

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY
THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

ON

MARINE CORPS READINESS

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Chair, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, I am thankful for the opportunity to report on the state of Marine Corps Readiness. We have accomplished much over the last five years to modernize the Marine Corps and improve its warfighting readiness. We are moving in the right direction but cannot slow down. In fact, we must go faster. The work of this subcommittee is crucial to the continued success and readiness of the Marine Corps – its warfighting forces, its individual Marines, and its families. I look forward to working with each Member over the coming year to ensure the continued readiness of your Marine Corps.

CMC Priorities in Support of Readiness

The Marine Corps' readiness is maintained through clear guidance, engaged and accountable leadership at every echelon, a ruthless focus on readiness, and on-time, predictable and adequate funding. The Commandant provided that clear guidance upon assuming office, which remains unchanged. Those priorities are: 1) Balance Crisis Response with Modernization Efforts; 2) Naval Integration and Organic Mobility; 3) Quality of Life; 4) Recruit, Make and Retain Marines; and 5) Maximize the Potential of our Reserves. These priorities inform all Marine Corps planning, including our budget. More importantly, they give us clear guidance and intent on what is necessary to ensure maximum warfighting readiness. Finally, the Commandant's priorities account for readiness across the board, from force design and warfighting to individual and unit training, personnel readiness, and our back-to-back unmodified audit opinions.

Warfighting Readiness

The character of warfare has changed in a few short years, and the four disparate threat state actors, China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea, are colluding into a single, complex, and adaptive global threat system. At the tactical level, we are witnessing the effects of the mass proliferation of drones and littoral sea denial in the Black Sea. This creates a twofold challenge of making maneuver increasingly challenging while demonstrating the criticality of winning the reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance contest. We are also relearning past lessons regarding the need for robust offensive and defensive electronic warfare capabilities across all tactical formations. At the operational level, we are witnessing the importance of possessing and maintaining a depth of magazine sufficient for protracted operations, and the rise of space as a critical warfare domain.

Warfighting Readiness Assessment

Your Marine Corps possesses the trained and ready forces necessary for crisis or contingency as identified by Operational Plans. We are ready to fulfill our 10 U.S. Code § 8063 requirements; ready to support our allies and partners in the East and South China Seas; ready to support the Republic of Korea on the Korean Peninsula; ready to combat Iran or its proxies globally; ready to fulfill our commitments in the High North alongside Norway, Sweden, and Finland; ready with the operational reach necessary to strike violent extremists; ready to support sea denial efforts; ready to seize and defend key maritime terrain; ready to support operations at southern border; and, ready to respond to crises in this hemisphere or anywhere else.

The Marine Corps balances readiness with two primary and competing metrics: sourcing day-to-day missions and modernizing to meet the demands of the future operating environment. Through modernization, our units are equipped with more advanced equipment and supplies, receive more robust individualized training, and participate in more collective training—much of which is force-on-force.

Marine aviation continues to see improvements in readiness as we retire older airframes, accelerate the acquisition of the CH-53K and fifth-generation F-35B/C, and fully employ our unmanned MQ-9 surveillance aircraft. Improvements in aircraft readiness from Fiscal Year (FY)19 to FY24 have been realized thanks to support provided by this Subcommittee and the herculean efforts of our Marine aviation maintainers.

We are innovating and adapting from lessons learned from the modern battlefields of Ukraine, Gaza, Lebanon, Red Sea, and our own exercises. We are innovating through experimentation with autonomous, low-profile technology to help us maneuver and sustain in a distributed environment. We are also innovating through the integration of automation and artificial intelligence in our fires and sustainment systems to respond faster and more accurately to the demands of the modern battlefield. But while technology has changed, the foundational elements of warfighting and lethality have not. We remain the

world's most elite fighting force with the most proficient combined arms teams and best small unit leaders. The extraordinary quality of our Marines remains our principal advantage.

Marine Forces Reserve

As the Marine Corps modernizes and operational tempo increases, the Marine Corps Reserve Component remains an integral part of the total Force. Marine Forces Reserve (MARFORRES) has increasingly activated units to provide operational relief to the Active Component (AC). In FY24, support to the AC nearly doubled over FY23 with 600 activations supporting joint force commanders in Southwest Asia, South America, Africa, Europe, and the Pacific. In FY25, activations will more than double FY24 levels, with nearly 1,500 Reserve Marines, approximately 4% of the Reserve Component (RC), activating to support Global Force Management commitments. Looking beyond FY24 and FY25, MARFORRES expects to continue to activate large combat formations such as infantry battalions, artillery batteries, and aviation squadrons, while simultaneously providing critical enabler support such as civil affairs experts, foreign advisors, and countless other specialty skill sets unique to the RC.

Force Design

Force Design is the Marine Corps' enduring strategic initiative for pursuing new capabilities and concepts to ensure we remain the premier force. The Marine Corps has made significant progress in our formations, equipment, and concepts through the pillars of modernization, talent management, training and education, and logistics.

Marine Littoral Regiment: The foundation of our Force Design progress is our Marine Littoral Regiments (MLRs). MLRs are specialized units designed to fight and win in a modern peer fight with dispersed, task-organized operations that integrate advanced command, control, communications, computers, combat systems, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities. These regiments enhance the ability to rapidly find, fix, track, target, engage, and assess threats, and are capable of maritime domain awareness and sea denial operations in support of maritime, joint, and combined operations.

The first MLR to stand up, 3d MLR, has achieved Initial Operational Capability with the activation of all its subordinate units. They are equipped with modern capabilities – both for sensing and lethality – including our first six Navy-Marine Corps Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System launchers. In 2024, the 3d MLR participated in exercises such as BALIKATAN, Archipelagic Coastal Defense, and Marine Aviation Support Activity in the Philippines, validating its capacity to operate in dispersed maritime environments alongside allies. Similarly, 12th MLR, based in Okinawa, Japan, has activated its Littoral Logistics Battalion and plans to establish its Littoral Anti-Air Battalion and Littoral Combat Team by the end of FY25. 12th MLR has engaged in joint and bilateral exercises, bolstering deterrence and readiness in the Indo-Pacific region as it develops interoperability with the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force.

Joint / Coalition Kill Webs and Combined Joint All Domain Command and Control (CJADC2): To support CJADC2, the Marine Corps is investing in advanced sensors to contribute to joint kill webs. Key examples of this include investments in electronic sensing capabilities provided by Electronic Remote Sensors, TPS-80 radar enhancements.

The service utilizes joint programs and initiatives that support decision advantage. Those unique emerging Marine Corps systems are “born joint” at the outset to ensure that the service is integrated at the joint force level. This includes electronic warfare systems feeding Spectrum Services Framework to provide electronic sensing to the joint community to support decision advantage; the use of Maven Smart System to Find, Fix and Track targets; and the fielding and integration of the Family of Integrated Targeting Cells in conjunction with the Navy and Army to support fusion and a target quality Common Operational Picture.

Talent Management

FY25 Retention Campaign: To date the AC Retention Campaign has already exceeded expectations, achieving the aggregate goal of 13,970 reenlistments seven months earlier than the previous fiscal year. To date, more than 14,842 First Term Alignment Plan (FTAP) and Subsequent Term Alignment Plan (STAP) Marines have committed to continue their service, accomplishing 106% of the original mission. This success builds on the momentum of FY24 and reflects a deliberate shift toward earlier engagement

and career alignment. The RC Retention Campaign has been equally successful with 2,450 FTAP and STAP Marines continuing service while achieving 99% of the obligation goal so far in FY25.

Commandant's Retention Program (CRP): The Commandant' Retention Program (CRP) identifies the most competitive Marines and offers them an opportunity to stay a Marine via a pre-approved reenlistment. FY25 AC CRP yielded over 1,450 reenlistments, accounting for nearly 20% of the overall FTAP mission for FY25. The RC CRP secured 238 reenlistments and drilling obligations from the first-year cohort, reaching 102% of our goal. The CRP remains critical in incentivizing the reenlistment of our highest-performing Marines.

Talent Marketplace: This year, we released the Talent Management Engagement Platform (TMEP), an internally developed digital prototype to arm Marines with more accessible and transparent information. Since May of 2024, TMEP has been tested by approximately 12,000 enlisted Marines across 10 Military Occupational Specialties (MOS). The platform has been released to AC Marines in the ranks of second lieutenant through colonel, consisting of approximately 16,000 Marines.

Training and Education

Enhanced Infantry Training / Infantry Marine Course (IMC): The Marine Corps continues to improve initial training through Enhanced Infantry Training / IMC. More than 15,000 Marines have attended IMC since it was expanded in October 2021. We anticipate another 4,000 Marines to complete the training in 2025. Unlike those who went before, these Marines will join their initial units with skills commensurate with those who have been in the unit for years and, as a result, these IMC graduates will be more easily integrated into our infantry battalions and more ready for the rigors of combat on any future battlefield.

Close Combat Lethality: In addition to producing more combat-capable Marines, and based upon lessons learned from ongoing conflicts, we overhauled our Marine Corps Combat Marksmanship Program to include our Annual Rifle Qualification (ARQ). The new ARQ incorporates shooting positions that are more realistic in combat into an efficient course of fire that provides for engagements at ranges between 15 and 500 yards and based on lethality zones. As a result, the ARQ target and course of fire reinforce the importance of marksmanship lethality.

We have also expanded our data and modeling-enhanced Infantry Marksmanship Training Program (IMTP) across the fleet. IMTP has been developed and validated to increase lethality by analyzing speed, precision, executive control, adaptability, and risk exposure metrics. IMTP has increased lethality across these metrics by 99% compared to traditional marksmanship training.

Project Tripoli: Project Tripoli is the Marine Corps' initiative to provide a Live, Virtual, and Constructive Training Environment (LVC-TE) that is persistent, globally available, all-domain, and all-echelon. We are currently in the execution phase and have fielded Force-on-Force Training System Next which enables live force-on-force training with after action assessment support in a virtual and constructive domain, enhancing our formations all-domain training readiness. These LVC-TE capabilities recently supported the 3d MLR Certification Exercise and are planned for use during FY25 exercises STEEL KNIGHT, Balikatan, and Service Level Training Exercise 2-25.

Project Triumph: Project Triumph is the Marine Corps effort to transform training and education to an outcomes-based, student-centric, information age learning model to generate cognitively agile Marines who can make bold and consequential decisions in challenging environments. This transformation will take place through three lines of effort (LOEs): 1) Policy Development and Outcomes-Based Learning; 2) Instructors as Learning Leaders; and 3) Technological Integration of all aggregate Marine Corps learning systems. These LOEs have influenced the IMC to implement active, student-centered experimental learning techniques with emphasis on problem solving and the reinforcement of sound decision-making skills with a bias for action.

Project Trident: Project Trident is the Marine Corps effort to enable the combat readiness of warfighting organizations by providing individual and unit-level training to build and close kill webs in a contested maritime environment at all echelons and in all domains. We are doing this through two LOEs: 1)

enhanced courseware, and 2) practical application in training exercises. Courseware initiatives include littoral targeting and fires, naval expeditionary operations planning, and advanced fires and effects. Practical application non-kinetic effects in a peer threat environment include the integration of Marine space, cyber, and air components to Service Level Training Exercise 2-24 to provide realistic and real-time non-kinetic effects through signals intelligence, electronic warfare, and cyber security threats.

Marine Corps Attack Drone Team: The Marine Corps recently created a Marine Corps Attack Drone Team (MCADT), whose mission is to support the rapid acceleration and scaling of the lessons learned from armed first-person view (FPV) drone use in modern combat. This initiative will ensure our Corps continues to enhance our readiness and lethality to hunt down and destroy our nation's adversaries. The MCADT's first competition is this July in Florida, where the Marines will battle in the first ever U.S. Military Drone Crucible Championship. After July, the MCADT will next focus on lessons learned from that competition and develop efforts to provide intermediate and advanced armed FPV drone skills to the Fleet Marine Force and Total Force via the Competition-in-Arms Program.

Logistics Modernization

Contested Logistics: The ability to move personnel, equipment, and supplies in a contested environment is just as critical as the ability to find, fix, and destroy adversary formations. To ensure persistence in such environments, the Marine Corps is shifting from traditional supply chains to a more resilient sustainment web. Marine Forces Pacific's operational concept - designed to deter conflict and, if necessary, fight and win - is reliant upon the integration of key warfighting functions: maneuver, mobility, and sustainment. This integration will be accomplished through the Global Positioning Network, which includes the establishment of terrestrial supply points in strategic locations and already established maritime prepositioning forces. Initiatives are also underway to enhance base resiliency, ensuring the ability to operate under attack, and rapidly recover as a warfighting platform.

Supply and Distribution Modernization: Experimentation and modernization of multi-domain distribution capabilities are progressing rapidly. Across the Fleet Marine Force, 58 Tactical Resupply Unmanned Aircraft Systems and Unmanned Logistics Systems - Air have been fielded for testing. Additionally, 504 Ultra-Light Tactical Vehicles have been delivered to infantry battalions and Marine Forces Special Operations Command. The Marine Corps is also collaborating with the Navy, Army, and allied and partner nations to integrate stern landing vessels and autonomous low-profile vessels to enhance littoral distribution. Additive manufacturing initiatives are also advancing, including the deployment of the portable expeditionary fabrication lab and Tactical Fabrication, both of which are now fielded to Combat Logistics Battalions and Maintenance Battalions.

Medical Modernization: Medical support is also evolving to meet expeditionary requirements, with a focus on smaller, more mobile Damage Control (initial stabilization of critically injured patients), Resuscitation, and Surgical teams, as well as Patient Holding and long-range enroute care capabilities.

Training Readiness

In support of generating greater warfighting readiness in our Marine Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs), the Marine Corps has executed an annual series of force-on-force training exercises for several years. The training objectives of those warfighting exercises are: 1) employ the principles of maneuver warfare; 2) apply adaptive decision-making; 3) conduct assured command and control; 4) execute the targeting cycle; 5) conduct logistics in a contested and austere environment; and 6) win in a multidomain operational environment. These are accomplished via an operational environment that seeks to approximate combat operations' friction, disorder, and uncertainty, and test decision-making against a live, thinking, adaptive enemy.

Training Exercises and Readiness

Our mission is as clear as it is vital: we forge Marines into organizations and units designed to fight across all domains. Marines have been multi-domain since there were only two - land and sea. We have adapted to the changes that technology has brought to warfare. We test the mettle of our Marines by

forcing them to fight at a disadvantage across domains we have historically maintained the advantage – especially the air.

Throughout the last year, the Marine Corps continued to execute bilateral and multi-lateral exercises throughout the globe to build and maintain the readiness of our formations. Nowhere is our commitment to working with allies and partners more apparent than in the priority Indo-Pacific theater. I Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) and III MEF forces operate from Darwin, Australia, through the Pacific Islands, to Southeast Asia and into Northeast Asia. They continue to conduct coordinated rehearsals, operations, and activities that demonstrate deterrence to would be aggressors trying to disrupt the status quo while we provide assurance to friends, allies, and partners who have stood with us for decades. We have practiced full naval integration in our exercises and experimentation through Task Force 76/3, a joint task force with 3d Marine Expeditionary Brigade and Expeditionary Strike Group SEVEN. We have also enhanced joint and combined partnerships and interoperability through exercises like Yama Sakura 87, a trilateral exercise involving III MEF the U.S. Army, Australian Defence Force, and Japan Ground Self Defense Force. The exercise spanned three nations, six locations, and over 7,000 service members, demonstrating the value of the Marine Corps' permanent presence in Japan and our ability to effectively integrate with joint, Australian, and Japanese forces. Our presence and partnerships translate into a rapid response capability that has proven invaluable to our partners in the Pacific during times of crisis. Our ability to respond quickly and decisively to natural disasters ranging from devastating typhoons in the Philippines to volcanic eruptions in Papua New Guinea remind the region that the United States is the partner of choice. Projecting power responsibly and constructively in the Indo-Pacific has allowed this vibrant region to thrive and has made the United States safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Reserve Training Readiness

MARFORRES maintains individual readiness through monthly and annual drill periods, and unit readiness through participation in Service Level Training Exercises such as the Integrated Training Exercise (ITX) at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center in Twentynine Palms. ITX is an annual capstone training event for our Reserve Forces. ITX builds readiness by providing Selected Marine Corps Reserve units an opportunity to focus exclusively on offensive and defensive operations, their core mission essential tasks. At ITX, MARFORRES employs an entire MAGTF, over 4,500 Marines and Sailors. It also prepares the MARFORRES Staff for the complexities of a mass mobilization scenario.

MARFORRES has also participated in Exercise UNITAS for the last three years. UNITAS offers a large-scale training venue for our Reserve units to form and train as a MAGTF alongside their AC counterparts from I and II MEF. Through Exercise UNITAS, our Reserve Forces gain experience operating under a combatant commander and integrating with our partner nations' amphibious forces. This year, MARFORRES will also participate in joint and multilateral exercises, Arctic Edge 25, and Red Flag Alaska 25-2 and 25-3. These exercises, conducted in Alaska, will provide critical all-domain C2, fires, and air control training while exercising homeland defense tasks and preparing Marines to operate in the arctic environment.

Safety

Improving the safety of our Marines is critical to maintaining Marine Corps readiness. As such, the Commandant of the Marine Corps has implemented several key initiatives designed to enhance safety and readiness across the fleet. Included in these initiatives are the establishment of a Force Preservation Directorate and a Local Area Assessment program. The Force Preservation Directorate is led by a General Officer. The goal of the program is to align and optimize current behavioral assessment programs to better serve the Marines and their commands. The Local Area Assessment is a program in partnership with the Naval Safety Command and tailored for Marine Corps aviation. Its purpose is to identify potential safety hazards, facilitate their prompt recognition, and ensure that necessary support and resources are allocated. In addition to these initiatives, we are using data to improve the safety of our tactical vehicle operators to assist commanders in reducing risk by enhancing driver proficiency across all levels of tactical vehicle operations. These efforts and our continuous assessment of our safety programs will ensure our weapon systems, equipment, and units are safe-to-operate and operated-safely – making your Marine Corps inherently more lethal.

Personnel Readiness

The cornerstone of Marine Corps readiness is the individual Marine – how we recruit them, invest in them, and retain them.

Recruiting

Our success in maintaining an elite force begins with recruiting young Americans with the values, character, mental aptitude, physical and psychological fitness, and desire to earn the title "Marine." We must collectively ensure the health of our All-Volunteer Force and the strategic advantage it provides – talent, capability, and warfighting excellence. The Marine Corps remains committed to providing resources and sending only our best Marines to be recruiters. Our refusal to lower standards sustains our brand as tough and smart professionals to the American public and continues to attract those who aspire to prove themselves worthy of earning the title. The Marine Corps once again made its Total Force recruiting mission in FY24 and remains on track to obtain an even larger mission this FY while growing the start pool and maintaining quality standards.

The quality of Marine recruits remains exceptionally high and exceeds every measurable Department of Defense metric. Last FY, we achieved over 64% CAT I-IIIAs mental group, the top scoring candidates, compared to the DoD standard of 60%. We assessed no CAT IV individuals. In addition, the Marine Corps saw marked improvement in overall MOS alignment. Lastly, we have almost tripled the previous year's prior service accessions, which brought experienced Marines with critical skills directly back to the operating forces.

Regardless of our success, we must remain mindful of the long game: these impressive gains face constant headwinds and are susceptible to disruption. Recruiting will continue to be a challenge into the future. Reinforcing and realigning the recruiting force has helped; however, to exploit success, we will continue to require robust resourcing for advertising and continued reinforcement of the Military Entrance Processing Command. Additionally, we thank Congress for its continued focus on and support for recruiter access to high schools and colleges. The FY24 National Defense Authorization Act provided additional timeliness guidelines for recruiter access to directory lists. The single biggest reason we hear from young people for not joining the Corps is that they simply were not aware of the potential opportunities we offer. Maintaining reliable and expanded access to high schools and student directories remains a top priority.

Suicide Prevention

Suicide rates in the United States have reached their highest levels since 1941. Efforts to prevent these deaths include implementing recommendations from the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee. For prevention we have invested in the data-informed leadership tool called the Command Individual Risk and Resiliency Assessment System, and the Marine Corps Training and Total Fitness (MCTF) program. MCTF is not solely focused on suicide prevention – but instead is a comprehensive approach to integrating physical, mental, social, and spiritual fitness programs to promote the combat readiness of our Marines. These programs employ a leadership out-front approach along four preventative lines of efforts: 1) prevention and skill-building (e.g., leadership and ethics courses with the Lejeune Leadership Institute); 2) feedback from the force via application of data and research (e.g., lethal means survey); 3) small unit leader communication (e.g., Warfighter Mental Readiness Playbook); and 4) collaboration with key support resources (e.g., preventative and proactive medical care; body and mind physical and mental training and education; and financial management counseling/guidance).

Marine and Family Readiness - Childcare

Providing quality childcare for Marines and their families remains an important readiness enabler, with 16 Marine Corps installations having Child Development Centers (CDCs). At MCB Camp Pendleton, a \$44.1M CDC is under construction to add 250 childcare spaces, expected to eliminate waitlists for Category 1 personnel. A \$105.2M CDC was awarded at NSA Andersen AFB, Guam, to support 276 children amid the Corps' buildup. Additionally, a \$37.7M CDC was completed at MCAS Miramar in November 2023, adding 412 new childcare spaces. These efforts aim to reduce childcare shortages and support Marine Corps families while improving service member readiness. Still waitlists remain. Lengthy waitlists are primarily due to shortage of qualified workers, high turnover, less competitive pay, lengthy hiring process, and seasonal permanent change of station (PCS) fluctuations.

Infrastructure Readiness

Barracks 2030

The Commandant and I are committed to providing Marines with barracks they deserve and can be proud of. However, the obstacles to overcome are enormous – and decades in the making. As the Commandant often says – we became Marines to do hard things, and remediating nearly two decades of under-investment and deferred maintenance in a fraction of the time is one of those hard things.

The Barracks 2030 initiative is focused on three specific LOEs: Management, Material, and Modernization. The initiative improves management of the barracks with professional barracks and building managers in the facilities and dedicated service teams to provide 24-hour maintenance support. The Marine Corps will modernize its barracks with in-stride room repairs, consolidation of Marines into its best facilities, demolition of poor-quality ones, renovations to modernize existing buildings, and construction of new facilities. Finally, the service will update materiel by replacing furniture on regular intervals and providing upgraded locks in the barracks. Since its inception, the Marine Corps has conducted wall-to-wall inspections to first and foremost ensure Marines are living in environmentally safe conditions, and to inform necessary corrective actions.

Right-Sizing Inventory: While it may appear counterintuitive to identify increased demolition (physical destruction) as a requirement for improved quality of life, it is necessary to both generate resources and improve the living conditions of our Marines. Our current inventory of 658 barracks includes approximately 69 that need to be demolished. Doing so would free the service from the costs associated with heating, cooling, cleaning, and repairing old, poor-quality facilities and would generate approximately \$50 million per year in savings and cost avoidance.

Clean Audit Opinion

Every investment and expenditure that has been discussed in this statement has been guaranteed by our achievement of an unmodified audit for two straight years. As we invest in new platforms, barracks, and training, it is our responsibility as good stewards of taxpayer funds to continue to prove that when the Corps is provided a taxpayer dollar, we can show exactly where and how it has been invested. For an unprecedented second year in a row, the Marine Corps achieved an unmodified – or “clean” – audit opinion. We have been comprehensively tested by Independent Public Accountants to validate budgetary balances and records and account for physical assets at installations and bases across the globe. This process included counting military equipment, buildings, structures, supplies, and ammunition held by the Marine Corps and our DoD partners. The audit’s favorable opinion was only possible through the support and hard work of dedicated Marines and our civilian Marines.

By better leveraging technology – by automating our system interfaces and streamlining the functionality of our systems and related business processes – we believe that we can get to a place where we more efficiently and effectively maintain our clean opinion. These clean audits also provide evidence of what we have believed for a long time – when Congress provides the Marine Corps a dollar – we invest it wisely, with transparency and accountability, and in a manner that allows us to tell you how those investments generate readiness. With that in mind, we request this subcommittee’s support in addressing the service readiness degraders listed below.

Readiness Degradors

Amphibious Warship Availability

The Commandant has been clear on the requirement for a 3.0 ARG/MEU capability which means a consistent, simultaneous deployments of a 3-ship ARG/MEU from the east coast, west coast, and forward deployed naval forces in Okinawa Japan. Reduced Amphibious Warship (AWS) availability not only prevents us from meeting this requirement but has also significantly impacted the Marine Corps’ ability to achieve or sustain proficiency in core amphibious skills. In 2023 and 2024, AWS operational availability delayed or limited the service’s ability to train to amphibious standards and deploy Marine Expeditionary Units embarked on Amphibious Readiness Groups in all three MEFs.

Since June 2024, AWS has averaged 46% available (roughly 14 of 32) for Navy and Marine Corps training and operations (fully mission capable / mission capable / partially mission capable). Our LHA/LHD in-reporting average (ships not on timeline in a planned maintenance availability) is 55%, and the

LPD/LSD average is 47%. Of note, currently 9 of 9 ships in planned maintenance have been delayed/extended in availability, LHA/LHD planned maintenance availabilities are extended 342 days on average. If AWS availability shortfalls are not resolved, each element of the MAGTF will experience further degradation in its ability to train to and meet operational requirements in support of Combatant Commanders. Further, the atrophy of amphibious operations experience at all ranks could jeopardize safety in future training and increase risk in the event of conflict.

We recognize that increasing current AWS availability will not be accomplished overnight; however, addressing this issue will require a mix of timely and predictable funding and maintenance planning and strategies to replace aging AWS platforms with new construction. Sustaining select mid-life upgrades and service life extensions, along with multi-ship procurement contracts for amphibious ships to signal industry to invest in its workforce and create stability in public and private shipyards for maintenance periods.

Organic Littoral Mobility

Mobility is critical to enable the dispersion and persistence of stand-in forces. MLRs' littoral mobility will be essential to maneuver through the Indo-Pacific's complex geography. We recognized this capability gap early as we developed concepts for the Indo-Pacific and designed a purpose-built Medium Landing Ship (LSM) as a critical element of Force Design. Separate and complementary to AWS, the LSM is a maneuver asset and, as a shore-to-shore vessel, is unique and vital to expeditionary littoral mobility. LSMs facilitate campaigning and can support diverse missions. Key missions include operational intra-theater mobility, tactical maneuvers in archipelagic environments, logistics support, and maritime domain awareness. The FY25 President's Budget request included funding for the first LSM, but FY25 enactment does not procure a ship. Any delays past FY25 shifts delivery beyond FY29.

Procurement of LSM is late to need. The LSM procurement timeline introduces a significant gap in maneuver capabilities for the priority theater. To address this gap, in October 2023, a naval resources and requirements review board (R3B) endorsed an initial littoral maneuver bridging solution (LMBS) for experimentation and operational use until the LSM becomes available to support a minimum of one MLR in FY34. This initial LMBS was deemed unexecutable due to Military Sealift Command shortfalls in their civilian mariners. The Department of the Navy is exploring options to mitigate the gap. These options include commercially available roll-on and roll-off chartered vessels (first arriving in Okinawa around 1 June 2025), six LCU 2000s available for purchase or charter, hybrid-crewed T-EPFs, experimentation with the leased Stern Landing Vessel-2 (in partnership with Australia), and funding additional steaming days for Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) ships. Without a timely LMBS solution, critical experimentation and operational capabilities of our MLRs are significantly impacted in the priority theater.

Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA) Training Readiness

The Marine Corps has provided over \$2 billion (replacement cost about \$5 billion) in equipment and munitions to the Armed Forces of Ukraine via PDA. Replacement and reimbursement for these inventory losses are needed to rebuild the depth of magazine needed to gain and maintain lost proficiency. Though some funds have been reimbursed through PDA replenishment funds, the defense industrial base (DIB) faces significant challenges in meeting production demands for replenishment. New procurement lead times delay replenishment, as existing programmed deliveries take priority. To mitigate impacts, the Marine Corps has adjusted training allocations and inventory management. However, continued high-demand support may require the service to accept further risks to either training readiness or strategic readiness.

MV-22B

The MV-22 fleet has been seriously impacted by fleet groundings. As the backbone of Marine Corps combat assault transport capability, MV-22B squadrons have conducted 109 operational deployments and flown over 630,000 flight hours since 2007. The MV-22B flies approximately twice as many flight hours per year as any other Marine Corps rotary-wing aircraft. The MV-22 maintains a safety record on par with other Marine Aviation assets. From FY20 to the present, there were a total of six Class A MV-22 mishaps within 212,114.5 total flight hours, resulting in a Class A mishap rate of 2.82 per 100,000 flight hours. The MV-22 10-year (2015-2025) Class A mishap rate is 3.04. Both are lower than the Marine Corps 10-year average of 3.17.

We remain committed to enhancing both the safety and performance of the aircraft by improving the proprotor gearbox (PRGB). Improvements in critical gears and bearings are being addressed with a more refined Triple-Melt steel. Additional sensors are also being installed in critical areas to provide better data to forecast necessary maintenance to prevent part failure. Finally, a redesigned PRGB Input Quill Assembly (IQA) will reduce the incidence of the wear-out mode observed in previous IQA failures that led to aircraft Hard Clutch Engagement occurrences.

While solutions to material challenges are in place, pilot and aircrew production and training challenges induced by the groundings are also impacting the fleet. To mitigate the impacts of the groundings on pilot and crew chief production and to prioritize contract utilization (fleet health) over time to train, the Marine Corps worked with Chief of Naval Air Training to pause intermediate tiltrotor and advanced tiltrotor pipelines from February through August 2024. Marine Medium Tiltrotor Training Squadron 204 (VMMT-204) tiltrotor pilot production deliveries are not projected to return to steady state pre-grounding levels until Q1 FY26. VMMT-204 can surge MV-22 crew chief production through FY25 based on available aircraft. This capability will deplete the backlog of 42 crew chief students that developed during the grounding with a return to steady state crew chief production in Q1 FY26.

Flight Hours

While the material readiness of our aircraft routinely receives the most attention, sustaining individual pilot readiness is equally important. In FY19, we executed 218,299 total flight hours in support of the Fleet Marine Forces as part of our overall flight hours program. Those hours cost a total of \$2.44 billion and supported the readiness of 3,161 total pilots. In FY24, we executed 200,647 in total flight hours. Those hours cost \$3.7 billion and supported the readiness of 3,312 total pilots. AC pilots averaged 14.1 hours per month in FY24. This is a decrease from FY19 when pilots averaged 17.2 hours per month. The major driver in the reduction was the prolonged MV-22 grounding. Sustaining and increasing individual pilot readiness at current levels while remediating readiness lost within the MV-22 community will require additional resources in the Marine Corps' request.

TACAIR Pilot Training

Low readiness of the T-6 trainer aircraft is the primary challenge in tactical aviation production, with material readiness consistently hovering at 75%. The primary issue is the lack of parts in the supply system which impacts the entire DoD, as the T-6 serves as the foundational trainer for all fixed-wing and rotary-wing aviators. Naval Air Systems Command and the Chief of Naval Air Training (CNATRA), in coordination with the U.S. Air Force Joint Program Office, are working to address these challenges by improving the supply chain and enhancing contractor performance under the Contractor Operated and Maintained Base Supply contract.

Conclusion

The investments we make today in support of our Marines, Sailors, and their collective warfighting readiness will reverberate through the rest of this decisive decade. There is only one thing that our Nation cannot give to our military – more time. We must make an integrated set of policy and budgetary choices that creates a trajectory toward a Joint Force capable of overcoming the key military problems, as outlined in the Strategic Readiness Assessment. I am grateful for the support that this body has provided our Corps' Force Design initiatives. Every dollar invested allows us to realize our modernization strategy and build a more ready force—one capable of satisfying the demands of the Joint Warfighting Concept and the expectations of our Combatant Commanders.

The Marine Corps will be ready to respond to any crisis or contingency in the future, just as we have in the past. However, we must use the time we have remaining to ensure that we have the right capabilities at the right time and in the right place. The Marine Corps will continue to do its part by maximizing every dollar invested so that legislators can be confident that we are deliberate with the finite resources provided to us. We will also remain the best stewards of the taxpayers' funds through transparency, accountability, and discipline – all evident in our second consecutive successful audit opinion. Through the audit's success, we demonstrated that the funds provided to us by Congress will be used effectively to support our core mission: organize, train, and equip Marines.

The Commandant and I remain committed to ensuring that the Marine Corps remains our Nation's force-in-readiness. With your support, we will ensure your Marines are provided world-class training,

improved quality of life, and enabled with the capabilities required to fight our Nation's battles anywhere, anytime. I thank the Subcommittee for your continued advocacy and support of the Naval Services and the Marine Corps. Semper Fidelis.