

NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

STATEMENT OF

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ON THE POSTURE OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

BEFORE THE  
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE

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## **Introduction**

Chair, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the Committee, I am thankful for the opportunity to report the progress of your Marine Corps over the last year and seek your support in continuing to prepare the Service to face an increasingly uncertain and challenging future. I would be remiss, in my final year as Commandant, if I did not first acknowledge the unwavering support of this Committee over the last three years. Simply put, the Marine Corps of today is a better fighting force because of your guidance, commitment, and resourcing decisions. But there is still much work to be done. A brief review of world events over the past few years tells us we are moving in the right direction, but we cannot slow down. In fact, we need to accelerate our efforts so your Marine Corps can effectively deter while remaining ready to immediately respond to any crisis, anywhere on the globe, at any time. The work of this Committee is crucial to the modernization of the Marine Corps into a force that will continue to do just that.

## **Posture**

Today, more than 32,000 Marines are forward-deployed or stationed across 50 countries. There are also, on average, 102 Marine Corps fixed-wing aircraft (F-35, F/A-18, and KC-130J) forward-deployed or stationed overseas, a 22% increase since 2018. This forward posture is a critical requirement for integrated deterrence and reinforces a national source of strategic advantage — our global network of allies and partners.

Most Marine forces west of the International Date Line are based in Japan. In January, the Government of Japan announced its intention to host the future 12th Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR). This unit will possess advanced intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities as well as long range precision fires capabilities, improving both maritime domain awareness and our ability to deter potential adversaries. When combined with the other stand-in force capabilities of III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), 12th MLR will provide a major lethality upgrade for the fleet and joint force in the Indo-Pacific.

While our posture has become more robust in the Indo-Pacific, fewer of our forward-deployed Marines are serving afloat with the fleet. In 2018, 16,000 Marines served aboard ships, but in 2022, just 12,660 did so — a 20% decrease. The principal reason for this decline was the lack of amphibious warfare ship availability. As directed by the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), 10 LHA/LHD and 21 LPDs are the bare minimum necessary for our amphibious fleet. Additionally, in my best military judgment, the Marine Corps needs a minimum of seven Amphibious Ready Group / Marine Expeditionary Units (ARG/MEU), three MLRs, and 35 Medium Landing Ships (LSM) to provide

a strong forward posture for building partnerships in the littorals and to contribute to integrated deterrence.

## **Resources**

The FY24 budget request for the Marine Corps is \$53.2 billion (B). To date, the Marine Corps has taken every possible opportunity to self-fund our modernization. This required hard choices and difficult, unpopular decisions. With the support of our civilian leadership in the Department of the Navy (DoN), Department of Defense (DoD), and Congress, from Presidential Budget 2020 (PB20) to PB23 this approach succeeded. Over the last five program objective memorandum (POM) cycles, the Marine Corps divested \$18.2B across the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) in structure and legacy platforms and systems and has reinvested \$15.8B directly into modernization. The success of these divest-to-invest actions would not have been possible without the support of our civilian and Congressional leadership.

To be clear, the Marine Corps is now complete with our major divestments. Reducing the approved acquisition objectives (AAO) of major programs like the CH-53K or F-35 at this point would not produce resources for investment elsewhere and would be premature decisions. We approached FY24 as a program review year. Limiting the introduction of new programs in FY24 allows the Marine Corps to maintain or even accelerate progress on investments from preceding budget cycles that are directly tied to our pacing threat.

The suggestion that we may have to choose between preparing to fight tonight — which your Marines are fully prepared to do — and preparing for some distant point in the future presents a false dichotomy. Readiness, lethality, and modernization to meet future challenges are all required today. Our collective challenge is to balance the resource tension between the force we employ today and the development of the force to compete and win in the years to come.

## **Warfighting Readiness**

In many ways, Marine Corps readiness has improved since 2018. Our units have higher levels of persistent manning / staffing, more equipment and supplies, enhanced individualized training, and more collective training — much of it force-on-force. Our combat arms units are equipped with modern capabilities far superior to those of past formations. Yet, while many things have changed, the foundational elements have not. We remain the most elite infantry in the world, with the most proficient combined arms teams on the globe.

While there have been substantive readiness improvements across the force, nowhere have these improvements been more visible than in Marine aviation. Across all type / model / series of aircraft, our mission capable rate has increased from 57% in 2018 to 66% in 2023 — an achievement that would not have been possible without Congressional support and the herculean efforts of Marine aviation mechanics and maintenance crews. We anticipate further improvements to aviation readiness as we retire older airframes (e.g., F/A-18 and CH-53E) and accelerate acquisition of newer platforms like the F-35B/C and CH-53K.

In 2018, we employed a lethal, though primarily fourth generation, tactical air (TACAIR) force of 173 F/A-18C/D and 126 AV-8B, with 72 fifth generation F-35B/Cs. Today, our TACAIR force is comprised of 174 F-35B/C and 178 fourth generation aircraft — a major step forward. Despite the challenges associated with transitioning the force from fourth to fifth generation aircraft, the overall readiness of our TACAIR fleet increased from 56% in 2018 to 68% in 2023.

We have also achieved significant gains in the readiness of our MV-22 fleet, rising from 52% in 2018 to 64% in 2023. The current challenges surrounding a series of hard clutch engagements caused each of the Services to take immediate action to replace certain transmission components in our V-22 fleets. That action is ongoing, and we expect to see a rebound in readiness this spring and summer.

Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV): The introduction of the ACV has the potential to greatly enhance our littoral mobility and expeditionary reach. However, as with all new systems and technologies, there have been a few notable challenges. At present, we are working with BAE Systems to address two major component issues — one with the struts / shock absorbers, and the other with the central tire inflation system. Both issues have caused part failures, resulting in a decrease in reliability and a corresponding decrease in readiness. We have also identified issues related to possible water incursion into the power train and are working with our industry partner to resolve those as well. In addition to these mechanical issues, we have experienced three incidents in the surf zone that resulted in vehicles rolling over. According to BAE Systems and confirmed by our safety investigations, these rollovers were caused by a lever effect generated when the vehicle becomes parallel to the surf-line and is struck by a large wave. These events were, in large part, the product of training shortfalls. We are actively working with BAE Systems to rectify all mechanical concerns and are enhancing the training regimen for our vehicle operators on this new and more sophisticated amphibious vehicle.

F135 Engine: In both PB22 and PB23, Congress enacted funding to support F135 engine modernization. In addition to this funding, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) added significant resources for an engine core upgrade and for power and thermal management system (PTMS) modernization. We will continue to monitor the current F135 engine and F-35 PTMS's ability to support Block IV mission systems and will work with the Joint Program Office to ensure our requirements are being met.

Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Pilot Training: As an integral part of Force Design, we embarked along a path in late 2019 to double our uncrewed aircraft capacity across the force from three unmanned aerial vehicle squadrons (VMU) to six squadrons, while transitioning from the RQ-21 to the much more capable MQ-9. While our commitment to uncrewed systems is unshakeable, we have concluded the Air Force's capacity to generate trained MQ-9 UAS officers is insufficient to satisfy Marine Corps requirements. At present, half of our total inventory of UAS officers (72 of 148) are not yet trained and qualified to operate the MQ-9. We are working with the Air Force to remedy this throughput issue. However, there is a need to direct the necessary resources in future budgets to establish a Naval UAS School to resolve this larger joint force issue.

Pilot Readiness Concerns: Service Chiefs are routinely asked about how the joint force can effectively compete against the Department's pacing challenge — the People's Republic of China (PRC) — or our acute threat — Russia. But there is a different competition that is more directly and more adversely impacting the joint force than that emanating from either Russia or China, and that is the unhealthy competition between the Services and the airline industry. As the head of personnel for the Air Force stated during testimony in 2017, we cannot compete with the airlines. We could not then and we cannot now. This is an issue that requires your oversight. We are at a competitive disadvantage and risk our reservoir of pilots drying up. As an example, in 2018, the Marine Corps had 88 of the 203 required F-35 pilots (43% of the requirement). At the end of 2022, we had 218 of 498 F-35 pilots (44% of the requirement). At the end of 2022, we had 200 F-35 pilots in flight school and another 62 at our fleet replacement squadrons with FY23 and FY24 completion dates. We are making some progress, but not enough — and certainly not quickly enough. We are exploring various options for structuring aviation bonuses and aviation incentive pay under the new authorities granted in the FY23 NDAA. But ever-larger monetary incentives are neither sustainable nor the appropriate remedy. This is not just a Marine Corps problem. It is a joint force problem, and we will continue to work with the other services and Congress as our understanding of this issue develops.

## **Force Design and Current Operations**

There is a misperception by some that Force Design might create a gap in Marine Corps capabilities between divestment and fielding new capabilities. The reality is that fielding new capabilities associated with Force Design is already well underway. Many of these “future” capabilities tied to Force Design 2030 are already being employed by Marine forces today. Six examples from 2022 are illustrative:

TF 61.2 and Reconnaissance and Counter-reconnaissance: In March 2022, U.S. Sixth Fleet partnered with II MEF to create Task Force (TF) 61.2. TF 61.2 was designed as a joint task force crisis response capability to command and control naval forces supporting contingencies in Europe and Africa. This force was delegated tactical control of amphibious forces (ARG/MEU) in theater, allocated Marine forces (Marine Rotational Force – Europe), and a task organized reconnaissance/counter-reconnaissance force. Near simultaneously, II MEF and 2d Marine Division were tasked with “accelerating experimentation with maritime, multi-domain reconnaissance constructs and activities to enhance the ability of the stand-in force to dominate the information environment, sense and make sense of the situation, and win the reconnaissance vs. counter-reconnaissance competition.” Commander, Sixth Fleet, immediately volunteered TF 61.2 to support these broader Service experimentation efforts. During the next several weeks, TF 61.2 conducted training aboard both the USS *Woody Williams* (ESB-4) and USS *Georgia* (SSGN-729) and engaged in combined-arms training in both Greece and Turkey. Those initial exercises demonstrated that maritime expeditionary forces could increase surface, subsurface, and aerial domain awareness for the fleet commander — regardless of theater — and allowed us to focus on the information web required to create domain awareness in a contested space. TF 61.2 then transitioned these experimental capabilities to the Baltics, where it participated in bilateral training on maritime domain awareness with the Estonian Navy in the Gulf of Finland. During this period, TF 61.2 participated in an amphibious landing in Estonia and Exercise BALTOPS with 16 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) nations, utilizing 47 ships and 7,000 personnel. This new organization has been so successful the previous Commander, U.S. European Command (EUCOM) chose to highlight the value of the task force during his spring 2022 annual testimony. The bottom line is that your Marines’ ability to conduct reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance is a current force capability that directly contributes to competition and deterrence today.

TF 76.3: Building upon the success of TF 61.2, in October 2022, the 3d Marine Expeditionary Brigade and Naval Task Force 76 staffs merged into a completely integrated naval task force in the Indo-Pacific. Over the next several months, TF 76.3 experimented with naval concepts at sea and ashore via a broad campaign of learning labeled NOBLE FUSION 22.2. TF 76.3 also participated in exercises

KAMANDANG in the Philippines and RESOLUTE DRAGON in Japan. Once again, Marines and Sailors demonstrated the ability to create advanced information webs to support maritime domain awareness across the theater. Just as importantly, they demonstrated this capability to potential adversaries.

USS Tripoli: The most recent deployment of the USS *Tripoli* (LHA-7) demonstrated the strategic and operational advantage that amphibious warfare ships create today. In early 2022, *Tripoli* set sail as an independent deployment, in part to test our F-35B “Lightning Carrier / Assault Carrier” concept by which 16-24 F-35Bs were embarked and operated in concert with a traditional carrier strike group.

During *Tripoli*’s time in the Indo-Pacific, embarked Marines and Sailors trained with and supported the USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN-72) and USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN-76), among other traditional surface combatants. Not only did the deployment illustrate the potency of the Lightning Carrier concept in support of carrier strike group operations, it also demonstrated the versatility and value of the platform for the integrated Navy-Marine Corps team. During Exercise VALIANT SHIELD 2022, the Commander of U.S. Seventh Fleet, Vice Admiral (VADM) Karl Thomas, embarked his staff aboard the *Tripoli* and used it as his command platform for 15 days — a strong endorsement of the platform’s importance within the larger fleet. VADM Thomas noted, “One day you can have F-35Bs on the flight deck, the next day you could have MV-22s and you can be putting Marines ashore. . . .it just is a very versatile instrument . . . [with] 14 5th-gen fighters on board — it’s an incredibly capable sensor.”

The LHA’s size, which closely mirrors the amphibious warfare ships of our allies, makes it an attractive partnership and learning platform. During their deployment, Marines and Sailors from *Tripoli* and the 31st MEU trained with forces from Japan, Australia, the Philippines, and Singapore.

Multifunction Air Operations Center (MAOC): In March 2022, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW) conducted the Service’s first operational deployment of a multi-function air operations center (MAOC). In Lithuania, under the command of U.S. Air Forces Europe, the MAOC conducted air surveillance and multi-domain awareness in support of NATO operations. This is not simply an evolutionary step in fixed aviation command and control (C2) nodes, but rather, a transformational, expeditionary capability that can serve as a hub for Marine Corps, naval, and joint kill chains and webs. The MAOC provides the Marine Corps with the capability to control aircraft and missiles and enables decision superiority. It also offers the ability to gain and maintain custody of adversary targets and hold those targets at risk via fires with its organic TPS-80 Ground/Air Task-Oriented Radar (G/ATOR), Common Aviation Command and Control System (CAC2S), and highly proficient aviation C2 Marines. The MAOC is scalable by task-

organized units, small enough to support distributed teams or large enough to support a multi-MEF or Corps-level fight. This agency construct is also the model we are using for the development of all-domain C2. 3d MAW is now leading the Service's MAOC experimentation efforts and employed this capability as part of Marine Rotational Force – Darwin (MRF-D), integrating C2 and sensor services for 16 allied and partner nations during Exercise PITCH BLACK. From these initial efforts, 3d MAW has matured the MAOC, creating a persistent hub to enhance the common tactical picture for I and III MEF. Recent experiments in February 2023, which included U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM), have further demonstrated the MAOC's ability to integrate additional capabilities from the MEF Information Group and improve the common tactical picture for a carrier strike group, and is visible evidence of Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2) in practice.

Marine Corps Information Command (MCIC): In October 2022, we streamlined and simplified much of the coordination required for space and cyberspace operations at the headquarters level, by realigning current relationships and structure at Headquarters, Marine Corps (HQMC) from a staff officer to an operational commander, to create the MCIC. The MCIC is a service-retained command designed to integrate global Marine Corps capabilities in information, intelligence, cyberspace, and space to support Fleet Marine Forces (FMF) resulting in decision advantage. This two-star command operates under Marine Forces Command (MARFORCOM) and provides critical linkages across operational level planning. It also provides task organized detachments to support the FMF commander's campaigning objectives. This allows the commander to leverage the authorities needed to synchronize global cyber, space, influence, and intelligence effects and generate multi-domain advantages in support of the commander's objectives. The MCIC achieved initial operational capability (IOC) in January 2023.

VMGR-153 and HMH-461: In January 2023, we activated Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 153 (VMGR-153) in Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. By 2026, VMGR-153 will bring 15 KC-130J aircraft to the region, building on the organic mobility available to Marines responding to crisis or conflict in the region. We are also approaching one year since the CH-53K program achieved IOC and are well underway transitioning Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 461 (HMH-461) into our first fully operational CH-53K squadron. Despite their ongoing transition, HMH-461 is already demonstrating the significant impact of this new capability, conducting heavy lift assault support missions previously impossible with legacy aircraft. In parallel, the operational test and evaluation squadron (VMX-1) continues to push the boundaries of heavy lift operations. Last December, they successfully lifted an F-35C, demonstrating the platform's utility in conducting next generation tactical recovery missions.

## **Force Design and the Ground Combat Element (GCE)**

Infantry Battalion Experiment (IBX): IBX is an ongoing Service-level initiative designed to evaluate the future infantry battalion's ability to conduct expeditionary, offensive, and defensive operations as an element of a MEU, MLR, or infantry regiment in support of fleet and joint operations. The results of IBX live-force experimentation represent a critical component of our campaign of learning and are one of several inputs informing our ongoing assessment of the future infantry battalion.

After 24 months of experimentations and force-on-force exercises with three infantry battalions, our combat developers, division commanders, and MEF commanders recommended an 811-person infantry battalion. This new battalion demonstrated improved C2, sensing, and lethality. Importantly, this recommendation reflects the value of our campaign of learning. In 2019, we experimented with a 735-person battalion. But force-on-force experimentation made clear our initial assumptions were off. It also demonstrated a need for additional ground ISR and indirect fires capacity. In line with these findings, we right-sized personnel, added back indirect fires capacity, and added organic UAS platforms and personnel to improve surveillance and target acquisition. Future infantry battalions will possess Block IV Javelins at the company-level to increase anti-armor capability and will have loitering munitions (organic precision fires (OPF)) at the squad and platoon levels to increase lethality, enhance maneuver, and facilitate distributed operations. They will have additional communications, logistics, and intelligence capabilities at the company-level, and new signals intelligence and electromagnetic warfare capabilities at both the battalion and company levels. They will possess vehicle-mounted and canister-launched OPF at the company and battalion level to enhance the lethality, multi-domain awareness, and reach of those units, and will have improved C2 systems at the company-level. But our learning never stops. We will build from past efforts and conduct another round of experiments with two additional battalions this year. These experiments will evaluate the new infantry battalion design against a peer adversary, with the aim of further refining its structure and capabilities to the demands of the modern battlefield. We will also begin incorporating our lessons learned into FMF battalions not directly involved in IBX later this year.

Close Combat Lethality: In 2018, former Secretary of Defense James Mattis convened the Close Combat Lethality Task Force (CCLTF). As we approach five years since that effort was launched, we should take stock of its significant impact. The CCLTF's insights have been instrumental in informing the ongoing transformation within our infantry formations, the most visible of which being the success of the Multi-purpose Anti-armor Anti-personnel Weapon System (MAAWS). It provides a multiple-effects rocket system to infantry and combat engineer squads to increase firepower and enhance their ability to close with and destroy the enemy. The MAAWS is a medium-range, multi-purpose, man-portable, line-of-

sight, reloadable, recoilless, day/night, anti-armor, and anti-personnel weapon system with an available suite of 84mm rockets. MAAWS munitions will be capable of obscuration, illumination, personnel denial, armored vehicle denial and penetration, bunker and hardened facility penetration, and soft target destruction capabilities. Every rifle squad, combat engineer squad, and Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC) team will be equipped with one MAAWS. Fielding began in the 3d quarter (3Q) of FY21 and will be complete in 3QFY25.

The Marine Corps has also fielded lightweight body armor including a new plate carrier (PC Gen 3), and an enhanced combat helmet — all of which address the significant weight of the individual Marine's combat load so well documented from operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, new night vision devices (AN/PVS-31A) have enhanced night movement and weapons lethality for our infantry, improving their situational awareness and ability to acquire targets. The MAAWS, Squad Common Optic, M27 squad automatic rifle, M17 pistol, and Mk13 and Mk22 precision rifles have all increased organic lethality within our small units. Multi-domain sensing and targeting is being addressed with a new signals intelligence / electromagnetic warfare (SI/EW) program called Marine Electromagnetic Ground Family of Systems (MEGFoS). This SI/EW suite of equipment, crewed by dedicated SI/EW and cyberspace personnel, will be employed in the future infantry battalion, greatly enhancing tactical level target identification and engagement. All these capability enhancements make our squads and platoons more lethal.

3d MLR and 12th MLR: On 3 March 2022, we activated 3d MLR and it is on track to achieve IOC this year. 3d MLR has an established littoral combat team (LCT), combat logistics battalion (CLB), and littoral anti-air battalion (LAAB), all of which have been exercising in operations, activities, and investment events in the Indo-Pacific region. 3d MLR continues to operate in coordination with the Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific (NAVSURFGRU MIDPAC) to further develop its maritime fires capabilities, and most recently, deployed to Marine Air-Ground Task Force – Training Command (MAGTF–TC) to execute the first Service-level MLR training exercise. This exercise focused on the MLR's ability to sense and make sense of the operating environment and rapidly close kill chains. 3d MLR is designed to be a stand-in force, but it is not the Service's sole stand-in force. Rather, it is one part of the larger III MEF system of stand-in forces that includes our forward deployed naval force, as well as other expeditionary capabilities including the F-35B/C.

We are on track to activate 12th MLR by 2025. The Government of Japan and Secretary Austin recently announced that 12th MLR will be forward stationed on Okinawa to create greater maritime domain

awareness and enhance our collective ability to deter in the region. As Secretary Austin stated during the announcement, “We will equip this new formation with advanced intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, as well as anti-ship and transportation capabilities that are relevant to the current and future threat environments.” 12th MLR’s presence and capability suite will augment our existing stand-in force capacity in the first island chain.

These littoral regiments provide the joint force two essential capabilities. First, they serve as eyes and ears of the joint force — meaning their persistent, forward, and distributed posture enables the joint force to reach well inside of weapons engagement zones. Second, they provide decision space and time for the other joint forces to deploy, while maintaining continuous maritime domain awareness.

### **Force Design Emerging Capabilities**

In addition to current operations that demonstrate Force Design in action today, a number of emerging capabilities on the horizon will increase the Marine Corps’ ability to enable full-spectrum operations for the Joint Force in contested environments.

Unmanned Logistics System-Aerial (ULS-A): As the ongoing conflict in Ukraine has illustrated, even traditional ground resupply, executed over interior lines and relatively short distances, can be disrupted with operational level effects. Consistent with these lessons, the Marine Corps is developing the ULS-A Small or Tactical Resupply Unmanned Aircraft System (TRUAS). The TRUAS has a 9-mile range and maximum payload of 150 pounds, which is sufficient to fly in ammunition, food, medical supplies, and batteries, among other supplies. This small system only requires two Marines to operate and will be a game-changing capability for our distributed forces. The TRUAS is anticipated to achieve IOC in 2023 with fielding completed in 2027. Fielding this capability is critical toward setting conditions for the development of the ULS-A Medium system, which is the required capability for large-scale tactical distribution in a contested space. The emerging ULS-A Medium will be fielded in 2025 and will provide payloads between 300 and 600lbs with a range of up to 100 miles.

Marine Air Defense Integrated System (MADIS): MADIS is an expeditionary, upgradable, and state-of-the-art capability to protect maneuver forces, installations, and other designated critical assets from fixed / rotary wing (FW/RW) aircraft and Group 1-3 UAS. It uses sensor-integrated C2 to provide beyond line-of-sight cueing, targeting, and engagement. Current air defense capabilities only defend against FW/RW targets and Group 3 UAS within line of sight. The MADIS is composed of a complementary pair of Joint Light Tactical Vehicles (JLTV). The Mk1 JLTV is designed to kill FW/RW variants with a turret-

mounted 30mm cannon, Stinger missiles, and an electromagnetic warfare (EW) jammer. The Mk 2 JLTV provides redundant, non-kinetic and kinetic fires while primarily employing C2 software and sensors to collect, interpret, and pass radar tracks to the Mk 1 via a wireless local network for target engagements. The AAO is 131 systems comprised of 262 vehicles; the FY24 budget request provides for 13 MADIS (26 vehicles). We will achieve IOC in 4QFY24 with the delivery of 17 systems, and we anticipate reaching full operational capability (FOC) in FY31. The FY24 budget request for the MADIS family of systems is \$265 million (M).

Medium Range Intercept Capability (MRIC): The MRIC defends forward-deployed forces against the threat of cruise missiles and other aerial threats with similar flight profiles. This is accomplished through the integration of already-fielded Marine Corps and Israeli systems that include CAC2S, the TPS-80 G/ATOR, the Iron Dome Battle Management Controller, and the Tamir missile and guidance uplink. Each MEF will be fielded with one MRIC battery. A battery is comprised of a headquarters element and four independently deployable firing platoons. To date, there have been four successful live fire events: August 2019, November–December 2021, April–June 2022, and September 2022. Each live fire successfully demonstrated the destruction of multiple operationally challenging missile threats. The Service's FY24 budget request is for \$44M.

Navy-Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS): The Marine Corps is transitioning the majority of its existing lightweight 155mm towed artillery batteries into medium-range missile (MMSL) batteries equipped with NMESIS to conduct anti-surface warfare operations as a component of an integrated naval force. By 2030, the Marine Corps will have 14 MMSL batteries: three batteries forward deployed in support of MLRs and 11 continental U.S. (CONUS)-based batteries supporting the rotational and MEU deployments. The program will enter low-rate initial production (LRIP) in 3QFY23. The first six operational launchers will be fielded to MMSL Battery, 3d MLR in 4QFY23 to give the Service its first capability to contribute to sea denial and sea control operations with ground based anti-ship missile (GBASM) fires. We anticipate reaching IOC in FY25 after fielding five MMSL batteries and a MMSL battalion headquarters. We anticipate reaching FOC in FY30 when all 14 MMSL batteries have been fielded. The Service's FY24 budget request for \$402M supports procurement of 24 NMESIS launchers and associated equipment, and 90 Naval Strike Missiles (NSM) keeping the program on track to reach 774 NSM. The 774 NSMs provide one combat load plus one combat load resupply per deployed MMSL unit.

Long-Range Fires (LRF): OSD directed the Marine Corps to develop and field a ground-launched Tomahawk Land Attack Missile (TLAM) capability to support joint force long range, precision fires requirements. The LRF weapons system is composed of a Remotely Operated Ground Unit for Expeditionary (ROGUE) Fires leader kit, LRF launcher, LRF C2 System (LC2S), and LRF Reload and Resupply System (LRRS). All four components are required to complete a full mission of loading, transporting, and firing a Tomahawk missile. This capability leverages existing Navy and Marine Corps hardware and software such as the Mk41 Vertical Launch System, Tactical Tomahawk Weapon Control System, Tomahawk cruise missile, and JLTW to reduce risk by accelerating capability delivery to the FMF and combatant commanders. The current plan is to establish three 16-launcher, long range missile (LMSL) batteries to form one LMSL battalion capable of deploying one battery at a time by 2030. The first four operational launchers are scheduled to be fielded during 4QFY24. Remaining batteries are planned for activation between FY26 and FY28. OSD provided \$1.2B in research, development, testing, and evaluation (RDT&E) and Procurement Marine Corps (PMC) funding through FY26 to support the development and procurement of 56 LRF launchers, C2 and support equipment, and 152 Tomahawk (TLAM and MST) missiles. The FY24 budget request for LRF is \$142M.

### **Research, Development, Test & Evaluation (RDT&E)**

This year, we will invest heavily in the next generation of RDT&E efforts. We are placing an emphasis on the future of Marine aviation, JADC2, persistent sensing, and contested logistics, while expanding our experimentation efforts. With the support of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering's Joint Capability Technology Demonstration office, we will begin the Long-Range Attack Munition (LRAM) project, to rapidly develop and field a low-cost, air launched, family of loitering and swarming munitions. The LRAM can be employed by not just H-1s and F-35s, but also palletized and employed from MV-22s, CH-53Ks, and C-130s, thereby significantly expanding our magazine depth. Likewise, we have moved out in earnest on experimentation with our capstone research and development effort, the family of integrated targeting cells (FITC). FITC accelerates the evolution of combined arms to a new level. It fuses operations, intelligence, and fires functions together in one center and creates the means by which the Marine Corps will be able to participate in and control joint fires, while also gaining and maintaining persistent custody of adversary targets. We will also expand our ground launched loitering munitions capabilities by demonstrating a common launcher for the family of munitions, and we continue testing a low-cost, hypersonic booster that will be in a form factor the Marine Corps can logistically support in a contested environment. For maritime mobility, we are also investing in our first Stern Landing Vessel (SLV) prototypes, which are helping buy down risk and advance the Medium Landing Ship (LSM) program. We will continue efforts to develop a medium-sized, uncrewed

logistics aircraft and will begin small boat experimentation to determine the future of our surface reconnaissance capabilities.

### **Force Design Experimentation in Support of Contested Logistics**

The Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory, in close collaboration with both the Navy and III MEF, is currently experimenting with more than a dozen new technologies and potential future capabilities focused on enabling logistics in a contested environment. These operational experiments include well-known capabilities such as the SLV and wing-in-ground-effect (WIG) craft, as well as lesser-known, emerging capabilities such as the autonomous low-profile vessel (ALPV). Based on our existing experimentation plans, operational experimentation with these and other capabilities will continue over the next three years and inform future capability investment decisions.

### **Force Design Experimentation with Littoral Mobility**

Mobility is a key characteristic to the dispersion and persistence of stand-in forces. In the case of the Indo-Pacific, littoral mobility will be essential to our ability to maneuver through the complex geography of the region. We recognized this capability gap early in the design process and identified the LSM as a mechanism to transport Marines in this unique maritime environment.

Medium Landing Ship (LSM): Distinct, yet complementary to traditional L-Class amphibious warfare ships, the LSM is purpose-built to provide tactical maneuver for regimental sized units, forward-deployed naval forces, and other expeditionary advanced base-enabling forces operating within contested environments. The LSM is a maneuver asset, and as a shore-to-shore connector, is unique and critical to expeditionary littoral mobility. It will facilitate campaigning and support diverse missions such as security cooperation, humanitarian assistance / disaster relief (HA/DR), and logistics support. While not optimized for any one threat or region, we envision the LSM being of particular utility in the maritime gray zone contests omnipresent in the Indo-Pacific. Given its size and characteristics, this vessel could be employed with a lower risk of escalation than larger platforms.

After extensive research and wargaming, we calculated a need for nine LSMs to support a single regimental sized unit. The DoN's Amphibious Force Requirements Study over the last two years validated this number, articulating a requirement of no fewer than 18 LSMs to support littoral maneuver. Given that current force structure plans call for three MLRs, we require 35 LSMs to account for operational availability and mobility for those units. We anticipate an initial request for 18 of the 35

LSMs we seek will be a step toward enabling us to more effectively counter adversaries' strategies, support and reinforce alliances and partnerships, and do so at a relatively low cost.

Despite focusing our efforts over the past three years on deterring, competing, and if necessary, contesting the pacing challenge, the Marine Corps will not fully realize the capabilities of the MLR until we have the littoral mobility assets that enable these forces. The decision to delay LSM procurement from FY22 to FY25 was a setback in our ability to bring this capability online within an operationally relevant timeframe. As Marines do best, we have adapted to this challenge and are developing bridging solutions to experiment with LCU-1700s and leased Expeditionary Fast Transports (T-EPF) and SLVs. While these platforms will inform the eventual employment of the LSM, they will fall short of desired capabilities if called upon in an operational setting. Our modernized expeditionary forces need a comparably modern mobility platform to bring the full weight of their capability to bear on competitors or adversaries, particularly in littoral regions.

### **Force Design Campaign of Learning**

Marine Corps Wargaming and Analysis Center (MCWAC): Wargames play an essential role in concept development and operational planning and provide the basis for informed decision-making. The Marine Corps is undergoing a shift from human-driven to technology-enabled processes that will provide disproportionate benefits — not only to the Service, but the joint force writ large.

Upon completion in 2024, the MCWAC in Quantico will provide a state-of-the-art facility designed to help decision-makers better visualize the threat environment, gain competitive advantages over adversaries, and simulate future operating environments. It will also provide data that informs force development, force management, and system functionality. Simulations will support existing and developing weapons platforms and capabilities in all regions of the globe.

MCWAC will incorporate elements of artificial intelligence and machine learning to amplify decision accuracy on issues that determine the way we organize, train, and equip for the future fight. This facility will also provide a critical asset to the joint force and senior leadership currently unavailable in the National Capital Region. Its location facilitates participation by joint, interagency, and multinational organizations, in addition to Service-specific analysis.

Lessons Learned: Between July 2019 and December 2022, we executed 25 wargames. This calendar year, we will conduct another 9 wargames and welcome the participation of any Member, or their staff,

interested in observing. These wargames will primarily focus on two subjects: (1) reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance, and (2) III MEF deployment and sustainment during major combat operations.

One of the persistent lessons from our wargames is that our current logistics concepts and capabilities are not optimized for maritime campaigns in a contested environment. Improving joint and combined logistics integration, and streamlining logistics C2, are critical areas for further planning and development. The number and capabilities of current logistics distribution platforms are insufficient to adequately deploy, maneuver, and sustain stand-in forces. Due to geographical distribution of forces, all Services will be challenged to meet their sustainment requirements. This suggests the Marine Corps will have reduced access to connectors under the operational control of the other Services.

Our learning is continuous, and we have already refined some of our initial Force Design decisions based on that learning. For example, when we initially reduced the number of cannon batteries, we assumed that the existing 6-gun per battery model would be sufficient to meet requirements. After additional study, we decided to expand those batteries back to their original, pre-2015, 8-gun structure and added back two batteries. Next, we initially assessed 10-plane fighter-attack squadrons (VMFA) as the operationally suitable and sustainable approach for the future force. After multiple studies, a series of experiments and wargames, and emergent capabilities development, we know the 10-plane model requires redress and are undertaking that effort now. Likewise, initial assessments of our heavy-lift helicopter capacity demonstrated we could cut several squadrons; yet real-world considerations have resulted in a modification to our original plans and restoration of some of that structure and capacity.

### **Amphibious Warfare Ships**

Achieving the priorities of the National Defense Strategy requires a Navy that creates advantage for the joint force across the competition continuum. Sustaining and recapitalizing our nuclear deterrent and nuclear command, control, and communications systems; enhancing and expanding our undersea advantage; and creating advanced naval expeditionary forces that consist of all classes of ships and are capable of persisting and prevailing against any threat, are all things we must do now. We cannot create and sustain this force on the time horizons necessary to achieve competition and deterrence objectives without a significant expansion of our defense industrial base, which is currently organized for peacetime efficiency. We are a maritime nation that requires naval forces capable of answering the Nation's call, whenever or wherever that might be. Amphibious warfare ships are, and will continue to be, a critical component of the Nation's fleet. They provide an essential capability to the joint force that cannot be

overstated. As the amphibious fleet requirement authority, as designated in the FY23 NDAA, it is my obligation to ensure this Committee is aware of the current status of your amphibious fleet.

Secretary of the Navy Amphibious Ship Studies: Since 2019, three DoN studies have examined amphibious warfare ship force structure requirements. Combining the findings of those studies with amphibious warfare ship readiness trends over the past 10 years and projected ship availability rates, I conclude that the Nation requires no fewer than 31 traditional amphibious warfare ships (10 LHA/LHD and 21 LPDs/LSDs) to ensure the warfighting readiness and responsiveness of amphibious naval forces.

The Importance of Amphibious Warfare Ships and the ARG/MEU: Our Nation's amphibious warfare ships enable Marines to execute three essential missions in support of the National Defense Strategy. First, unlike traditional surface combatants whose role is to sink enemy surface combatants and submarines or destroy enemy aircraft and missiles, amphibious warfare ships are meant to project the national power of the United States globally as both a warning to our adversaries and as a visible sign of our commitment to allies and partners. Our defense strategy clearly identifies those allies and partners as a source of our strategic advantage. As Secretary Austin has previously stated, we "need resources matched to strategy, strategy matched to policy, and policy matched to the will of the American people." Our strategic aims are clear: we must deter any act or activity intended to disrupt the rules-based international order. Our strategy is to not fight unless necessary; we seek only to deter conflict. Effective integrated deterrence requires amphibious warfare ships. More so than any other Marine Corps operation, activity, or investment, amphibious warfare ships with embarked Marines provide a flexible, scalable, and visible capability for our combatant commanders to employ at the time and place of their choosing in support of integrated deterrence campaigning.

Second, amphibious warfare ships enable Marines to *immediately* respond to crisis or contingency. When the Japanese nuclear reactor in Fukushima was damaged by an earthquake in 2011, an amphibious Task Force responded immediately. Non-combatant evacuations in Lebanon, the response to Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, the rescue of downed U.S. aircrew in contested areas, and numerous other situations around the world have all required an amphibious response, either due to lack of inland access or a determination that a large U.S. military footprint ashore would exacerbate an already dire situation.

Third, amphibious warfare ships and their embarked Marines ensure the President and his ambassadors, as well as all U.S. citizens living outside the United States, have the on-call crisis response protection required to ensure their safety. Whether in Haiti, Venezuela, South Sudan, Yemen, Eswatini, or

anywhere else on the globe, MEUs are ready to respond and protect. We must maintain forward-deployed ARG/MEUs with the operational reach to rapidly respond to our highest threat consulates and embassies globally. Marines forward-deployed aboard ships are the operationally desirable solution.

Lastly, the 31 combined amphibious warfare ships are vital components of our Nation's seven ARG/MEUs. This number of ships allows the Nation to maintain at least two ARG/MEUs at sea, with the option to surge to five. Assuming our present trajectory, we will fall below the congressionally mandated floor of 31 amphibious warfare ships. From my perspective, this is a result of divesting these platforms faster than we are procuring their replacements. The result of not meeting this requirement became most acutely visible when we were unable to provide traditional disaster-relief response following the earthquake in Turkey earlier this year. Our ARG/MEU deployments are a visible sign of commitment to our allies and partners and provide evidence to the PRC of our readiness to contest any malign activities. They also provide a visible sign to Russia about our commitment to NATO. In fact, when the Prime Minister and Minister of Defense for Sweden wanted to send a clear signal to Russia regarding Sweden's intention to join NATO, they did so by making a statement on the flight deck of the USS *Kearsarge* — a Wasp-class amphibious assault ship.

LPD Flight II Program: The PRC is accelerating their production of amphibious warfare ships. We cannot overlook the fact that since 2019, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has launched three Type 075 "LHA-like" and three Type 071 "LPD-like" amphibious warfare ships. The PLAN intends to launch an additional five Type 075 "LHA-like" amphibious warfare ships in the next five years. It appears that the PLAN sees amphibious warfare ships as highly relevant and a critical instrument in power projection as evidenced by their recent deployments extending beyond the South China Sea. In my opinion, there is also a soft power component to our amphibious warfare ships that cannot be replaced by other platforms. It is obvious the PRC is learning this lesson and is pursuing their own amphibious warfare ship program as a competitive act.

Next, an LPD's or any other amphibious warfare ship's vulnerability to an anti-ship missile is no more relevant to its value than an aircraft's vulnerability to being shot down is relevant to its value. Over 5,000 helicopters were destroyed during the Vietnam War, yet we do not hear persistent arguments related to their survivability. In a recent series of wargames held by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2 carriers and 10 – 20 destroyers and cruisers were sunk in the Pacific during each of the 24 iterations. Just as these wargames do not signal the irrelevance of these surface warships, conjecture about the survivability of amphibious warfare ships does not either. Instead of focusing exclusively on

the survivability of platforms in a high-end fight, we should instead seek an appropriate balance of capabilities needed to effectively campaign and maintain deterrence with those capabilities optimized for major war. As evidenced by constant year cost, the LPD Flight II is the most effective and affordable answer until a follow-on amphibious warfare ship is developed.

### **Force Design and Marine Forces Reserve**

The Marine Innovation Unit (MIU), manned by Marine Reservists, was recently established aboard Stewart Air National Guard Base in New York. This cutting-edge unit will make considerable contributions by focusing Marine talent toward accelerated identification and adoption of advanced capabilities, transforming naval service capacity for technology employment, and retaining and investing in human capital. MIU is expanding Marine Corps reach into the wider innovation ecosystem and developing key partnerships with the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU), NavalX, Army Futures Command, and others to increase tempo and progress toward Force Design objectives.

The MIU is just the beginning. We continue to explore the efficacy of establishing a maritime reconnaissance capability within our Reserve Component (RC) as part of our larger multi-domain reconnaissance initiatives across the force. We are currently evaluating the potential to establish a reserve MQ-9 squadron, as well as reserve augmentation detachments with active-duty squadrons.

In addition to its role supporting Force Design, Marine Forces Reserve (MARFORRES) continues to function as both an operational and strategic reserve to augment and reinforce the Active Component (AC). In 2022, more than 1,100 Marines and Sailors activated to support Operation ALLIES WELCOME (OAW), honing their security and humanitarian relief skills. From that activation, 103 Marines volunteered to deploy to OAW-Kosovo aboard Camp Bondsteel. Finally, as the Service brought new capabilities online during FY22, MARFORRES provided High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) and Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAV) rotations in support of USINDOPACOM requirements. This augmentation enabled the AC to execute Force Design experimentation and unit transitions without an impact on combatant commands. The Marine Corps' continued employment of the RC demonstrates our total force approach and has proven to be a critical component of force modernization efforts.

### **Force Design and Marine Special Operations Forces**

As part of the larger Force Design effort, our Marine special operations forces are modernizing through their Next Generation Raider Force (NGRF) initiative. The NGRF is intended to implement the strategic

shaping and reconnaissance (SSR) operating concept, and its two major sub-components — irregular warfare and special reconnaissance, both focused in the littoral regions of the globe. In a manner consistent with other Marine forces, MARSOC seeks to provide the joint force with the capability to shape the operating environment; illuminate adversary actions, activities, and intentions; and provide options to impose cost, both kinetically and non-kinetically, from competition to conflict.

## **Talent Management**

Talent Management 2030 (TM2030) directed accelerated personnel reforms and oriented the Service toward retaining more experienced Marines. In February 2022, I directed the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps to form a Talent Management Strategy Group to align and harmonize Service-wide talent management efforts. This group focuses on future demographics, economic, and human capital trends, while working with academia, research organizations, pertinent departments in HQMC, and commanders in the FMF to identify initiatives that will better align individual abilities, skills, and desires with the warfighting needs of the Service. Since the release of TM2030, we have better aligned departments and organizations involved in talent management, assessed, and mapped out interdependencies of total force personnel policies, and begun to generate momentum with a sense of urgency. Leveraging authorities previously enabled by Congress, we enacted nine initiatives in 2022, which we will expand and accelerate in 2023:

Commandant's Retention Program (CRP): During FY23, the CRP offered pre-approved reenlistments to top-performing Marines by streamlining the process and giving priority access to primary military occupational specialty (MOS) monitors for duty station and assignment options. The CRP resulted in a 72% increase of first-term reenlistment submissions by top-performing Marines with the average reenlistment approval accomplished in 24 to 48 hours, much quicker than the previous norm. Going forward we will expand the program to more first-term Marines as well as our career force.

Staff Non-Commissioned Officer (SNCO) Promotion Board Realignment: Beginning in FY24, we are realigning SNCO promotion boards to sequence more effectively with the assignments and reenlistment processes. This initiative will reduce SNCO billet gaps in the FMF and decrease the processing time of reenlistment packages. The realignment will provide greater predictability for SNCOs and their families while dramatically reducing the number of permanent change of station (PCS) moves across the force.

Recruiting Station Commanding Officer Selection Board: We implemented two initiatives for the FY23 Recruiting Station Commanding Officer (RSCO) selection board. First, officers now have the

opportunity to volunteer for command, including officers otherwise not scheduled for consideration. Second, officers may also request removal from RSCO consideration for one year, without penalty, should they prefer to complete a deployment or other professional obligation, or due to a personal life circumstance.

Special Duty Assignment (SDA) Volunteer Program: Prior to 2022, we screened and selected Marines for Special Duty Assignments en masse. But last year, we launched a pilot SDA volunteer program, expanding incentives to provide duty station preference for volunteer recruiters, drill instructors, and combat instructors. As a result, volunteers increased by 62%, reducing the number of involuntarily screened Marines by 38%. This minimized disruption to our Marines, their families, and FMF units while also reducing SDA school attrition. We will improve and expand this program in 2023.

MarineView 360-Degree Leadership Review: MarineView360 is a development tool for leaders that helps Marines identify their strengths, personal blind spots, and areas for focused improvement through the polling of their supervisors, peers, and subordinates. Leaders receive feedback and advice through a dedicated mentor and coach. The MarineView360 pilot began with a group of 150 sitting commanders and is now leveraging the experience of 200 additional selected commanders and senior enlisted advisors. The final phase of the pilot will expand to 1,000 Marines of varying rank from gunnery sergeant to colonel.

Officer Promotion Opt-Out: Starting in 2022, both the AC and RC offered certain officer populations the ability to opt-out of consideration for promotion once without penalty. This allowed officers increased flexibility in their career paths to pursue unconventional career experiences or formal education that would otherwise take them off track for key developmental assignments. We are currently exploring the expansion of this initiative to enlisted Marines to afford them the same flexibility in their careers.

Digital Boardroom 2.0 (DBR 2.0): DBR 2.0 increases the functionality and accuracy of information presented to board members, enhances the conduct of virtual boards, safeguards data, and improves this critical talent management process. The Enlisted Career Retention and Reserve Aviation boards successfully used DBR 2.0 in 2022. With the availability of cloud-based data, we will expand use of DBR 2.0 while simultaneously assessing the outcomes, cost and time savings, and professional depth and breadth of board members to benchmark with our legacy process.

Separate Competitive Promotion Categories: To meet the demands of the future, the Marine Corps must retain the highest quality officers with the necessary skill sets at all ranks. To that end, we are exploring

options to reorganize the unrestricted officer population into separate competitive categories to better meet the Marine Corps' needs for diverse expertise and experience at all ranks by competing for promotion with peers having similar skill sets, training, and education. We will conduct a pilot program to evaluate the merits of this reorganization during the 2025 field grade officer promotion boards.

Career Intermission Program (CIP): Many Marines desire to pursue specialized education, or to focus on family for a significant life event. The CIP is an initial step toward allowing Marines an option to temporarily pause their active-duty service and later resume their careers without penalty. This program enables career flexibility, and in doing so, also encourages retention of experienced, talented Marines.

### **Talent Management Way-Ahead**

Manpower Information Technology System Modernization (MITSM): In February 2022, Deputy Commandant, Manpower and Reserve Affairs (DC, M&RA), created a business capability requirements document that outlines the capabilities required to begin the MITSM acquisition process. MITSM will aggregate legacy systems and capabilities into a device-agnostic, data-driven, and dynamic human resources information technology solution that meets the evolving needs of the Marine Corps' talent-based work force. One aspect of the MITSM will be a web-based "talent marketplace," which will enable a collaborative and transparent assignment process and increase the role of both commanders and individual Marines. This capability will help us better align the talent of individuals with the needs of the Service to maximize the performance of both. Despite its criticality to modernizing our talent management systems and processes, MITSM is currently challenged by the acquisition process.

Potential Implementation of "Indefinite End of Active Service" Policy for Enlisted Personnel: As we seek to mature the force, we also seek to eliminate antiquated processes and policies that induce both friction within the personnel system as well as personal and familial stress. There is little reason why those who have served honorably for 16+ years need to worry about re-enlistment before completing twenty-years of service. This year, we will explore the feasibility of senior SNCO career designation to establish an indefinite expiration of active service. This shift will align senior SNCO retention practices with those of officers, increase flexibility in assignments, reduce administrative burden and needless paperwork, and minimize uncertainty for SNCOs and their families.

Small Unit Leader Initiative: Under the current policy, first-term Marines are ineligible for promotion to sergeant. While the spirit of that policy is reasonable, it creates a disincentive to the highest performing Marines across the force by establishing an administrative obstacle they cannot overcome regardless of

individual talent. Going forward, if one of our talented Marines with at least 36-months of service wishes to re-enlist, then that Marine will become eligible for promotion to sergeant upon their re-enlistment. This program will incentivize the most talented who desire to stay for another enlistment and should help mitigate the persistent need for sergeants across the FMF.

Active and Reserve Permeability: During the next year, we will explore options to increase the permeability between the AC and RC. The aim is to better match the diverse — and often immediate — operational needs of AC commanders with the specialized skills of individual Marines in the RC. Due to statutory limitations on reserve employment, we will work with the Administration to identify potential opportunities for improvement to AC-RC permeability.

Orders Issuance: In an attempt to give individuals and their families as much time as possible when executing a PCS move, we will increasingly attempt to issue orders up to twelve months before the execution date. We will also assess the feasibility of issuing follow-on assignment orders to those individuals selected for resident professional military education. This should do two things. First, it should provide greater clarity to service members and their families to facilitate proper planning for any school transitions, childcare needs, and special healthcare needs, and will provide spouses more time to secure desirable employment. Second, earlier issuance of orders would allow the Service to clarify a unit's incoming personnel picture to increase long-term planning, effectiveness, and risk management.

Five-Year Orders: The importance of unit cohesion cannot be overstated. To achieve that cohesion, we need to shift from a three-year tour model toward a five-year tour model — with notable exceptions for some of locations such as Okinawa, Japan and Twentynine Palms, California. In addition to creating greater unit cohesion and, as a result, greater readiness, a five-year model would facilitate improvements to family stability and family readiness. Using the standard twenty-year career timeline, the new assignment length would only require a family to relocate three times after the initial assignment. This suggested tour length should enable children to finish elementary or secondary school in one location, and would enable extended periods of spouse employment — minimizing the impacts on dual-income households.

Assignment Incentive Pay / Hardship Duty Pay: Congress and the Department have provided us with the authorities necessary to incentivize service at some of the more challenging duty stations and we have a plan to use them. We will increasingly utilize Assignment Incentive Pay (AIP) — consistent with the other services — to increase the attractiveness of hard-to-fill duty stations. Notably, Army soldiers

stationed at Fort Irwin, California or in Korea, have many of the same concerns as our Marines at Twentynine Palms and Okinawa. In addition to AIP, we are exploring other authorities provided by Congress, to incentivize duty by our most talented Marines in our hardest-to-place locations.

Weapons Systems Officers (WSO) & Electronic Countermeasures Officers (ECMO): As we transition from the F/A-18D and EA-6B to the F-35, we will have the opportunity to transition some of our most talented Naval Flight Officers (NFOs) currently serving as WSOs and ECMOs into our expanded uncrewed aircraft squadrons (VMUs). At present, we have 95 WSOs and 32 ECMOs. While the legacy aircraft these officers were previously associated with are being retired, their individual skills remain critical to the future force.

Attracting, developing, incentivizing, and retaining dedicated professionals that increase our readiness and lethality is a priority and necessary to improve our efficacy as a force. The initiatives undertaken since the publication of TM2030 demonstrate our commitment to our expeditionary warfighting legacy and our drive to fight and win in 2030 and beyond. Our performance in future battles will be defined by the investments we make in our Marine Corps today. All actions to evolve our talent management system are aimed squarely at supporting our warfighting requirements. They will incentivize and optimize our talent and sustain our ability to serve as the Nation's premier expeditionary force in readiness within the rapidly evolving world we face.

### **Recruiting and Retention**

The Marine Corps is not insulated from the challenging recruiting and retention environment impacting the entire DoD. The FY24 budget supports an active-duty end strength of 172,300 Marines, an achievable target. The Marine Corps will monitor and reevaluate end strength, even as we continue to increase retention as part of our Talent Management strategy. We appreciate the support and flexibility that Congress provides us on retirement, retention, and end strength.

In 2022, we achieved our annual recruiting mission and exceeded both our first-term re-enlistment goal (101%) and our subsequent-term re-enlistment goal (107%). To put this in perspective, 5,063 first-term Marines re-enlisted in 2018, while 5,820 re-enlisted in 2022. Further, we are re-enlisting those Marines earlier. In FY22, the Service met its First Term Alignment Program (FTAP) mission on 8 July 2022, which at the time was considered a major accomplishment. In FY23, we met our FTAP mission of 6,225 Marines on 6 February 2023 — a full six months earlier — and retained higher quality Marines than we have in the last few years.

The Marine Corps met or exceeded both our FTAP and Subsequent Term Alignment Program (STAP) goals across the force for the first time in 13 years. In FY23, we expanded early re-enlistment authorizations for Marines with at least 24 months' time in service from 200 to 600. We reached 150 in the first weekend, and then reached 200 (last year's total) within three weeks. We then expanded this program to accommodate the 700+ submissions we had received by 1 February this year. Completing these early re-enlistments will help mitigate any recruiting challenges across a two-year period (FY25-27). In FY23, we satisfied our retention goal of infantry Marines before December for the first time in over a decade. As a result of these retention efforts, we are gradually maturing the force. This will result in more mature non-commissioned officers leading our youngest Marines and will generate better operational outcomes on the modern battlefield.

As noted by RAND economist Dr. Beth Asch, we should never forget that we do not have an all-volunteer-force; but rather, a predominantly all-recruited force. To overcome current challenges in recruiting, we have challenged *all* assumptions. We have also resurrected and reviewed ideas and options previously generated over the years, but never actioned or implemented. The results have been very promising.

While some assumed five year "infantry-only" contracts would not be well received, that assumption has been invalidated. During the past year, we conducted a limited experiment in which we offered recruits a 60-month infantry-only contract. This 400-spot program "sold out" immediately and was subsequently expanded to accommodate the demand. Infantry-only contracts ensure unit cohesion and almost guarantee Marines two deployments in a single contract, mitigating unit turnover between deployments. Since the completion of that pilot program, we continue to find that our young Marines prefer the stability afforded by these 60-month contracts and are choosing this option over 48-month contract options.

Some assumptions related to the utility of monetary incentives have also been invalidated. Big sums of money are not required to incentivize potential Marine recruits. This past year, we implemented a \$5,000 shipping bonus program for new enlistees with great success. In exchange for this one-time payment, we direct shipping at a date of our choosing, which gives us greater predictability and flexibility. This experiment was very successful. We also implemented a \$9,000 shipping bonus program with similar success. In exchange for this one-time payment, the individual's contract time does not officially begin until they arrive at their first unit. As a result, those in this program that become infantry Marines will

average 2 deployments during their first contract, because their initial 7 months of entry-level training will not count towards their obligated service.

Finally, we want to make the statement, “there is always boat-space for talent,” a truism across the Marine Corps. In the past, talented individuals were denied re-enlistment due to “closed” MOSs or other administrative obstacles beyond their control, such as an inability to transition from an MOS they didn’t choose or perhaps never wanted. These talented Marines want to re-enlist, but they also want a new (primary MOS) PMOS. The ability to “laterally move” talent into a new PMOS is an obstacle at present, but we are working on this issue. This is a training issue, not a personnel issue. Regardless, we are not going to let 8-12 weeks of retraining costs prevent us from benefiting from the talents and leadership of these proven Marines for another 4 years or more of service. If we must choose between proven leadership and MOS credibility, we will prioritize proven leadership for a greater return-on-investment. Retraining costs less than the \$42,000 cost to recruit a Marine. While recruiting will remain challenging for the foreseeable future, the Marine Corps is up to the challenge. But there is one option that we will not exercise: we will not lower our standards. This is non-negotiable. Despite the well-known recruiting challenges in recent years, from 2018 and 2022, the average Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) and average General Technical (GT) scores of our infantry Marines (0311s) have actually increased across the force.

## **Childcare**

Addressing the availability of childcare remains a top priority for the Service. Unfortunately, persistent supply and demand imbalances have resulted in unacceptable wait times for our Marine families. At present, there are notable waitlists for full-time childcare at Marine Corps Base (MCB) Quantico, MCB Camp Lejeune, MCB Camp Pendleton, and MCB Hawaii. These locations still maintain approximately 77% of the Service’s unmet waitlist for ages six weeks to five years. This is primarily due to a shortage of qualified workers, high turnover due to less competitive pay, lengthy hiring and background check processes, seasonal PCS fluctuations, and facility renovations. While we have capacity to serve 6,523 children at present, we only have sufficient staff to serve 5,880 children. To provide a variety of options that fit families’ needs and to mitigate lengthy Child Development Center (CDC) waitlists, we also offer fee assistance for eligible Marines who are geographically remote, reside more than 15 miles from an installation, or are assigned to an installation with a lengthy CDC waitlist.

In 2022, with the support of OSD Office of Military Family Readiness Policy, we established the Child Care in Your Home (CCYH) Pilot Program. CCYH is a DoD fee assistance pilot program that helps military families cover the cost of full-time childcare (30-60 hours per week) provided in their homes.

Designed to support families with non-traditional work schedules, care can be provided every day of the week and during non-traditional hours, such as evenings and weekends, or on rotating schedules.

At present, we maintain 58 childcare facilities (32 CDCs and 26 school-aged care facilities). Renovations are currently in-progress aboard MCB Quantico and Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Beaufort. We recently completed a \$37.7M construction project aboard MCAS Miramar, which will provide 412 new childcare spaces to our families. In addition, we have construction planned aboard MCB Butler in Okinawa for a new school-aged care facility, aboard Camp Pendleton for a new CDC that will add 250 additional spaces, and aboard MCB Camp Blaz in Guam to satisfy the needs of 276 children in the future.

### **Substance Abuse Prevention**

The Marine Corps' Substance Abuse Program focuses on three distinct areas: drug demand reduction, alcohol misuse prevention, and substance misuse non-medical counseling services. As part of our continued vigilance, we have expanded our urinalysis testing to include both illicit and prescription drugs, including the most misused and abused opiates. One hundred percent of urine samples are now tested for fentanyl. Additionally, due to a regrettable resurgence in lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) in some of the communities surrounding our major bases and stations, we added LSD testing back to the standard drug testing panel. Delta-8 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) was also added to the standard drug testing panel in July 2021, expanding testing for THC products. THC remains the most prevalent drug detected during our testing. While expansion in testing did result in an increase in positive test results, the Marine Corps remains below the DoD benchmark for positive test results and current data indicates that prescription drug misuse is low.

### **Sexual Assault Prevention and Response**

As a Service, we have focused on countering sexual assault within our ranks by professionalizing the prevention workforce, improving training for Marines at all levels, professionalizing the sexual assault response workforce, and strengthening an environment of accountability by establishing an Office Special Trial Counsel. As of January, our newly established Office of Special Trial Counsel reached IOC and is on track to reach FOC by December 2023, putting prosecutorial discretion for these offenses in the hands of trained attorneys. In addition to these efforts, the Marine Corps continues to implement the recommendations of the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, as approved by the Secretary of Defense. These efforts include developing organizational structure, hiring qualified professionals, and ensuring our prevention workforce is trained and postured to provide this crucial support to commanders. We are also investing in education to enable prevention, focusing on leadership responsibilities to both prevent and respond to sexual assault and sexual harassment, and providing

training for trauma-informed leadership. While this larger societal problem persists, we are actively pursuing solutions to improve prevention and ensure offender accountability when prevention efforts fail.

## **Suicide Prevention**

As part of our larger human performance management efforts, we continue to examine our mental health programs and suicide prevention efforts. Every life lost to suicide is one too many. As an organization known for our camaraderie, we take every loss of life seriously and continue to pursue all opportunities to reduce the incidence of suicide amongst our Marines, Sailors, and their family members.

The Secretary of Defense recently released a report from the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee. The committee concluded that the most important preventative measure is engaged quality leadership, and we agree. This has long been a focus of ours, as have many of the recommended personnel reforms, which mirror our on-going talent management initiatives. We also embrace the Committee's conclusions about the criticality of access to mental healthcare professionals and services, and their recommendations related to TRICARE reform to enable such access.

## **Healthcare**

Developmental Pediatricians: Generating ready forces requires building and sustaining readiness at-home among our military families. Military service is demanding. Extended training, frequent military moves, and routine deployments — scheduled and unscheduled — strain marriages and stress families, regardless of a Marine's rank or time-in-service. That stress is magnified in cases where children have special medical needs, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Regrettably, we are currently unable to provide sufficient developmental pediatric care across the force, even in areas where we enjoy highly developed military healthcare infrastructure, such as San Diego or the National Capital Region. Parents are often forced to wait six months or longer for an appointment. This is not acceptable. The scholarship is clear and undisputed: early intervention is the key to better outcomes for children with ASD. Today, we have four active duty and three civilian developmental-behavioral pediatricians to support the force, which is insufficient to meet the needs of our families. The force requires at least two developmental-behavioral pediatricians per medical treatment facility to meet the needs of our families. If providing these additional developmental pediatricians is considered unsupportable, then we would ask for Congress' support in creating legislation to make it easier for families requiring this care to obtain it from the civilian market. Parents should not be forced to choose between their profession and calling to serve, and their need to provide for their families.

Defense Health Agency (DHA): The DHA has undertaken the largest transformation in the history of the military health system. From the lens of providing support to service members and families, this undertaking has failed to satisfy expectations, and has resulted in both unsustainable costs and degraded services. While the DHA is maturing in its role as a combat support agency (CSA), the lack of agreement between the DHA and military departments regarding DHA's roles and responsibilities as a CSA, as well as business rules governing employment of uniformed personnel inside the medical treatment facilities (MTFs), has created significant challenges. This problem is compounded by a recent exodus of military and civilian healthcare professionals due to "burn out" from the COVID-19 pandemic and operational tempo, the ability to double or even triple salaries in the civilian sector, and uncertainty and frustration over the DHA transition. Due to the nation-wide shortage, the DoD is competing for the same finite resources when attempting to hire contract healthcare professionals. Unfortunately, the DoD contract pay rate is near the lowest, if not the lowest, in the industry, making recruitment particularly challenging.

In terms of improving the affordability of healthcare as promised, these cost savings have not been realized. In fact, the transition has come with higher costs. An additional undesired outcome of the movement away from Service authority, direction, and control of healthcare delivery is the lack of consideration for Service-specific requirements and the impact to healthcare operations. Specifically, in remote locations such as Okinawa and Iwakuni, decisions to reduce access to care inside MTFs has negatively impacted dependents and civilian personnel, which impacts operational readiness.

I ask for your continued oversight of the DHA and help in addressing the overwhelming gap between DoD contract healthcare labor rates and the civilian market. The success of the military health system (MHS) requires the ability to hire qualified, civilian healthcare labor. The MHS must have contract rates that can compete in a highly competitive market for a finite and highly valuable resource. Failure to remedy this issue will have catastrophic consequences on the readiness of the force.

### **Training and Education**

The Marine Corps enjoys a hard-earned reputation as a learning organization. The previous three years of Service-level training exercises, along with other large and small exercises, wargames, and live force experiments, established a sound foundation for organizational learning. Collectively, they provided clear evidence that change is required. We have learned that today's training and education system must rapidly evolve to prepare individual Marines and units to succeed on an all-domain battlefield. Those changes are articulated in the recently published Training and Education 2030 report.

Training and Education and the Russo-Ukraine Conflict: While the future remains uncertain, clear trends are emerging from the conflict in Ukraine that are consistent with much of what we have seen in other recent conflicts, evidencing the need for accelerated modernization across the joint force. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that the Ukrainians succeeded in the early phases of the conflict not because of superior equipment, but because they were adaptable — especially at the tactical level — and rapidly innovated new concepts of employment to address specific areas where the Russians had achieved advantage. In fact, their bias for action, unit cohesion, and emphasis on decentralized C2 had a significant impact on the readiness of Ukraine’s infantry and maneuver forces. These factors allowed Ukrainian battalions to effectively operate in and control battlespace we would normally associate with an Army Brigade or Marine Regimental Combat Team — units 3 or more times larger than a traditional battalion. The operational requirements associated with these expanded areas of responsibility are placing more and more demands upon junior leaders that can only be addressed through greater investment in the training and education of our Marines. The conflict is demonstrating that advanced capabilities will be available and employed at much lower tactical levels than we have witnessed in our own recent past. In future conflicts, we are going to ask junior leaders at the company level and below to do things battalion commanders may not have had the authority to do in recent years. It is clear this will require an increasing investment in the training and education of our leaders at all levels and across the entire joint force.

## **Doctrine**

Doctrine establishes the basis for developing operational concepts and requirements. It also describes our understanding of how those capabilities are to be employed and ultimately, details training and associated resource requirements. Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1, *Warfighting*, tells us that doctrine “establishes a particular way of thinking about war and a way of fighting. It also provides ... a mandate for professionalism, and a common language.” Our doctrine, including its bedrock in *Warfighting*, has given us a solid grounding in the essential elements of maneuver warfare, upon which we expect our philosophy of warfare to remain anchored for the foreseeable future. This is not enough. The character of warfare has always been subject to the constant and uneven pressures of technological advance and social and geopolitical change. Warfare’s changing character means we must constantly review and revise our assumptions; they will change, and we must change with them. Doctrine, in turn, must evolve, adapt, and keep pace. For example, in June 2022 we published MCDP 8, *Information*, describing how the Marine Corps gains and exploits information advantages in all warfighting domains across the competition continuum. We also recently revised MCDP 4, *Logistics*, updating our doctrinal foundation of this critical warfighting function to meet the challenges of the future.

Changes to our warfighting ideas, theories, and concepts must be expressed clearly and quickly. This leads to greater emphasis on the rapid creation and dissemination of doctrine at a level of specificity below that of our capstone publications and tied tightly to our campaign of learning, including feedback from the FMF. Most importantly, we must hold ourselves accountable for training and operating in accordance with our refined doctrine.

### **Enhanced Infantry and Leader Training**

14-week Infantry Marine Course (IMC): Before our IMC pilot effort began, the Marine Corps underwent a deliberate process to identify the infantry skills necessary to win in a fight against a peer adversary. During this process, Training and Education Command developed 39 behaviors required for all infantry Marines. These required behaviors range from traditional skills like employing the service rifle, patrolling, and land navigation to skills such as “embodying the Marine Corps’ warfighting philosophy” or “manag[ing] signature.” Based on feedback from our division commanders, a subset of 20 of the original 39 infantry behaviors were prioritized as a requirement for entry-level training. Those 20 infantry behaviors became the foundation for a new program of instruction (POI) and the first pilot of the 14-week IMC.

IMC Marines are held to a much higher physical standard to both enter training and to graduate than previously required. Marines earning the infantry MOS are now challenged to achieve first class scores on the Physical Fitness Test (PFT) and Combat Fitness Test (CFT), achieve a minimum swim qualification of Water Survival Intermediate (WSI), and pass an evaluation on the Shallow Water Egress Trainer (SWET), which simulates procedures for evacuating a sinking aircraft. Student physical graduation requirements also include a 10-kilometer (km) Combat Endurance Assessment (CEA) and completion of a 20km hike with a 75-pound fighting load.

In addition to better physical fitness, IMC Marines develop better decision-making skills. By the end of the course, students make thousands of decisions, receiving constant feedback from both combat instructors and peers, significantly increasing the experiential foundation for sound decision-making. As IMC builds a better decision-maker, it also produces a significantly more lethal Marine. IMC graduates are trained to a markedly higher standard in rifle marksmanship and are combat capable in all environments with the M27 Infantry Automatic Rifle (IAR). They are further trained in the employment of medium machine guns, grenade launchers, anti-armor systems, and light mortars — all of which are new weapons skills for basic riflemen.

Better-trained Marines generate operational tempo — a key to success in maneuver warfare. The outcomes thus far are remarkable. IMC graduates are trained to be quicker-thinking and better decision-makers, more physically fit, and much more lethal at earlier points in their careers than their predecessors. All these things should increase the readiness of their units and the overall force. To date, 3,524 Marines have graduated from this program. While it is too early to make any definitive conclusions, initial findings suggest IMC graduates may have lower non-EAS attrition rates.

### **The Modernized Marine Corps Training Environment (Project Tripoli)**

We train how we fight. But we are limited by the number of ranges and training areas available, environmental limitations, airspace restrictions, and several other factors that ensure Marines can employ the full range of capabilities they will have at their disposal. One solution to this challenge is to expand and modernize the Marine Corps training environment (MCTE) through an effort called Project Tripoli, which seeks the integration of the live, virtual, and constructive training domains. The MCTE is our combined arms training concept for the future that will enable us to realistically train and exercise with our advanced capabilities both internally and as part of the joint force. Importantly, it permits training with capabilities in a manner concealed from our adversaries and in ways that would otherwise be resource prohibitive in terms of materiel, ordnance expenditure, and personnel. The MCTE will enable combined arms training in the broadest sense and will allow new and expanded dimensions in force-on-force (FoF) exercise capabilities. Conceptually, a modernized MCTE integrates all training enablers — from high-fidelity flight simulators, to ranges and training areas, to FoF training systems — into C2 architectures and networks supporting training events. MCTE is not a single acquisition program, but a system comprised of multiple training programs. To further improve the MCTE network, we will continue to build interoperability among existing training systems as we bring new systems online, pre-designed with enabling technologies to support increasingly dynamic training environments.

Our next big step will be to field our Force-on-Force Training System (FoF-TS) Next Program across the force to equip units with the training tools necessary to conduct realistic and challenging FoF training. This system is designed specifically to accommodate rapid changes and refinements in the training continuum. Additionally, it will process the tremendous amounts of sensor data needed for our FoF-TS, UAS, cyber, electronic warfare, and loitering munition capabilities to facilitate readiness. The FY24 budget request for training and education modernization is \$581M.

## **Training Areas and Ranges**

At present, ensuring sufficient range access and training in the Western Pacific region is challenged by a lengthy supply chain, environmental constraints, infrastructure challenges, and access restraints. To ensure the persistent readiness of Marines in the region, the Marine Corps has a number of planned investments across the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Investments planned for Guam include: a live-fire training range complex, a multi-purpose machine gun range, and urban combat training facility, and a training support center. On Tinian, the Marine Corps is pursuing a platoon level live-fire and maneuver range and an explosive ordnance disposal range. These efforts are pending a positive determination of ongoing environmental impact studies. The Marine Corps is also involved in the Pacific Multi-Domain Training and Experimentation Capability (PMTEC) initiative. PMTEC will better integrate existing capabilities and expand the ranges and training areas available to Marines, to include the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex and the Pacific Missile Range Facility.

Training areas and ranges in Alaska continue to grow in importance to overall Marine Corps readiness. The sophistication, instrumentation, infrastructure support, and sheer size of Alaska ranges make them indispensable for the development of 5th generation fighter aircraft tactics. During 2022, Marines participated in four joint exercises in Alaska, to include the high-end rehearsal exercise RED FLAG. The Marine Corps provided 38 F-35Bs across different phases of the exercise as well as leading edge air C2 capabilities. In 2023, we will expand our participation in exercises in Alaska to include Exercises NORTHERN EDGE and ARCTIC EDGE.

While our efforts to prevent encroachment have focused on protecting the ranges and training areas we have, modernized training requirements are going to push us to expand training areas in multiple domains to ensure we have trained and ready forces to meet our Nation's needs into the future. MCAS Yuma makes an outsized contribution to the training readiness of Marine aviation due, in part, to the presence of Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One (MAWTS-1) and the conduct of the biannual Weapons and Tactics Instructor (WTI) courses. In addition to the decades long challenges associated with the location of the Yuma Fairgrounds, the continued use of Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Yuma's Barry M. Goldwater Range (BMGR) in support of modernized aviation training is at risk due to the loss of Flat Tailed Horned Lizard (FTHL) habitat associated with border wall construction. By risk we mean, the loss of habitat increases the likelihood that the FTHL would be listed under the Endangered Species Act. Listing the FTHL could result significant restrictions to our ability to train and experiment to meet force design objectives. To prevent this from occurring, we need to act now to secure necessary

FTHL habitat and are leveraging the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program as one tool to support habitat protection efforts.

In addition to physical ranges, we will also leverage a variety of virtual ranges like the Persistent Cyber Training Environment (PCTE) for joint qualification requirements and rehearsals. The PCTE integrates capabilities that support continuous evolution of cyber training and exercises, enabling force readiness and driving decisions on tactical, operational, and strategic levels. Over the past year, the PCTE has expanded access to cyber operating forces in the FMF. We are confident that access to these modern training environments will significantly enable the all-domain nature of our Marine forces.

### **Installations and Logistics**

In recent years, we have identified logistics as the “pacing function” for warfighting. Among the seven warfighting functions, logistics most dictates the tempo of operations and the operational reach of a unit. No other warfighting function more profoundly affects our ability to persist in contested spaces. Moreover, logistics and sustainment capability and capacity have a deterrent effect. Persuading an adversary that a quick win is not possible by demonstrating an ability to generate, re-generate, and sustain combat power is, in itself, a deterrent.

An uncertain future, the threat of peer and near-peer competitors, and developing challenges in all warfighting domains create wide-ranging implications for sustaining the current and future force. To support emerging and future operational requirements against peer and near-peer adversaries, we will have to transform our approach to logistics. Simply put, we must transition from a force optimized for supporting sustained operations ashore to a maritime force capable of supporting operations in austere, expeditionary, and littoral environments that are contested across all domains. This process of change and adaption began with the release of our Installations and Logistics 2030 report and our revised foundational doctrinal publication on logistics, MCDP 4.

While our current approach worked well in the past, it is insufficient to meet the demands of the future operating environment, particularly when contested across all domains. The magnitude of change required to prepare the Marine Corps installations and logistics enterprise to support the future force mandates a fundamental reevaluation of our approach to logistics.

## **Installations Assessment and Resources**

Ready and resilient bases and stations are a critical requirement today and into the future. Years of underfunding the installations portfolio has resulted in a funding shortfall across the FYDP in the tens of billions of dollars. Earlier decisions to take near-term risk in these accounts and shift resources to support readiness-related accounts resulted in longer-term systemic risks to the Service that we must address.

Beginning in 2023, we will engage in a comprehensive and informed infrastructure recapitalization that directly contributes to the requirements of the future force. This will require additional funding, and while it will take more than one FYDP to accomplish, the foundation must be laid today.

## **Facilities Sustainment, Restoration and Modernization (FSRM)**

Fiscal Year 2024 will be the second year using our pilot Readiness Maximization Tool. This pilot program prioritizes restoration, modernization, and demolition in order to achieve a better facility readiness outcome as opposed to the traditional emphasis of focusing on sustainment metrics. The Marine Corps' FY24 FSRM budget request for the active and reserve forces totals \$1.3B.

## **Installations Plan 2023 (IPLAN)**

In the near future, we will publish our first ever Installations Plan (IPLAN), modeled after the Aviation Plan (AVPLAN), to create a shared understanding of the Marine Corps Installations Command (MCICOM) enterprise. We intend to produce this reference document annually to show military construction (MILCON) and FSRM funding framed across time by region, base, and station. The report will further identify the five priority MILCON projects (funded or unfunded) by base and station for the next 1–10 years. Finally, future versions of the IPLAN will include a threat-based resiliency assessment by base and station regarding resiliency of force protection; airfield operations; range support; and command, control, and communications. It will also describe the scope, cost, and schedule to achieve resilience.

## **MILCON Priorities in Support of Force Design**

The FY24 budget includes \$1.3B to support a total of 16 projects, which includes both planning and design. This funding includes seven projects totaling \$457M to continue our efforts to relocate Marines from Japan to Guam.

## **Infrastructure**

Water Infrastructure: Aging drinking water and wastewater systems were not designed to meet increasingly stringent environmental requirements. These old systems also require significant maintenance to continue operation. Since FY16, the Marine Corps has invested approximately \$400M to upgrade or replace drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, improving environmental compliance and reducing risk to personnel and the environment. We are currently evaluating the need for future support.

Energy Infrastructure: The vast majority of our installations are dependent on a commercial electrical grid vulnerable to disruption due to a variety of threats such as aging infrastructure, severe weather, and both physical and cyber-attacks. While procedures and infrastructure are in place to respond to short-term power outages, there is a growing need to ensure we can maintain essential functions and critical services during a prolonged outage. As part of our renewed focus on installations, we will produce energy resilience plans by base and station in 2023.

Fuel Storage Tanks: In April of 2022, in response to an inquiry by the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations, and Environment, MCICOM conducted a risk assessment of significant (>10,000 gallon) fuel storage tanks located on Marine Corps installations, and the risk to drinking water sources and systems. This assessment included tank condition, tank location relative to systems and sources, and condition and adequacy of containment systems. The assessment concluded no immediate threat for this population of storage tanks. However, the assessment did identify two >10,000-gallon tanks with a high-risk for release due to condition, but due to their locations, concluded any release from either tank would not impact water sources or systems. Since the completion of this assessment, the high-risk tank located aboard Camp Fuji has been replaced, and the other tank, located aboard MCB Quantico, is scheduled to be replaced this fiscal year. As an additional risk mitigation, the tank aboard MCB Quantico has been drained pending replacement.

Barracks: The Marine Corps possesses 672 barracks with 155,329 bed spaces. On average, those barracks are 32 years old and in need of renovation. In FY22, we renovated 14 barracks for a total cost of \$118M, and in FY23, we plan to renovate another 16 at a cost of \$262M. The barracks renovations completed in FY22 to FY23 will positively impact 8,116 Marines living in them. The per barracks renovation costs over the past two years have risen from \$8.4M to \$16.4M. At present, 16% or 108 Marine Corps barracks are in poor (Q3 on the facilities conditions index ratings) or failing (Q4) condition. Current estimates to recapitalize, sustain, or demolish require an additional \$3B to return all assets to Q2

(>80 facility condition index) by 2031. Clearly Q2 is not our goal; Q1 *is* and will be. In FY24, we plan to use approximately \$270M to renovate 25 barracks including some renovations previously deferred.

### **Guam and H2B Visas**

Earlier this year the Marine Corps reactivated Camp Blaz — a facility that secures a geographically distributed and operationally resilient posture for the Marine Corps in the Indo-Pacific. It also strengthens DoD's ability to deter, defend, and support allies and partners in the region. The continued build-out of Guam projects will require a reassessment of the H-2B visa issue, based on available qualified workforce.

### **Climate Change Resilience**

Currently, the Marine Corps is undergoing a review of installation master plans to build resilience against all hazards such as wildfires, water scarcity, rising sea levels, and hurricanes. Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) Parris Island (PI) has already completed a master plan (2021) and a Climate Change Resiliency and Adaptation Plan (2020), which are being used to develop MILCON and FSRM investment projects to reduce existing and projected localized flooding. The Military Installation Resilience Review of the low country community surrounding MCAS Beaufort and MCRD PI developed a toolkit for structural interventions and nonstructural planning approaches to enable the low country communities to adapt to climate change. The toolkit has been applied to three pilot projects: St. Helena Island wastewater treatment plant, Lady's Island neighborhood, and the Shell Point Interchange. MCRD PI's efforts to address sea-level rise and climate change with regional conservation groups and the local community is growing stronger. MCRD PI currently has five initiatives in process with our regional partners: Lowcountry Sentinel Landscape Application, National Fish and Wildlife National Coastal Resiliency Fund (carbon sequestration \$550K), South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program, and US Army Corps of Engineers.

### **Conclusion**

On-going conflicts across the continent in Africa, along the line-of-actual-control between India and China, along the Turkish-Syrian border, and in Ukraine remind us that despite our best efforts, we can never know with certainty when, where, or how an adversary might precipitate conflict — especially against an ally or partner. We must be ready — not simply available — to respond tonight, tomorrow, and every night into the future. **We are.** As a Service, we must ensure that your crisis response force is globally deployable. **We are.** But we don't have the luxury of building a force for only one threat, one region, or one form of warfare. The Marine Corps must be organized, trained, equipped, and postured for the full range of operations in places we might not expect, and on timelines we did not anticipate. **We are.**

In these times of increasing complexity and uncertainty, the Nation needs one force, maintained at the highest levels of readiness, that can respond to the crises that few saw coming. **We are that force.**

This Committee's support to our modernization efforts — anchored on Force Design 2030, Talent Management 2030, Training & Education 2030, and Installations and Logistics 2030 — has been crucial to our success thus far. Today is an opportunity to re-recommit to our modernization program and help facilitate its acceleration, while at the same time addressing issues often mistakenly deemed secondary to readiness such as barracks, housing, childcare, and healthcare. Which are equally essential to the readiness of the force.

**Based on your continued support, 2022 and 2023 will be known as the years Force Design transitioned from ideas to operational capabilities. Force Design is now; it is here today.** But with updates to organization and equipment well underway, we must turn both our attention and our resources to manning, training, and retaining. We must never lose sight that our most critical warfighting advantage is our people, and that they deserve the best quality-of-life that we can provide them given the anticipated stress associated with military service. I look forward to working with the Committee members and staff over my final months as Commandant, and thank each of you and your staff for the tireless efforts in support of the Marine Corps.