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Presenter: Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. James Conway

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DoD News Briefing with Gen. Conway from the Pentagon

MODERATOR: Well, thank you for coming this morning. It's my pleasure to introduce a guy that doesn't need any introduction, really, but General James Conway, commandant of the Marine Corps, who is back to discuss with you some of the things that he's been seeing throughout the past several months.

Since he was last here he's not only been to Central Asia, but also to China and the Middle East, and has a good perspective on the operations out there and what he's seeing. He's going to kind of give you a brief overview and then he's going to take some of your questions.

So, General, thanks for coming by, and --

GEN. CONWAY: Okay. Folks, I did prepare just a rough opening statement, and I'll read it to you, and we'll be happy to take your questions.

Good morning, first of all, and thanks for the time - for the time of day that you're going to spend with us. It's been awhile since I've last had the opportunity to meet with you all, but I sincerely believe that it's important to keep the dialogue open with the media, especially those of you who cover the Armed Forces, as it's good for our Corps and good for the nation.

Earlier this month, sergeant major of the Marine Corps and I visited Marines serving in Spain, Afghanistan and Ghana, West Africa. Whether they were manning post one at the American embassy in Madrid, or manhandling the Taliban in Afghanistan, I was repeatedly impressed with the quality and professionalism the Marines showed as we continued our travels.

Some of those serving in Iraq still say there aren't a whole heck of a lot bad guys there left to fight. Driving conspicuously through the once mean streets of Falluja and Ramadi, our vehicles seemed to go largely unnoticed, as there was much construction and rebuilding taking place. The change in the Al Anbar province is real and perceptible. Anbar remains a dangerous place, but the ever-growing ability of Iraqi security forces continues to move us closer to seeing Iraqi control of the province, which, by the way, was once projected to be the last to turn for the better. Now we believe the province could turn over to Iraqi control in just a few days.

There is also change under way in Afghanistan. The Taliban are growing bolder in their tactics and clearly doing their best to exploit security gaps where they exist. American Marines there have taken the fight to an enemy that believes he can wait us out and exact revenge on members of communities who have cooperated with coalition forces.