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BY THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE**

**STATEMENT OF
LIEUTENANT GENERAL LEONARD F. ANDERSON IV
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS RESERVE
BEFORE
THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE
CONCERNING
THE GUARD AND RESERVE
ON
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Introduction

Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, it is my privilege to testify on behalf of the Commandant of the Marine Corps. This testimony will provide an overview of the current state of the Marine Corps Reserve and the responsibilities that your Reserve Marines and Sailors have in our national security, along with the significant progress we have made since I took command two years ago.

The role of the Reserve Component (RC) within the Marine Corps Total Force is critical to achieving our Nation's strategic objectives in an era defined by strategic competition, rapid technological advancement, and shifting operational demands. We are not merely a Strategic Reserve held in readiness for a distant future—we are a globally engaged Operational Reserve, providing the Marine Corps with strategic depth and a force that can seamlessly augment, reinforce, and integrate with the Active Component (AC) at a moment's notice.

Readiness is our relevance. Our commitment to that principle remains resolute and action-oriented. Combining yearly drill opportunities and annual training leaves commanders with 39 days a year to train. Recognizing this challenge, we are engaged in a ruthless pursuit of efficiency in all we do. Every moment of preparation is a deliberate step toward a more capable force.

At the same time, we are investing in advanced training, modernized educational tools, and realistic exercises to sharpen the warfighting proficiency of our Marines and Sailors. Central to this effort remains our focus on talent—identifying, developing, and retaining individuals with the skill sets and leadership qualities essential to winning in a complex battlespace. Our Marines

and Sailors are the foundation of our combat effectiveness, and we are unwavering in our obligation to equip them with the capabilities, resources, and support they need to excel.

I am confident that the Marine Corps Reserve is ready to meet the challenges of the future as we provide combat-ready forces capable of seamlessly reinforcing and augmenting the AC.

Talent Management

Our commitment to readiness is deliberate and enduring. The Marine Corps Reserve continually refines its activation and mobilization processes to ensure units are ready to deploy rapidly and integrate seamlessly with the Total Force through a predictable, repeatable, and budgeted process. We are advancing training standards, incorporating emerging technologies, and expanding opportunities that strengthen individual and unit proficiency across all domains. At the heart of this readiness is talent—our Marines and Sailors are our greatest asset. We remain focused on attracting, developing, and retaining skilled, adaptable leaders and ensuring they are equipped with the tools, support, and resources required to meet the demands of a dynamic global security environment.

In fact, the strength and appeal of Reserve service are directly reflected in our successful end strength management. At the close of Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, the Selected Reserve achieved an end strength of 33,071, exceeding our authorization of 32,500 by 101.76% of the goal. This success was driven by multiple factors, including exceptional Non-Prior Service recruiting, which surpassed its goals, and significantly higher retention rates fueled by targeted incentive initiatives. Furthermore, the Direct Affiliation Program (DAP) effectively supplemented the Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR), underscoring the high demand for meaningful service

opportunities. Looking ahead to FY 2026, our authorized end strength will increase to 33,600, a reflection of the growing requirement for Reserve capabilities.

The Marine Corps Reserve plays a unique and strategic role in expanding the Service's access to high-demand skillsets. Reserve Marines bring with them critical civilian-acquired expertise in areas such as cyber, finance, law, medicine, logistics, communications, and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—competencies essential to operating effectively across all warfighting domains. This intersection of military service and civilian experience enhances the Corps' ability to respond to complex challenges with speed, precision, and depth. Aligned with overarching Service goals, the Marine Corps actively embraces new initiatives to enhance career flexibility and cultivate talent within the RC.

Our efforts to maximize permeability across the Total Force are yielding significant results. By streamlining the Prior Service Enlistment Program (PSEP) for enlisted Marines and the Return to Active Duty (RAD) program for officers, we have made it easier for Marines to move between the AC and RC. These initiatives proved highly successful, making FY25 a record year in which we both achieved our end strength goals and transitioned over 500 Marines to the active component.

The Marine Corps Reserve will continue to develop innovative policies, pathways, and tools designed to incentivize, recruit, and retain Marines with high-demand skills. A key part of this strategy is reducing the barriers that have historically limited RC participation. By increasing inactive duty training travel reimbursements, the SMCR directly addresses the significant out-of-pocket travel costs that can deter participation. This policy makes it more feasible for Marines with critical skills to serve in units far from their homes, thereby expanding the nationwide talent pool the service can draw from and improving retention across the force.

Modernization

The SMCR, operating as both a strategic and operational reserve, is a critical element of the Marine Corps Total Force. The Marine Corps fights as a Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF), integrating air, ground, and logistics capabilities under a single commander to achieve effects across the battlespace. The greatest strength of this warfighting construct lies in its ability to be rapidly tailored and scaled to meet emerging operational demands. The RC remains indispensable in sustaining this flexibility.

The SMCR is eager to be fully equipped and modernized to effectively contribute to the stand-in force and execute littoral operations in contested environments. As Force Design continues to mature, ensuring Reserve units are resourced with compatible, modern equipment is essential to maintaining seamless integration with the active component and delivering credible combat power to combatant commanders.

Additionally, the Secretary of War has tasked the Secretary of the Navy to support the Amphibious Ready Groups and Marine Expeditionary Units (ARG/MEU) “North Star.” The RC is a critical element of the Total Force required to enable sustained presence of those formations. Properly resourced and modernized Reserve forces provide depth, capacity, and operational flexibility necessary to meet this enduring global requirement while preserving the readiness of the AC.

While not structured as a standing Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), the Marine Corps Reserve serves as a vital force provider in full alignment with the AC. Operationally, the RC continues to reinforce, augment, and sustain all three MEFs. Reserve force generation remains centered on battalion and squadron-level deployment constructs while retaining the agility to

source smaller, mission-tailored detachments that meet specific operational requirements, enhance joint interoperability, and extend the reach of the Total Force across the competition continuum.

Across the MAGTF, the RC is modernizing in conjunction with the AC—ensuring balanced progress, capability relevance, and readiness within Force Design priorities. The Ground Combat Element (GCE) is executing a deliberate, phased modernization of infantry battalions. This includes the measured divestment of legacy equipment, the planning for integration of new infantry capabilities such as small Unmanned Aerial Systems (sUAS) and Operational Precision Fires (OPF), and preparation for Company-level Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) transitions. These efforts will strengthen Reserve infantry units' interoperability and ensure their readiness to serve as interchangeable, combat-credible formations.

Within the Aviation Combat Element (ACE), modernization efforts focus on expanding key capabilities and restructuring legacy systems to support both Reserve and Active force requirements. The F-5N/F and upgraded F-5N+/F+ jets remain vital for providing cost-effective adversary air support—enhancing aggressor capacity, training realism, and aircrew survivability. At the same time, Marine Aerial Refueler Transport (VMGR) squadrons, equipped with the KC-130J, provide critical aerial refueling and assault support transport, ensuring the ACE has the reach and logistical sustainment to operate globally. Simultaneously, the activation of Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 4 (VMU-4) and a Low Altitude Air Defense (LAAD) Battery reflects a deliberate investment in priority capability areas, expanding unmanned aviation and air defense capacity essential to Distributed Operations in the 21st-century battlespace.

The Logistics Combat Element (LCE) and Command Element (CE) are also undergoing integrated modernization and reorganization efforts. The LCE is refining logistics command and

control while aligning sustainment functions with new MAGTF employment concepts and adding depth to backstop key AC formations. Within the CE, enhancements to critical enablers—such as communications, cyber, and intelligence capabilities—are improving responsiveness and integration across the force as demonstrated by the Reserve Marines currently employed defending the homeland. The activation of the Marine Expeditionary Force Information Group (MIG) within the RC demonstrates a growing emphasis on leveraging Reserve talent to accelerate Total Force innovation.

Congressional support remains essential to sustaining these capabilities. Stable and timely appropriations are critical for ensuring the continued momentum of specific modernization programs, such as F-5 modifications, ACV fielding, and infantry upgrades. This funding is equally vital for addressing the significant logistical and financial challenge of modernizing equipment and facilities across the Marine Corps Reserve's extensive footprint of 148 sites. As the home base for Marine Reserves and the centers of readiness generation, significant investment in these facilities is also crucial for enhancing quality of life and ensuring our ability to respond quickly in times of need. Ultimately, an ongoing partnership with Congress and deliberate resource commitments are key to ensuring the Marine Corps Reserve remains an adaptable, capable, and ready force for the Nation.

Fiscal Stewardship

Every investment and capability outlined in this testimony is grounded in a demonstrated commitment to fiscal responsibility and transparency. For the third consecutive year, the Marine Corps has earned an unmodified—or “clean”—audit opinion, the highest possible rating and a distinction no other military service has achieved. This outcome reflects the rigorous evaluation conducted by independent public accountants, who reviewed our financial statements, validated

budgetary balances, and physically verified equipment, facilities, munitions, and supplies located at Marine Corps installations and sites worldwide. These favorable audit results are the product of disciplined financial management, a culture of accountability, and the tireless efforts of both uniformed Marines and civilian personnel across the Service. They affirm our longstanding position: when Congress provides the Marine Corps with a taxpayer dollar, we invest it wisely, account for it fully, and can clearly demonstrate how that investment supports readiness, modernization, and global operations.

We thank this Subcommittee for its continued support, especially through the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account (NGREA). For the Marine Corps Reserve, NGREA is not just a funding line—it is a warfighting requirement and the primary tool that enables our modernization. These funds allow us to field the modern platforms and systems our Marines need to train as they fight. With a 99% execution rate across recent fiscal years, the Marine Corps Reserve has proven its ability to execute with discipline and speed while maintaining our Service's clean audit.

The continued modernization of platforms, facilities, and training systems is essential to preserving readiness. As we implement new technologies and streamline business processes—including system automation and data integration—we are not only increasing efficiency but also reinforcing our ability to sustain clean audit opinions in future years. The Marine Corps remains committed to fiscal discipline, transparency, and delivering maximum strategic return on every dollar invested.

A Total Force

The Marine Corps Reserve supports Combatant Commander requirements by providing reserve forces for global deployments that span the spectrum of conflict. In FY25, the Reserve mobilized 1,730 Marines to meet 33 operational requirements across five Combatant Commands. Thus far in FY26, 333 Marines have been activated, including those directly engaged in the conflict in Iran. The Reserve will activate over 325 additional Marines for 15 formations this year and has also added another 191 personnel on short notice for additive formations. These deployments significantly increase readiness and strengthen interoperability with the AC, Joint Forces, and our allies. Planning for future mobilizations is accelerating, with projections to activate a total of 2,690 Marines across 33 formations in FY 2027 and continue larger, integrated deployments through 2030 to meet high-priority national security needs.

In addition to deployments, the Marine Corps Reserve conducts rigorous, realistic training to sharpen readiness, retain skilled Marines, and build critical interoperability with allied nations. In FY25, the Reserve committed nearly 10,000 Marines to 48 exercises in 25 countries, operating across every warfighting domain. This year, over 9,500 Marines will be trained in 44 exercises globally. As an example, Reserve aviation assets led a joint training event at Camp Shelby and San Clemente Island, certifying Joint Terminal Air Controllers from the Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force. This training enabled pilots and controllers to perfect mission-essential training in close air support.

The Reserve also strengthens the nation through the Innovative Readiness Training Program, where it conducts vital military training that serves American communities. In 2025, Reserve units executed eight of these missions, tackling essential construction, logistics, civil affairs, and medical care tasks. These efforts made a tangible impact in Puerto Rico, Oregon, the

U.S. Virgin Islands, Alaska, and North Carolina. With continued support, the Reserve seeks to expand these efforts to include airlift, cybersecurity, and expanded medical operations.

Finally, the Marine Corps Reserve upholds the sacred responsibility of caring for the families of our fallen Marines, a mission regarded more highly than any other. Reserve personnel are strategically positioned across the nation to provide immediate, compassionate casualty assistance. In FY25, Reserve Marines conducted 82% of all Marine Corps casualty assistance calls. Furthermore, Reserve units performed honors at over 21,800 funerals, ensuring every Marine receives the final tribute they have earned.

Equipment

The Marine Corps Reserve functions as a globally engaged Operational Reserve, supporting Combatant Commander requirements through Total Force Integration. While the Selected Reserve currently exceeds its authorized end strength, material readiness remains constrained by depleted in-stores equipment levels, specifically reaching 47% for Major End Items and 61% for Principal End Items. These shortages increase reliance on Training Allowances and mobile maintenance teams to sustain legacy platforms and meet high-demand deployment needs. In FY25, Marine Forces Reserve (MARFORRES) began executing a recapitalization plan to improve the condition of in-stores equipment and prioritize deficiencies for potential NGREA funding. This recapitalization will leverage the Marine Corps' organic industrial base and improve the efficiency of maintaining in-stores equipment, gaining more readiness per dollar than previous years. Continued Congressional support remains vital to stabilize modernization efforts and restore stored inventories.

As an essential component of the Total Force, the Marine Corps Reserve balances immediate crisis response with long-term modernization requirements. The Reserve continues to innovate through initiatives like the modernization of the F-5 aviation portfolio to deliver cost-effective adversary training capability. While mission-critical deficiencies remain in vehicle-mounted radio sets and cryptographic transfer units, other capability gaps have been mitigated through modernized expeditionary network infrastructure. Modernized capability gaps still exist in areas, such as sUAS, that cause a disparity between the capabilities of like-type units in the AC and RC. This is especially critical as MARFORRES increases its support to the Service's Joint Force requirements between FY27 and FY31. Active and Reserve Marine Corps units should be indistinguishable to the gaining Combatant Commander.

Modernization and fielding gaps have resulted in a persistent equipping deficit for Individual Combat Clothing and Equipment (ICCE). ICCE, which includes Personal Protective Equipment such as individual body armor and helmets, load-bearing equipment such as field packs, and environmental protective textiles such as sleeping bags and insulated jackets, must be issued to every Marine and is a prerequisite for all training and deployments. This individual combat equipment is a basic necessity central to a unit's ability to perform its doctrinal missions.

. MARFORRES is unable to fully equip all assigned Marines with modern ICCE and relies on an aging inventory of legacy equipment that lags behind the AC, which presents training, deployment, and combat readiness risks. Mitigation strategies include procuring \$4 million annually from Operation and Maintenance funds, directed redistributions between units, and temporary loans from the AC for specific training and deployment events. Other equipment requirements that experience similar gaps, such as aircraft and ground vehicles, have been procured using NGREA funds.

Facilities

The Marine Corps Reserve occupies 148 Reserve Training Centers in 47 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Among these, 30 sites are owned and maintained by the Marine Corps Reserve, while the remaining 118 Reserve Training Centers are categorized as “tenant” status and owned by other Services. Through support agreements, the Marine Corps Reserve assumes maintenance responsibility for facilities at 98 of these tenant sites. The Marine Corps Reserve has dedicated significant efforts towards rectifying and ensuring the accuracy of our real property records, aligning them with our complete sustainment funding requirement. Among the total 148 sites, some Reserve Training Centers are situated within major Department of War (DoW) installations, but the majority are dispersed across civilian communities, encompassing residential neighborhoods to industrial and commercial districts.

Traditionally, the Marine Corps Reserve has prioritized the sustainment, maintenance, and modernization of its existing infrastructure. Despite these investments, the average building condition for the Marine Corps Reserve portfolio is classified as “poor.” The disparity between the cost to own and maintain our infrastructure and the resources required to sustain and recapitalize is growing, requiring careful prioritization. Through the comprehensive utilization of the Facilities Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization (FSRM) program, we have focused efforts to maintain facilities that are deemed vital to support the Marine Corps Reserve’s mission. Presently, our focus is on identifying significant FSRM projects for future funding. Simultaneously, we are actively engaged in efforts to maximize efficiency. This includes a strategic approach to cost reduction, focusing on Minimum Viable Projects, considering

Alternative Construction Methods and funding savings through the consolidation of facilities and the demolition of excess footprint.

As we capitalize on utilizing the Military Construction, Navy Reserve (MCNR) program, our focus is on providing construction for new and enduring capabilities and recapitalizing our aging facilities. The construction projects enabled by the annual authorization and appropriation of MCNR funding are a significant factor in advancing our facilities support mission, especially as we optimize our force laydown throughout the Nation. Continued support for our MCNR program funding requests is essential for planning and execution to modernize our capabilities and, when needed, to divest from infrastructure or facilities that no longer meet the mission.

The combined effects of our targeted site consolidations, FSRM, and MCNR Programs have slowed the decline of our aging facilities and reduced the number of inadequate or substandard Reserve Training Centers. However, as our infrastructure ages, the operating costs have steadily increased due to the requirements for more secure communications and classified spaces within these facilities. This demand for secure spaces will continue to rise as the Marine Corps modernizes to meet its obligations under the 2026 National Defense Strategy.

The safety of our Marines, Sailors, and their families is of utmost importance, and we are actively engaged in ongoing efforts to improve the overall force protection at all our sites. We take pride in working with our Service partners and the National Guard to improve security at our sites where joint occupation is optimal. Throughout the last ten years, numerous force protection assessments have been conducted at our facilities, and security-engineering reports have been generated to assist in developing designs that mitigate protection concerns, specifically within the realm of physical security. These assessments identify requirements and

serve to prioritize enhancements, ultimately improving the overall facility security for our Marines, Sailors, and their families.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

Improving the health and safety of our service members by fostering a climate of dignity and respect is a top priority for the Marine Corps Reserve. This commitment is central to our goal of eliminating sexual assault from our ranks. These efforts are showing significant results: fiscal year 2023 saw a reduction in prevalence for the first time in nearly 10 years, a success driven by our Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program and unwavering leadership engagement.

To further strengthen these efforts and professionalize our support, the SAPR program is aligning with DoW directives by transitioning victim assistance roles from collateral duties to full-time, dedicated civilian personnel. This structural enhancement ensures our Marines and their families have access to high quality assistance and recovery support. This support infrastructure is available 24/7 through both the dedicated Marine Corps Reserve Sexual Assault Support Line and the confidential, anonymous Safe Helpline, guaranteeing that help is always available.

Quality of Life

The readiness of the Marine Corps Reserve is inextricably linked to the well-being of our Marines and their families. The decision to fully fund our Operation and Maintenance and Military Personnel accounts directly enables the essential programs that generate readiness, improve retention, and build a more resilient force. Quality of Life programs are critical for Marine Reserves and have proven their value as a sound investment in our national security.

A ready force is a healthy force. We employ a proactive Integrated Prevention strategy to address behavioral health, an approach that is far more effective and fiscally responsible than treating a crisis after it occurs. These efforts are yielding tangible results. For example, from Calendar Year 2024 to Calendar Year 2025, the Marine Corps Reserve saw a 25% reduction in suicides, with the total number of events decreasing from 12 to 9. To further support our dispersed force, we have forged powerful partnerships with the National Guard Bureau and the Department of Veterans Affairs, which unlock access to over 400 Family Assistance Centers and 383 Veteran Centers. This focus on wellness also extends to physical readiness; through a partnership with the Armed Services YMCA, memberships were coordinated and approved for personnel at fifty-two (52) independent duty sites in FY25, filling a critical gap where no on-installation facilities exist.

Strong families are the bedrock of a strong force. The Marine Corps Family Team Building (MCFTB) program serves as a vital link between command and our families; in FY25, its outreach efforts and requests for assistance reached a total of 13,742 Marines and family members. For those facing deployment, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) remains an invaluable tool. Last year, a total of 17 YRRP events were completed, connecting more than 1,477 participants with the support they need to navigate the deployment cycle. These programs, made possible by the support of Congress, deliver an immense return on investment, measured in higher retention, increased readiness, and a more resilient force. Continued, full support for our budget request is essential to the execution of these proven services.

Conclusion

As the operational environment continues to evolve, the Marine Corps Reserve remains committed to innovation, adaptability, and forward-looking transformation to meet emerging

challenges and deter the pacing threats outlined in the National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy. At the heart of our continued success are the individual Marines, Sailors, and families who serve with unwavering dedication. They are the foundation of our readiness and the strength behind every mission. With your continued support, Reserve Marines and Sailors will remain ready to answer our Nation's call—anytime, anywhere. *Semper Fidelis.*