

More Marines, more coalition forces will allow us to go to those places and force the bad guys into the mountains. If you look at how Algeria defeated its insurgency, that was their method; that was their tactic, was to drive these guys into the mountains. And you know what? Sooner or later, they get hungry. They start to starve to death. And they're much more willing to listen to terms.

So that's a potential for us, there. There's not a lot of things that grow on those rocky mountainsides in Afghanistan.

With regard to the second part of your question, I wouldn't say that it's a strategic win, necessarily, for the Marine Corps. I would say that our requirement right now in Iraq is much more about nation- building than it is fighting. And quite frankly, young Marines join our corps to go fight for their country.

Now, they're serving an absolute purpose in Iraq. They are -- they are doing a very good job of this nation- building business, but it's our view that if there is a stiffer fight going someplace else in a much more expeditionary environment where the Marine Air-Ground Task Force really seems to have a true and enduring value, then that's where we need to be.

Q General, on the -- your Title X responsibilities here in force levels, I remember you recounting this a few months ago, when it was announced that the 24th MEU and the 2/7 were going there. And you raised this issue of stress on the force, that you could do it through October but you're really pushing it after that. We're getting extended now to November. Now -- it sounds like, though, that you are happy to see the draw-down in Anbar move to a build-up in southern Afghanistan as opposed to an increase in dwell time or something along those lines.

GEN. CONWAY: Yeah, well --

Q Can you talk about why your concerns about dwell time and stress on the force have not continued over the last few months?

GEN. CONWAY: Well, it has continued. And we talk with the families and our promise to our families and our Marines is to try to do something about it. Our object is one to two. It's the same as the Army objective. That gives us seven months deployed and 14 months home. And in fact, my standing pretty firm on that red line recognizes that we've got to turn that worm somehow to get headed back the other direction. So that remains a paramount concern.

But I do think this: I think that a battalion of Marines in Afghanistan count for more than a battalion of Marines in Iraq, if you will, just in terms of the impact that they can have. So I think in the end if we see a draw-down and eventually a complete removal of Marines in Iraq -- we've got 25,000, 26,000 Marines there -- we can do with a lesser number of Marines in Afghanistan, I believe at this point, and have the same effect. So that we can -- if we could get to a magic number of about 15,000 Marines deployed worldwide, anywhere, we're at one to two. So that's the thought process, is it's --

Q You're not talking about a one for one, sent from Iraq to Afghanistan.

GEN. CONWAY: No, not --

Q You're talking about a draw-down in Anbar but perhaps not equal uptake in Afghanistan.

GEN. CONWAY: Both. Maybe initially a one-for-one just in order to be able to make sure we don't do more than we're capable of. But in the end, it would not be a complete transfer, I don't believe. I don't know that we need that kind of force structure in Afghanistan, but, you know, time will determine that.

Q General, are further tour extensions for the forces already in Afghanistan completely off the table, or is that something you would consider if you need to sustain the gains that have occurred?

GEN. CONWAY: Well, you know, the secretary has said that he wants those units home by the end of November, and I think we're on a timeline that will do that. That, to me, is fair. The one extension has already been, you