

NOT PUBLIC UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

**STATEMENT
OF
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DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR MANPOWER & RESERVE AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
BEFORE THE
MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
CONCERNING
PERSONNEL POSTURE
ON
16 APRIL 2026**

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INTRODUCTION

Chairman Fallon, Ranking Member Houlahan, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, it is my privilege to testify on the personnel readiness of the United States Marine Corps. In my months leading Manpower & Reserve Affairs (M&RA), I have been profoundly impressed by our team's dedication to our most vital asset: our Marines and their families. M&RA's mission is foundational to the Corps: to recruit our nation's best, retain our most talented, and ensure the force is ready for any challenge.

I thank this Subcommittee for the authorities and resources that underpin our success. Together, we will ensure your Marine Corps remains the nation's premier expeditionary force – ready, relevant, lethal, capable, and victorious.

RECRUITING

The Marine Corps met its recruiting goals for the last fiscal year and is on track to do so again, while exceeding Department of War quality benchmarks. Service in our Corps continues to attract those who seek a challenge and aspire to earn the title, Marine.

Our Delayed Entry Program, a critical pipeline of motivated individuals, is being successfully rebuilt to historic levels after its strategic use during the COVID-19 pandemic. This achievement is a direct result of strong leadership, an expanded and empowered recruiting force, and our continued commitment to assigning our very best Marines to this vital mission. These recruiters are the backbone of our success, and the Commandant is unwavering in his commitment to providing them with the resources they need.

Our advertising program is essential for reaching high-quality prospective Marines. Robust and sustained advertising funding is a direct investment in readiness, yielding higher-quality recruits and lower first-term attrition. We thank Congress for the continued support of

our recruiters; it ensures our nation's youth are aware of the opportunities for, and benefits of, service to their country.

RETENTION

The Marine Corps is retaining Marines with the right skills and talent at a historic pace. We met our retention goals in FY25 and will do so again this fiscal year. Our non-end-of-active-service attrition remains exceptionally low, reinforcing a simple truth: once an individual becomes a Marine, they want to *stay* Marine. This deep-seated desire to remain in our ranks is a testament to our sacred bond of Honor, Courage, and Commitment.

Initiatives like the Commandant's Retention Program and our new Enlisted Career Designation Program, which offers top-performing Marines the opportunity to re-enlist for the duration of their careers, are proving effective. These efforts are focused on a single goal: increasing the number of trained, experienced, and deployable Marines to sustain combat readiness.

COMPENSATION

Competitive compensation is foundational to sustaining the all-volunteer force and ensuring the high quality of life our Marines and their families deserve. We are grateful for Congress' commitment to this area. Currently, an enlisted Marine's regular military compensation places them in the top 17 percent of their demographic, junior enlisted are in the top 10 percent, and officers are generally in the top 25 percent. This is before factoring in healthcare, education, retirement and other benefits.

Special and incentive pay are critical tools that allow us to retain talent in high-demand fields like aviation, cyber, and intelligence. We thank the Subcommittee for these flexible authorities. I am also exceptionally proud to report that we execute payments to our Marines with 99.7 percent accuracy and timeliness—a standard of excellence in any sector, public or private.

Our strategic focus on the Indo-Pacific demands an equal focus on the quality of life for our personnel stationed there. The new authority to ship a second vehicle overseas will have a positive, practical impact on family readiness. It supports a spouse who needs to get to work, a child who needs to get to school, and the overall quality of life of the family. However, challenges remain. Simply executing assignment orders to this area is often difficult. The well-being of our overseas military and civilian personnel requires our continued and shared attention and your support of the FY 2027 President's Budget.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Warfighting capability is built on a foundation of trust that the institution will provide stability for our Marines and their families. Marine and family support is a major line of effort for achieving combat readiness.

Marine Corps Total Fitness (MCTF)

Our combat effectiveness is derived from the readiness of the individual Marine. MCTF is a leadership philosophy and lifestyle framework that builds and sustains peak performance. It ensures Marines are mentally, physically, socially, and spiritually prepared for combat. This strategy targets harmful behaviors through a strengths-based, upstream approach to prevention. To operationalize MCTF, we are executing the Warrior Athlete Readiness and Resilience (WARR) initiative, which modernizes our fitness infrastructure to enhance combat performance, lethality, and survivability. We have established 20 initial WARR centers and our strategic plan is to upgrade our entire inventory of fitness facilities. By adopting best practices from elite athletics, these centers will maximize training throughput and serve as hubs for a network of interdisciplinary experts, extending support through mobile and virtual platforms. With your continued support, we can scale MCTF across the force, ensuring our Marines remain lethal and ready.

Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Management

We are enhancing stability for families by issuing PCS orders earlier, providing more time to plan for housing, childcare, and school enrollment. While we must always balance the needs of the individual Marine and the service, we will continue to seek flexibility where possible. Marines with exceptional family members will continue to receive coordination prior to their assignment to ensure their destination has care that meets their needs. We recently established a dual-military coordinator who serves as a resource for our dual-military families to assist in understanding policy, requesting co-location after marriage, streamlining the separation waiver process, and ensuring proper arbitration of assignment issues. The dual-military coordinator maintains relationships with assignment personnel of the other services to facilitate inter-service assignments. We will not separate dual-military couples except in extraordinary circumstances or at their request.

Another notable success story is our special duty assignment (SDA) volunteer program. This program allows Marines to volunteer for an SDA and receive monetary incentives and duty station preference upon successful completion of their tour. During the FY26 SDA campaign, 82 percent of our SDA billets were filled with volunteers. This has improved morale and given Marines more control over their career paths and future duty assignments, all while reducing attrition.

Childcare

High-quality childcare is a critical component of family stability and retention. Our child development centers currently serve more than 40,000 children. We have waitlists for approximately 650 children, primarily at Camp Pendleton, Hawaii, Quantico, Beaufort/Parris Island, and Camp Lejeune/New River, but the waitlist numbers are declining. Waitlists are driven primarily by workforce shortages; a challenge shared nationwide in the childcare industry.

We are actively addressing staffing challenges through targeted workforce initiatives, to include a non-competitive childcare employee transfer program. More than 40 percent of our direct care childcare employees are Marine spouses, which contributes to the annual turnover rate due to PCS. The non-competitive transfer program enables these employees to seamlessly transfer from their current position to one at a different installation. This initiative has strengthened workforce retention, allowing us to retain more than 160 spouse employees we may have otherwise lost.

We also offer childcare fee assistance for eligible Marines assigned to installations with significant waitlists or stationed far from a DoW childcare facility. Utilization of fee assistance has steadily increased over the years, both in the number of children served and in community provider participation. In FY 2025, approximately 2,500 children were served in the fee assistance program at a total cost of \$12.7 million.

Spouse Employment

Our Marine families are integral to our readiness, and stable spouse employment directly affects retention and financial security. The Family Member Employment Assistance Program strengthens career continuity for spouses by providing employment referrals, career assessments, coaching, job search guidance, support for portable and remote career pathways, and education center referrals.

To help reduce PCS-related disruption, we released a relocation tool that allows spouses working within Marine Corps Community Services to identify positions at their next duty station in advance of their move, facilitating direct transfers and preserving career continuity. Additionally, we reimburse eligible Marine spouses up to \$1,000 for state licensure, certification, and relocation-related business costs when moving across state lines. To date, 511 spouses have

been supported through this reimbursement program. We appreciate Congress' recent expansion of this authority.

RESERVES

As a vital component of a fully integrated Total Force, the Marine Corps Reserve delivers responsive, joint capable, combat-ready units and individuals to the Naval and Joint Force. It fulfills warfighting requirements for contingencies and crisis response across the entire competition continuum. Aligned with ongoing Force Design modernization, the reserves continue to adapt to meet contemporary and evolving warfighting challenges. By actively contributing to the National Defense Strategy, the reserves enhance operational effectiveness by participating in strategic exercises, fostering critical partnerships, and supporting operational commands. Resources are prioritized to deliver robust and immersive training opportunities, cultivating a ready and resilient force, and fostering a profound sense of purpose.

It is important to remember that many reservists can make a retention decision every day; only 50 percent have a contractual obligation with the Marine Corps. Bonus programs support the retention of experienced drilling reservists and incentivize direct affiliation of Marines transitioning from the active component. Bonuses also enable ambitious yet attainable reserve recruiting missions throughout the fiscal year. Together, these recruiting and retention initiatives populate reserve formations with high-performing Marines, stabilizing unit readiness and contributing to the readiness and lethality of your Marine Corps.

CIVILIAN WORKFORCE

Our Marine Corps civilian workforce is lean with only one civilian for every ten Marines, compared to 1:2 for DoW as a whole. They exemplify our core values and embrace esprit de corps, teamwork, and pride. Our civilians serve alongside our Marines throughout the world, providing support at every level. Most of our civilian employees work outside the Washington,

DC, beltway at 57 bases, stations, depots, and installations around the world. Fifty-nine percent of our civilians are veterans who have chosen to continue to serve our Nation; of those, 23 percent are disabled veterans. Many others are military spouses. In fulfilling our shared mission, our civilian workforce provides indispensable support that directly impacts our Marines, cares for our families, and honors our wounded, ill, and injured. They stand shoulder-to-shoulder with us, keeping the welfare of our Marine Corps family at the forefront of their efforts.

MARINE CORPS EFFICIENCY

Last fiscal year, the Marine Corps earned a clean audit for the third time. This milestone reflects a deep commitment to financial stewardship and accountability. A clean audit means Marine Corps financial records are materially accurate, complete, and compliant with federal regulations and supports our Marines and their mission. This financial discipline is inseparable from combat readiness—every dollar properly managed strengthens our lethality and the trust placed in us by the American people.

CONCLUSION

Our people are our highest priority. We honor this commitment by recruiting, developing, and retaining elite warriors and by providing them with the best quality of life our mission allows. Every initiative we undertake is measured by its contribution to readiness and lethality. Our ultimate measure of success is a Marine Corps that is more lethal in combat, ensuring we can fulfill our mandate to be "most ready when the Nation is least ready," today and in the future.

Semper Fidelis.