

1 NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY
2 THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
3 SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS
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12 STATEMENT OF
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15 GENERAL CHRISTOPHER J. MAHONEY
16 ASSISTANT COMMANDANT OF THE U.S. MARINE CORPS
17

18
19 BEFORE THE
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22 HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
23 SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS
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25 ON
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27 MILITARY READINESS AND THE FY2025 BUDGET REQUEST
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29 APRIL 30, 2024
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49 Chair, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I am thankful
50 for the opportunity to report on Marine Corps Readiness. While much has been
51 accomplished over the last five years to modernize the Marine Corps and improve its
52 warfighting readiness, there is still much work to be done – especially with our
53 infrastructure readiness. We must accelerate our modernization efforts in accordance
54 with the demands of the Combatant Commanders, who have told us, “Go faster; deliver
55 faster.”

56

57 **CMC Priorities**

58 As noted by the Commandant in his August 2023 White Letter and reinforced in his
59 Fragmentary Order 01-2024 “Maintain the Momentum,” the Marine Corps priorities are:
60 1) Balance Crisis Response with Modernization Efforts, 2) Naval Integration and
61 Organic Mobility, 3) Quality of Life, 4) Recruit, Make, and Retain Marines, and 5)
62 Maximize the Potential of our Reserves. These priorities inform our budget and focus
63 our collective efforts to ensure maximum warfighting readiness across the spectrum of
64 conflict and competition continuum.

65

66 **Warfighting Readiness**

67 We possess the fully trained and ready forces necessary for any crisis or contingency
68 as identified by approved Operational Plans (OPLANs). Perhaps more importantly, we
69 are ready for the unknown and the uncertain future ahead. Using the current battlefields
70 in Ukraine and Gaza and maritime competitions in the Red Sea and South China Sea
71 as benchmarks – we are ready. We are ready to fulfill our title 10 requirements; ready to
72 support our Allies and partners globally; ready to support sea denial efforts; ready to
73 seize and defend key maritime terrain; and ready to respond to crises in every theater.
74 By any measure, our units have better material readiness, more modern equipment,
75 and more robust individualized and collective training, including significantly increased
76 force-on-force training opportunities. Specifically, our combat arms units are equipped
77 with modern capabilities – both for sensing and lethality – far superior to past
78 formations. Yet while many things have changed, our foundational elements have not.

79 We remain the world's most elite infantry with the most proficient non-commissioned
80 officer and officer leadership.

81

82 **Ready for What: Campaigning & Warfighting**

83 As our Commandant has repeatedly and rightfully asserted, the Marine Corps is, first
84 and foremost, a warfighting organization. We exist to fight and win our country's battles.
85 The character of war may change, but its essence never will – it is the violent struggle
86 between two irreconcilable wills. That struggle is where Marines thrive. We ask for
87 nothing more than the chance to be First to Fight. Should our adversaries choose to
88 fight, Marines will be ready with the best training and modern tools necessary to defeat
89 and destroy them in combat. To effectively execute our mission, the importance of
90 consistent and predictable Operations and Maintenance funding of ground and aviation
91 training, maintenance, safety, and readiness cannot be overstated.

92

93 **MAGTF Readiness**

94 As a result of the continued acceleration of key Force Design and organic mobility
95 programs, our units' readiness continues to improve – and will only continue to do so as
96 more modern capabilities are fielded over the FYDP and more units consistently engage
97 in force-on-force training. In FY25, we are requesting resources to procure another 674
98 JLTVs, 80 ACVs, 17 F-35B/C, 19 CH-53K, and 13 MADIS, which will both maintain our
99 modernization momentum, while simultaneously enhancing our crisis response
100 capabilities. We also seek to add dozens of tactical tomahawks, naval strike missiles,
101 and long-range anti-ship missiles as we create the operationally suitable magazine
102 depth for our forward deployed forces. In addition, we are making major investments in
103 tactical communication modernization and wideband satellite communications, both of
104 which will further enhance warfighting readiness. Based on lessons learned from
105 Ukraine and other battlefields, we continue to focus on developing capabilities to
106 support electro-magnetic spectrum operations (EMSO), which will assist Marines to
107 sense, attack, and defend against electromagnetic threats.

108

109 Unmodified Audit Opinion. As we invest in new platforms, barracks, and training, it is
110 our responsibility as good stewards of taxpayer funds to continue to prove that when the
111 Corps is provided a taxpayer dollar, we can show exactly where and how it has been
112 invested – a responsibility we take very seriously. Following a rigorous two-year audit,
113 the Marine Corps achieved an unmodified audit opinion, the best possible outcome –
114 and the first time in the Department of Defense’s history that any service has received
115 an unmodified audit opinion. These results demonstrate how seriously the Marine Corps
116 takes its stewardship of taxpayer funds and our ability to account for and put to best use
117 every dollar trusted to the service. The Marine Corps worked with Independent Public
118 Accountants to validate budgetary balances and records and to audit physical assets at
119 installations and bases across the globe. These actions included counting military
120 equipment, buildings, structures, supplies, and ammunition held by the Marine Corps
121 and our DoD Partners. The audit’s favorable opinion was only possible through the
122 support and hard work of numerous dedicated Marines, civilian Marines, and many
123 other partners across DoD. Nonetheless, we will not rest on our laurels. The audit report
124 pointed out some areas for improvement, and we will use these recommendations to
125 make our fiscal practices even better and continue to achieve favorable audit results
126 going forward.

127

128 Pacific Deterrence Initiative. Several years ago, Congress had the foresight to develop
129 the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) in support of accelerating changes across the
130 Pacific necessary to sustain deterrence and enhance strategic competition. While the
131 benefits to INDOPACOM are well-understood, the program also significantly enhances
132 Marine Corps warfighting readiness. Specifically, the initiative contributes to the
133 modernization and readiness of both I and III Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEFs) – to
134 include the MEU and Unit Deployment Program (UDP), as well as expand our Marine
135 Rotational Force efforts in Darwin and in Southeast Asia. PDI funds also support
136 MILCON aboard Guam. These efforts will generate readiness and ensure that III MEF,
137 our main effort, remains our forward-deployed, “Fight Now” force for INDOPACOM.

138

139 Marine Aviation. While there have been substantial readiness improvements across the
140 force, nowhere have these improvements been more visible than in Marine aviation.
141 Across all type/model/series of aircraft in our inventory (with one exception, the F-35B
142 whose MC readiness rate only decreased 2.3% between FY19 and FY23) our readiness
143 levels increased – an achievement that would not have been possible without the
144 resources and support provided by this subcommittee, and the herculean efforts of our
145 Marine aviation mechanics and maintenance crews. We anticipate further
146 improvements to aviation readiness as we retire older airframes and accelerate
147 acquisition of fifth generation F-35B/C and CH-53K.

148

149 F-35B/C. We have taken delivery of 142 F-35B and 22 F-35C aircraft, and maintain five
150 operational sites – MCAS Beaufort, MCAS Cherry Point, MCAS Yuma, MCAS Miramar,
151 and MCAS Iwakuni. Our F-35B/C aircraft create a competitive warfighting advantage in
152 every theater globally.

153

154 MV-22B. The MV-22B is the workhorse of the MAGTF – we have been flying it in
155 combat since 2007. In the last decade alone, Marine MV-22 pilots have accrued over
156 446,000 flight hours. We trust the aircraft and the Marines who fly them and maintain
157 them. The MV-22 provides the force with both the operational reach and flexibility
158 necessary to compete across the vast distances in the Indo-Pacific. Its capabilities are
159 so unique and sought-after that Combatant Commander demands for the aircraft far
160 exceed the Marine Corps' ability to source them. We are focused on improving
161 readiness, decreasing costs, and enhancing capabilities to ensure the aircraft continues
162 through the 2050s.

163

164 CH-53K. As HMH-461, the first heavy lift (HMH) Kilo squadron, has shown, the CH-53K
165 provides an unmatched operational heavy lift assault support capability, interoperability,
166 survivability, reliability, and maintainability in a distributed maritime and expeditionary
167 environment. To date, the Marine Corps has received 14 aircraft, and will have 17 total
168 aircraft by the end of this calendar year. In FY25 the Marine Corps will begin to

169 transition its next HMM squadron, and we anticipate deploying the CH-53K for the first
170 time in 2026.

171
172 Operations and Maintenance Accounts. Our active and reserve operation and
173 maintenance (O&M) funding request supports training, multinational exercises,
174 recruiting and advertising, and maintenance, and for FY25, our request is approximately
175 \$17B – or roughly the same as last year. With inflation and increasing demands on the
176 Marine Corps, the Marine Corps has balanced difficult choices on what accounts to
177 fund. With our available funds, the Marine Corps will posture itself via enhanced
178 multilateral exercises that will strengthen alliances and partnerships. O&M further funds
179 ground depot maintenance at 98% to generate maximum ground readiness.

180
181 Flight Hours & Readiness. While the material readiness of our aircraft routinely receives
182 the most attention, sustaining individual pilot readiness is equally important. In FY19, we
183 executed 218,299 in total flight hours in support of the FMF as part of our overall Flying
184 Hours Program (FHP). Those hours cost a total of \$2.44B and supported the readiness
185 of 3,161 total pilots. In FY23, we executed 213,534 in total flight hours in support of the
186 FMF as part of our overall FHP. Those hours cost a total of \$3.4B and supported 3,047
187 pilots. At present, our FHP is funded to 91.1% of the MARFORs' executable
188 requirement at \$4.2B. FHP funds aviation fuel, contract maintenance, and flying hours
189 maintenance for F-35, F/A-18, MV-22, CH-53, KC-130J, AH/UH-1, and UAS. Aviation
190 Depot Maintenance is funded to 91%, which supports depot level aircraft and engine
191 overhauls at fleet readiness centers across the United States. And, Aviation Logistics,
192 primarily for F-35B/C maintenance actions and flying hour requirements, is funded to
193 95% to achieve sustainment goals produced by the Joint Program Office. This funding
194 also covers critical maintenance performance for KC-130J and MV-22 platforms
195 essential for Force Design priorities.

196 197 **Littoral Mobility**

198 Mobility is a critical requirement to enable the dispersion and persistence of stand-in
199 forces. We recognized this capability gap early as we developed concepts for the Indo-

200 Pacific and designed a purpose-built Medium Landing Ship (LSM) as a critical enabler
201 for this theater. Separate and complementary to AWS, the LSM is a maneuver asset
202 and, as a shore-to-shore vessel, is unique and critical to expeditionary littoral mobility.
203 LSMs facilitate campaigning and can support diverse missions including operational
204 intra-theater mobility, tactical maneuver in archipelagic environments, logistics support,
205 and maritime domain awareness. The FY25 President's Budget request includes
206 funding for the first LSM and additional resources for seven additional LSMs across the
207 FYDP. In FY27, the FY25 Shipbuilding Plan reflects the steady procurement rate of two
208 LSMs per year.

209

210 **Readiness Degradations**

211 Amphibious Warship Availability. Reduced AWS availability diminishes Navy and
212 Marine Corps interoperability and integrated proficiency, which can result in a less
213 capable force and increased probability for mishaps. Reduced AWS availability also
214 creates gaps in our training cycles as well as limits a consistent ARG/MEU forward
215 posture for sustained naval campaigning with allies and partners in support of integrated
216 deterrence. High operational demand, age, deteriorating materiel condition, and lack of
217 skilled labor continue to exacerbate AWS readiness challenges. Unexpected issues
218 discovered during maintenance periods further expand the periods of non-availability.
219 These factors limit the persistent ARG/MEU presence that enables the Combatant
220 Commanders to have a ready crisis response force capable of moving hundreds of
221 miles, during the day and throughout the night, without concerns of access, basing, and
222 overflight. Addressing this issue will require a mix of timely and predictable funding to
223 replace aging AWS platforms with new construction. Amphibious warship procurement,
224 like other Navy shipbuilding programs, can benefit from multi-ship procurement
225 contracts that stabilize the industrial base and provide significant cost savings for the
226 Department. New ship acquisition using authorities already granted by Congress yield
227 potentially significant cost and schedule benefits, accelerates delivery of amphibious
228 warfighting capability to the Fleet, and provides critical stability and predictability to the
229 shipbuilding industrial base as long as industry produces those ships on schedule and
230 on budget. Sustaining these procurement strategies will not only signal to industry to

231 invest in their work force, but it will also create stability in public and private shipyards
232 for maintenance periods.

233
234 Marine Corps Tactical Fixed-Wing Aircraft (TACAIR) Pilot Shortfalls. At the end of 2023,
235 we were only able to fulfill 47% of our TACAIR pilot requirement (267 of a target
236 inventory of 567). We are making some progress, but not enough – and certainly not
237 quickly enough. Aviation retention requires a holistic approach, and we cannot rely
238 solely on monetary bonuses. Pilot retention is also influenced by flight hour availability,
239 training opportunities, and other non-monetary factors. We are exploring both monetary
240 and non-monetary incentives, including improving aircraft readiness rates and flying
241 hours, and increasing production pipeline throughput.

242
243 **Training Readiness**
244 In support of generating greater warfighting readiness in the FMF with our MAGTFs, the
245 Marine Corps has executed an annual series of force-on-force training exercises for the
246 past several years. The training objectives of those warfighting exercises are: 1) employ
247 the principles of maneuver warfare, 2) apply adaptive decision-making, 3) conduct
248 assured command and control, 4) execute rapid targeting cycles, 5) conduct logistics in
249 a contested and austere environment, and 6) win in a multi-domain operational
250 environment. These objectives are accomplished via an operational environment that
251 seeks to approximate the friction, disorder, and uncertainty of combat operations; test
252 decision-making processes against a live, thinking, adaptive enemy; and enable
253 command and control of distributed elements in a communications-degraded
254 environment.

255
256 Our goal is simple: we seek to develop organizations, units, and Marines not just ready
257 to survive in a peer-to-peer competition, but to thrive and dominate in all domains. One
258 of the ways we do this is by forcing units to fight at a disadvantage, and to grow
259 comfortable with it. We have been conducting these types of large-scale, force-on-force
260 exercises well before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Additional funding has
261 been essential to improving our warfighting readiness via enhanced training. The same

262 trend holds for our Live Virtual Constructive Training Environment (LVC-TE)
263 modernization. Our efforts to accelerate development of this critical capability will
264 ensure this joint-capable, all-domain training environment is delivered at the speed of
265 relevance.

266
267 Large Scale Exercise 2023 (LSE 2023). In the summer of 2023, the Navy and Marine
268 Corps team conducted our most expansive and stressing live and virtual training to-date
269 in LSE 23 using Carrier Strike Group 2, anchored on the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower
270 (CVN-69), to help us better understand how we would fight the next war at sea. We
271 were able to connect six carrier strike groups (two live, four virtual), six amphibious
272 ready groups (two live, four virtual), and an additional 25 live and 50 virtual ships. To
273 add to the realism of the event, exercise planners added 25,000 sailors and Marines to
274 the exercise with very little additional preparation outside of normal training. All these
275 factors made both the learning and findings more authentic. LSE 23 required the use of
276 nine Maritime Operations Centers. Testing warfighting concepts and challenging
277 ourselves at this scale are exactly what is required to generate the warfighting
278 readiness we need in the future against a peer threat.

279
280 Amphibious Combat Vehicle Training. As we incorporate the ACV into our training and
281 operations, we deliberately planned for surf-zone water-operations training to begin only
282 after our vehicle operators successfully completed the highest-level of training to safely
283 operate in those conditions. This methodical approach ensures that as we transition
284 from the tracked-vehicle procedures to wheeled vehicle operations, we achieve the
285 highest level of training for our Marines and Sailors. As a result of this additional
286 training, we are pleased to report that our ACV Transition Training Unit (TTU) has
287 conducted over 350 surf-zone transits to-date with zero incidents or mishaps. 162 ACV
288 operators have been certified by the TTU with another 185 Marines pending
289 certification.

290
291 **Safety**

292 Safety is a critical component to Marine Corps Readiness and a key element of our
293 warrior culture. It is a key indicator of our units' discipline. We do not view safe practices
294 as a restriction or obstacle to realistic or challenging training; rather, they are a
295 requirement. Many mishaps are preventable when we comply with established
296 procedures and take action to stop unsafe acts before they occur. Our safety culture is
297 strong, but it must be doggedly maintained and actively inculcated into our youngest
298 Marines. The Commandant announced last year that he will appoint a General Officer
299 as the full-time Director of Safety for the entire Marine Corps. We are grateful to
300 Congress for authorizing the additional billet, enabling this necessary appointment,
301 which will provide an additional, higher level of daily safety oversight.

302

303 **Personnel Readiness**

304 Nothing is more important to Marine Corps Readiness than the individual Marine – how
305 we recruit them, invest in them, and retain them. Over the past 12 months, we have
306 implemented nine major personnel reform initiatives nested within four lines of effort: 1)
307 Rebalance Recruiting and Retention, 2) Optimize the Employment of the Talent, 3)
308 Multiple Pathways to Career Success, and 4) Modern Talent Management Digital Tools.
309 To date, there have been notable successes with the Expanded First Term Alignment
310 Plan (FTAP) Retention Model, the Small Unit Leader Initiative, and Special Duty
311 Assignment (SDA) Volunteer Incentives, which have resulted in an increase in
312 volunteers by 62%.

313

314 In support of these efforts, we have focused on talent management information
315 technology (IT) modernization. Over the previous 24 months, we have migrated our
316 existing nine manpower technology applications/platforms to the cloud into an
317 integrated capability that we label “one system with many applications.” Reorienting and
318 reconfiguring our human resources enterprise into a talent management system is a
319 work in progress, but one that is well underway and accelerating.

320

321 Recruiting. Our success in maintaining an elite force begins with recruiting young men
322 and women who possess the character, mental aptitude, physical and psychological

323 fitness, and desire required to earn the title, “Marine.” Labor market challenges, historic
324 lows in qualification rates, and lower propensities to join have made it increasingly
325 difficult to maintain our recruiting momentum. We are a proud organization that
326 welcomes and judges all based on one standard - the Marine Corps standard. There is
327 no better visible example of our disciplined warriors than our recruiters. We send our
328 very best to recruiting – our recruiters are often the first Marine a young person ever
329 meets. One in four of our general officers has been a recruiter during their career, and
330 we pride ourselves in assigning a sergeant major to every recruiting station.

331
332 Last fiscal year, over 98 percent of our recruiting accessions were high school
333 graduates, exceeding the Department of Defense’s standard of 90 percent. While we
334 are authorized up to 4% of accessions from the CAT IV mental group, we have
335 deliberately chosen not to do so and did not access any CAT IV applicants in 2023. In
336 addition, the average Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) score for Marine recruits
337 was over 60 – which remains well above the AFQT average score of 50; sixty-six
338 percent scored in the top three tiers of the AFQT, exceeding the DoD standard of 60
339 percent. Marine Corps Recruiting Command has also successfully made our shipping
340 and contracting missions every month this fiscal year. For our officer mission, we have
341 accessed 639 officers so far this fiscal year, which is on-pace to meet or exceed the
342 mission by category and component.

343
344 Retention. In FY22, we successfully re-enlisted 5,918 (22%) of the eligible first-term
345 population of 26,221 Marines. In FY23, we expanded those efforts and successfully re-
346 enlisted 7,070 (27%) of the eligible first-term population of 26,121 Marines. Most
347 importantly, 5,670 of those re-enlisted remained in the FMF to provide greater unit
348 cohesion. With even greater goals in FY24, we anticipate continued high re-enlistment
349 rates, particularly among first-term Marines. The Commandant’s Retention Program,
350 which has resulted in a 72% increase of first-term enlistment submissions by top-
351 performing Marines. As just one example of the positive impact these initiatives are
352 having on warfighting readiness, we entered FY23 with a persistent shortfall of
353 approximately 2,000 Sergeants across the force. Through the implementation of the

354 Small Unit Leader Initiative, we not only nearly eliminated that shortfall, but we also
355 secured the retention of top talent within our E4 ranks for years via early re-enlistment.

356

357 Marine Corps Total Fitness. Marine Corps Total Fitness is the summation of physical,
358 mental, spiritual, and social fitness programs that equip our Marines with the tools of
359 resiliency and fortitude required to fight at their highest potential and prevent
360 unnecessary loss due to factors ranging from non-EAS attrition to the tragedy of suicide.
361 The Marine Corps takes a holistic approach to total fitness, understanding that fitness is
362 more than simply possessing high physical fitness or mental aptitude scores. As a
363 Corps, we apply a public health approach to prevention, focusing on ensuring the
364 health, safety, and well-being of the entire Marine Corps community. Our efforts aim to
365 strengthen protective factors that reduce the risk of individuals experiencing harmful
366 behaviors. For example, social connections, social support, and positive social
367 relationships are protective factors against a spectrum of issues including child abuse,
368 domestic abuse, hazing, sexual violence, substance abuse, youth violence, and suicide-
369 related behavior. Skill-building is an essential component of prevention and equips
370 Marines and their families with the tools needed to cope with stressors before they
371 become overwhelming.

372

373 **Infrastructure Readiness**

374 It has become increasingly clear that our infrastructure is below the state of readiness
375 required to support our Marines and Marine Corps warfighting requirements and is
376 negatively impacting the generation of ready forces across the enterprise. Infrastructure
377 readiness is also below the standards that our Marines and their families deserve – and
378 have earned.

379

380 Barracks 2030. As confirmed by our recent wall-to-wall inspection of more than 57,700
381 barracks rooms, our infrastructure challenges are substantial, but our Commandant and
382 his Barracks 2030 plan provide a clear path ahead. This strategy codifies many
383 initiatives the Corps began in early 2023. The Marine Corps' Barracks 2030 strategy
384 takes an aggressive approach in improving housing for our Marines along three lines of

385 effort: Management, Modernization, and Materiel. Our strategy is data-driven – to the
386 “room level.” Over the last six years, the Marine Corps has averaged over \$200 million
387 annually in restoration and modernization projects for barracks exclusively. In Fiscal
388 Years 2022 and 2023, we renovated 30 barracks, improving the quality of life of 8,116
389 Marines. In Fiscal Year 2024, we approached Congress with a funding request to
390 renovate 13 more barracks to improve the living conditions of 3,517 Marines. We are
391 leveraging a tiered readiness approach to lifecycle management to prioritize
392 investments for the most critical facilities. Future modernization efforts include installing
393 new air conditioning systems for barracks in the warmest climates and targeted
394 demolition to remove buildings not suitable for our Marines.

395

396 Facilities Sustainment (FS), Restoration & Modernization (RM), Demolition (D), and
397 MILCON.

398 Providing the Marines with a better quality of life through higher quality barracks, chow
399 halls, and Warrior Athlete Readiness and Resilience (WARR) Centers will positively
400 impact their individual readiness. Ensuring better sleep, dietary, and fitness outcomes
401 should further contribute to fewer lost days due to fatigue, injury, or illness, and will
402 contribute to our overall efforts to improve our culture of safety. The Commandant is
403 committed to providing the Marines with barracks they both deserve and can be proud
404 of, yet the obstacles to overcome are enormous – and decades in the making. As the
405 Commandant often says – we became Marines to do hard things, and remediating
406 nearly two decades of under-investments and deferred maintenance in our barracks in a
407 fraction of the time is one of those hard things. Our best estimate of our deferred
408 maintenance backlog is \$27.8B for all our facilities. The goal of our Facility Investment
409 Strategy is to invest in recapitalization, which increases the overall condition of our
410 facility portfolio. As we improve our facilities’ conditions, we will continue our disciplined
411 approach to maintain them. In FY25, to execute this strategy and make improvements,
412 we increased Restoration and Modernization funding request by 9% for a total of \$544
413 million. In total, our FSRM accounts represent approximately 12% of our total Operation
414 & Maintenance funding.

415

416 Installations Communication Grid. Each of the Marine Corps 25 Installation
417 Communications Grid's (ICG) capital assets (e.g., communication facilities, their
418 horizontal and vertical linear class II structures and real property built in equipment,
419 telecommunications) is comprised of segments of varying technologies from the 1940s
420 through today. Installation communication planning funds were made available in FY23
421 to establish an Installation Communication Facility Plan (ICFP) for each Marine Corps
422 installation. In FY24, the Marine Corps will establish two ICFPs for MCB Butler and
423 MCB Hawaii. We expect to be able to create additional ICFPs for several other
424 installations during the FYDP. Outputs of these ICFPs include ICG Basic Facilities
425 Requirements (BFR) and ICG DD-1391s that are required for the Marine Corps' military
426 construction program. In addition, ICFPs will identify which communication facilities the
427 Marine Corps can modernize, repair, or recapitalize effectively and efficiency to comply
428 with broadband / ultra-high broadband requirements. The ICFPs will also identify which
429 communications facilities are to be replaced due to cost benefit assessment, and what
430 new class II real property investments are needed per installation. Once the initial
431 ICFPs are completed for MCB Butler and MCB Hawaii, we will provide the results to the
432 subcommittee.

433
434 Water Infrastructure. Since FY16, the Marine Corps has invested over \$400M to
435 upgrade or replace drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, thereby enabling
436 environmental compliance and reducing risk to personnel and the environment. Our
437 current focus is the modernization of the MCB Quantico water treatment plant, which
438 will cost approximately \$127M.

439
440 Overseas and Pacific Marines. The Marine Corps has established a Pacific cell to focus
441 solely on improving the quality of life and morale for our Marines, civilian workforce, and
442 families throughout the Indo-Pacific. This cell is engaged with units stationed in the
443 Pacific and has solicited direct feedback. One idea we are studying is the adequacy of
444 policies regarding shipment and storage of privately owned vehicles for Marines
445 stationed overseas. Those changes would improve spouse employment, access to
446 childcare, and other quality-of-life priorities. We are considering other monetary and

447 non-monetary incentives to reduce the cost and stress of executing orders to overseas
448 locations.

449

450 Childcare. Our Child and Youth Programs (CYP) provide high-quality, accessible,
451 affordable care aboard 16 Marine Corps installations and through contractual
452 partnerships. Some of the benefits CYP offers include Child Development Programs,
453 the Community-Based Child Care Fee Assistance Program, and Youth
454 Programming. We continue to make progress in recovering from the effects of COVID-
455 19 on our childcare network. The Marine Corps Child Development Centers' (CDC)
456 unmet needs list continues to shrink, with the current total at 962 spaces. We are
457 addressing childcare waitlist issues by emphasizing hiring efforts and a non-competitive
458 childcare employee transfer program.

459

- 460 • Beginning in FY23, we added over \$100 million to the Child and Youth Program
461 portfolio to hire more employees at increased wages to help retain a professional
462 workforce. Our average CDC employee salary is now higher than those outside
463 the gate at most installations.
- 464 • In FY23, direct care employees' salaries were increased beyond the federally
465 mandated \$15 per hour. The minimum wage of an entry-level employee is
466 \$18.20 per hour. Childcare employees with children enrolled in the program now
467 receive a 50 percent reduction in fees for the first child and a 20 percent
468 reduction for subsequent children. Currently, 640 CDC employees are benefitting
469 from this discount.
- 470 • Our current staffing turnover rate is 20 percent, a marked improvement over the
471 FY21 and FY22 turnover rates of 34 percent and 45 percent,
472 respectively. Departing employees listed "relocation" as the primary reason they
473 resigned in about a third of cases, which is explained by the fact that many CDC
474 employees are spouses who move alongside their servicemember. Military
475 spouses comprise 40 percent of the Marine Corps' Child and Youth Programs
476 employees. Spouse employment is important for many Marine Corps families
477 and can be a significant factor in their financial security, readiness, and retention.

478 The Family Member Employment Assistance Program is available at each
479 Marine Corps installation and provides employment related referral services,
480 career and skill assessments, career coaching, job search guidance, portal
481 career opportunities, and education centers referrals/guidance. We also
482 reimburse eligible Marine spouses up to \$1,000 for state licensure and
483 certification cost arising from relocation to another state. We appreciate
484 Congress's recent expansion of this program and continued support. To address
485 the challenge of PCS cycles, we have implemented a CDC employee non-
486 competitive transfer program that allows employees to transfer from their current
487 position more seamlessly to a similar one at a different installation. This single
488 initiative has enabled us to retain more than 180 spouse employees, whom we
489 may have otherwise lost.

- 490 • To mitigate waitlists, we also offer childcare fee assistance for eligible Marines
491 assigned to an installation with a significant waitlist. Over the last three Fiscal
492 Years, the rate of fee assistance utilization has increased steadily for both
493 community-based childcare providers as well as children served. In Fiscal Year
494 2023, over 1,600 children were enrolled in the fee assistance program at over
495 620 community-based providers at a total cost of \$6.1 million. We recently
496 increased the maximum amount of fee assistance, which will undoubtedly help
497 our Marine families – especially those in high-cost areas.

498

499 We appreciate Congress's support to improve childcare delivery in all its forms. Access
500 to high quality, affordable and reliable childcare enables Marines to focus on their
501 duties, which directly impacts our readiness and lethality.

502

503 **Conclusion**

504 The investments we make today to support our Marines, Sailors, and their collective
505 warfighting readiness will reverberate through the rest of this decisive decade. There is
506 only one thing that our Nation cannot give to our military – more time. We must make
507 critical resourcing decisions now, so that we have the warfighting readiness needed for
508 tomorrow. The Corps is perpetually grateful of the support that this subcommittee has

509 provided for our Force Design initiatives. Every dollar invested allows us to realize our
510 modernization strategy and build a more ready force, and importantly, one capable of
511 satisfying the demands of our Combatant Commanders.

512

513 The Marine Corps will be ready to respond to any crisis or contingency in the future, just
514 as we have in the past. The Marine Corps will continue to do its part by continuing to
515 maximize every dollar invested so the American people can be confident that we are
516 deliberate with the finite resources that are provided to us. We will also remain the best
517 stewards of the taxpayers' funds via transparency, accountability, and discipline.

518

519 Our Commandant remains committed to ensuring that the Marine Corps remains our
520 Nation's force-in-readiness. We will continue to rely on our unique culture as Marines to
521 attract the finest young Americans to join our ranks and drive our personnel readiness.
522 With your help, we will ensure they are provided world-class training, improved quality
523 of life, and enabled with the capabilities required to win our Nation's battles against any
524 adversary. I thank the subcommittee for your continued advocacy and commitment to
525 our Nation, the Naval Services, and the Marine Corps. Semper Fidelis.