COL. MOORE: -- an exact month that you're going to be done with something, is, I'm given a six-month window, a threshold date and an objective date, to try to hit for delivering, you know, the capability to the next stage of development.

And so right now, out of the six-month window that I was given back in 2007, coming through the Nunn-McCurdy certification, is, I'm estimating that I've got about four months or so left of, you know, of time that I can slip a little bit and still meet, essentially, my contract with DOD for when I have to deliver the capability.

Q Super. Thank you.

And I'll just speak with Lt. Cragg about arranging a time to get down to Pendleton.

COL. MOORE: Okay.

Q Thank you so much, sir.

LT. CRAGG: (Look forward to that ?), Beth.

Let's go to Jason.

Jason, you're next.

Q Hi. This is Jason Sigger, with the Armchair Generalist.

Sir, the question -- last year the GAO released a report on the efficiencies of the assessments of major weapons programs. And the EFV was reported to have had a program unit cost increase of about 170 percent, where the per-unit cost is about \$22 million. With your attempts to revise the program and get it under control, do you foresee the unit cost of the vehicle dropping more towards its original estimates of \$8-9 million a copy?

COL. MOORE: Yeah. No. I mean, we're not going to get there.

Here's -- and, you got to keep in context the fact that, you know, GAO reports are good, and they're -- and, for the most part, my own belief is, most of the time they're at least reasonably accurate. What they absolutely aren't is timely.

You know, I mean, next year there may be a GAO report out on, you know, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Q (Laughs.)

COL. MOORE: Is, all of that unit-cost growth, and the other stuff that they had talked about, was all of the stuff that led to the Nunn-McCurdy breach.

So, the rebaselined program already took into account. And PAUC number of \$22 million that you cited, is, the reason that that number has grown substantially over time is, one is, because the program's been stretched several times by funding actions, and all those sorts of things, is -- you know,

obviously, inflation just drives the cost of things up over time, and when it, you know, when you spend a decade or so, you know, getting to production, you see a lot of inflationary costs.

The other part of it is, that PAUC number accounts for all of the research/development, test and evaluation money that's gone into the program, plus the actual cost of buying the vehicles, and then divides that total dollar value by the numbers bought. So, when the Marine Corps cut the buy in half, and the fact that I needed another, you know, three-plus years of development time, you know, that's what caused those numbers to, sort of, go wildly out of whack back in 2006, 2007.

And the things that I most closely monitor, because it's the easiest to effect in the short-term, you know, in time, as you're -- as you're moving through it, is the average production unit cost of the vehicle, which right now the threshold and objective for that is for the vehicle to cost -- this is actual money to buy it, you know, like if you went to buy a car --

Q Right.

COL. MOORE: -- is between \$3.5 and \$15.5 million, roughly.

Some of that -- about \$2-2.5 million of that is costs that the government's sort of completely responsible for. It's the government equipment that I furnished to the contractor. Things like the radios that are already bought under a different, you know, government program; the gun, and some stuff like that, that I buy and just give to the contractor to install in the vehicle.

You know, that's part of the cost of the vehicle, but the contractor really has no control over how much that costs. There's about \$13 million that the contractor actually controls based upon how he manages his vendors; you know, the material choices that he makes, all of his make-and-buy decisions; and, you know, just production efficiencies.

What we've actually seen is that, going from the Preliminary Design Review about a year ago, to the Critical Design Review in December, is the contractor has actually been able to reduce -- you know, by a little bit, I mean, about \$110,000 a copy. The contractor-controlled costs that will go into the average cost of a vehicle, I would expect that, you know, he may be able to -- that they'll be able to make some other changes like that.

But, one of the things is this vehicle has a very long production run anticipated for it, and so we're sort of buying it at a very low economic order quantity. And one of the ways in which, you know, you can obviously get things cheaper is if you buy more of them in a lot. And the lots are so small that it's hard to get any sort of dramatic cost changes.

Q Great. Thank you.

If I can ask just one more quick question. Just historically speaking, when's the last time the Marine Corps had a forced entry operation on a beach? It seems like it's been a little while since we've seen an amphib invasion, or am I just not reading my history books?

COL. MOORE: Well, you know, I tell you, I think sometimes, you know, folks tend to think Tarawa, Iwo Jima, Inchon. And, you know, probably the days of the nation being mobilized for a world war that requires those, you know,

huge -- you know, a Normandy invasion, an Inchon, a Tarawa or an Iwo Jima, I would agree those are probably, could still happen, but they're probably not the most likely scenarios.

(Today is the ?) -- the Marine Corps has been involved -- between 1982 and 2006, the Marine Corps' been involved in 102 amphibious operations, what the military -- by military definition, what are doctrinally amphibious operations. Six of those fall under the definition of an amphibious assault. Four of them have been amphibious withdrawals, where we've actually put forces ashore to withdraw, you know, other forces, or folks.

Three demonstrations -- and that's probably the most notable one, is, you know, one of our biggest demonstrations is, if you recall, during Desert Shield, Desert Storm, the Marine Corps parked a Marine Expeditionary brigade off the coast of Iraq, which managed to tie down nine Iraqi divisions against that beachhead to prevent the Marines from landing, which is part of what enabled, you know, the joint Army and Marine Corps land forces that were in Saudi Arabia, to conduct the enveloping movement that ended up destroying a good chunk of Saddam Hussein's army, is because we managed to, with one small brigade, tie down nine divisions. So, you know, that, I think, is a pretty, you know, dramatic thing. And, you know, with this capability -- and I think that's the important thing, the threat of employing the capability is oftentimes more effective, and serves a larger strategic and operational purpose in the employment of it, but you have to have the credible threat of being able to do it.

You know, now the bulk, obviously, of those 102 operations have been things like noncombatant -- (inaudible) -- by getting noncombatants out of an area. If you think about the times that we went into Liberia in the mid-'90s to secure the embassy, to allow U.S. and other third-country nationals to be able to safely evacuate down from a war zone; if you think about the couple of times that we've been into Lebanon over the last couple of decades; if you think about the landings we made in Grenada back in the early '80s. So, there's been a number of them.

Clearly, nobody would pretend that any of those rise to the level of Normandy, Inchon, Tarawa, Iwo Jima, or Okinawa, but they still have been, you know, important exercises of national power that have facilitated some national strategic gain.

Q That's a great point. Thank you, sir.

LT. CRAGG: And let's just going around the horn one more time.

Do any of the other bloggers have any other follow-up questions -- David, Andrew, Beth?

Q Yeah, I do.

LT. CRAGG: Please go ahead.

Q David, you got one? Or should -- okay.

Colonel, Andrew Lubin again.

And just so people know where I'm coming from on this, my son (is senior enlisted ?) -- (inaudible) --. So, I'm not against any program. I'm for

a program that's going to keep our Marines safe and kill more of them than they do of us. Can we switch gears, flatly, about the land capability. This program's replacing the Amtrac(s). I spent a lot of time up in Fallujah and Ramadi with the trackers (sp). Can this do what the Amtrac(s) has done?

COL. MOORE: Yeah.

As far as the basic land mobility of the vehicle, it's equal with the AAV, equal with the M1 tank. That was really my requirement, was to do the high water speed capability the AAV doesn't have, but to at least do no worse than the AAV and the other tracked mechanized vehicles that would be employed in a joint or combined force inland.

So, if you think about the types of terrain that we can go over, all that sort of thing -- pretty equal. In a few areas, you know, a little bit better than the AAV, not too much to brag about. The biggest thing for sustained land combat that we bring is -- you know, to the extent you're familiar with the AAV, 50 caliber machine gun and a Mark 19 grenade launcher. You know, every Marine loves a 50 caliber machine gun but, you know, it's not a very good sighting system; it's an unstabilized platform; it's an area weapon.

And the Mark 19, because of its arcing trajectory, you know, tends to not be a terribly accurate weapon, is, the EFV has a 30 millimeter cannon that's capable of firing an armor-piercing round that can defeat most of the other light-to-medium armor systems that exist out there in the world, out to 2,000 meters; and has the ability to fire AG multipurpose, and a programmable air burst round, you know, with very precise accuracy that can defeat all sorts of material targets; bad guys that are in the open; and light fortified positions; trucks; can go through most other light material, buildings and those sorts of things.

And the precision part of that is incredibly important, I think, for the types of conflicts that we find ourselves in, because collateral damage from area weapons, or weapons that just aren't precisely controlled, can end up causing us, as a force, more problems than, you know, than letting the bad guys get away. So, being able to, with a very few rounds, precisely reach out and touch exactly who you want to kill, but not kill anybody else, is a very important thing where we are leaps ahead of the AAV.

Q Do you have the hatches on the top, where the Marines can stand up and fire out, as necessary?

COL. MOORE: Yeah. If you're at all familiar with the LAV that has, sort of, much smaller hatches because of their scouting reconnaissance mission for the four to six Marines that they have in the back there --

Q Right. COL. MOORE: -- it's not the big, long hatches like we have in the AAV, because those were really put on the AAV for the cargo aspect of the AAV. I have much shorter hatches, but you can get four to six guys up through those hatches, you know, to be able to provide sort of, you know, the (closer-than-eyeballs ?) in security around the -- around the vehicle, but still provide them a certain amount of protection and the mobility of not being dismounted.

Q Great. Thank you -- sir.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, I want to make sure if Beth, or Jason, or David -- I know someone might have logged off, do they have, do you guys have any other questions?

Q This is Beth. Thank you, sir. I'm good. I look forward to the trip to Pendleton. Thank you.

COL. MOORE: You bet.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, well, with that, sir, I'm going to turn it back to you. If you'd like to end with any closing thoughts?

COL. MOORE: Okay, I got one thing. My guys here, that were sort of backstopping me, said that -- I think I misspoke when I was talking about the contractor-controlled average unit procurement costs, is the cost requirement is between \$13.5 million and \$15.5 million. I think I may have misspoke. So, if anybody wrote that down, those are the real accurate numbers, and I apologize for screwing that up the first time are.

I'll tell you, I appreciate the opportunity to talk with you all. The things that, I guess, to sum up, is just, you know, this is -- the Marine Corps has a unique charter under the law to do amphibious force development, the procurement to support amphibious forces to fulfill the joint forcible entry capability that the nation has for our warfighting forces.

This vehicle is one of a couple of critical asset that enable an overall joint forcible entry that includes a surface component, an aviation component, and a fires component to successfully get a force ashore where there's no friendly nation that we can -- can stop in next door. And that the program itself, despite some of its problems back in 2005, 2006, is on a very solid technical footing for delivering the capability that the Marine Corps requires -- you know, on time with the schedule that we've got.

So, those are the couple of things that I'd like for you all to take away from this.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, with that, sir, I want to thank you for attending today's Bloggers Roundtable, and thank you for the bloggers that attended as well. Just a note to everyone on the line, today's program will be available on DefenseLink on the bloggers page; and also a story, based on today's call; the transcript; and the audio file.

Again, thank you, sir, and thanks to the bloggers on the line who attended. This concludes today's event.

Q Thank you.

Q Thank you.

END.