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HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE

STATEMENT OF

GENERAL ERIC M. SMITH
COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

ON THE POSTURE OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

BEFORE THE
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
MAY 12, 2026

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Chair, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and discuss the readiness, posture, and direction of the United States Marine Corps. Your continued support remains essential as the Corps sustains forward presence, preserves combat readiness, and modernizes to meet the demands of an increasingly contested security environment. The Marines you support today are deployed, ready, and focused on deterrence and warfighting, and together we will ensure the Corps remains lethal, disciplined, and prepared for the challenges ahead.

Who We Are

"The Marine Corps is a globally responsive, lethal, and resilient combined-arms naval expeditionary force that projects power from sea to land and land to sea, fighting as a Marine Air Ground Task Force across all domains in contested environments to deter, deny, and defeat adversaries. Marines conduct sea-denial, contribute to sea control, and conduct amphibious operations to deny adversary freedom of action, while extending Joint Force commanders' operational reach. Forward forces, optimized to operate in the littorals, seize and hold key maritime terrain to deliver lethal effects, sense and shape the operating environment, and close kill webs in support of fleet maneuver and joint campaigns."

--Marine Corps Force Design Update (Oct. 2025)

Introduction

As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, the Marine Corps enters this moment with a clear sense of purpose shaped by the history of the Republic it serves. From its earliest days, the Corps has been an institution built for uncertainty, designed to respond when the country faces danger at home or instability abroad. Across centuries of change, Marines have adapted their capabilities while preserving the character and discipline that have always made them a dependable instrument of national power. That continuity of service, carried out across generations, frames the Corps' approach to meeting the demands of today's national security challenges.

The 2025 National Security Strategy and 2026 National Defense Strategy emphasize the need to defend the homeland, confront challenges in the Indo-Pacific, and ensure that America's military remains capable of deterring conflict and prevailing should deterrence fail. Our priorities are designed to directly support these strategic objectives, focusing on strengthening the Marine Corps' core functions of forward posture, rapid response, and operational flexibility in contested maritime regions. It provides decision makers with options across the competition, crisis, and conflict continuum, while supporting naval forces and joint commanders at the speed demanded by modern warfare.

The Corps enters this year with momentum, fully committed to modernization though making measured decisions to remain a persistent, forward postured force ready to rapidly respond to crisis. Progress in modernization has been steady, guided by the Marine Corps' Force Design

initiative, our deliberate, multi-year effort that strengthens lethality, expands sensing and maneuver options, and accelerates the integration of unmanned capabilities. The modernization campaign is producing warfighting advantages that are visible throughout the entire Marine Corps—from the Marine Littoral Regiments to the Marine Expeditionary Units to the Marine Expeditionary Forces. These gains, coupled with investments in personnel, training, and quality of life, increase readiness and deepen the Corps' ability to support national objectives while strengthening deterrence in critical regions.

This year's President's Budget allows us to sustain this momentum. A "generational investment," the President's Budget for Fiscal Year 2027 (PB27) provides monumental investment in Amphibious Warfare Ships and Medium Landing Ships, revolutionizes our logistics enterprise to sustain distributed forces, accelerates our modernization and lethality efforts by years, and greatly enhances the Quality of Life for our Marines and Sailors. This budget provides the Corps with the resources required to ensure Marines are ready to respond to crises globally, deter adversaries, and if deterrence fails, to fight and win.

The Marine Corps' identity has remained aligned with the enduring needs of the nation, even as the character of warfare continues to evolve. As threats grow more complex and adversaries field systems designed to challenge America's freedom of action, the Corps continues to refine its doctrine, modernize its capabilities, and sustain a forward posture that emphasizes speed, access, and readiness. This approach reflects a force that adapts without losing its purpose, remaining prepared to operate in contested environments while supporting naval and joint commanders. That balance between continuity and adaptation frames how the Marine Corps approaches the challenges ahead and sets the conditions for the priorities that follow.

To assist Congress in understanding the current state of the Corps, this posture statement details the discipline and warrior ethos that are foundational to the Corps, the complexities of the current operating environment, our current force posture, and the priorities we are focused on in this budget cycle to best posture the Corps for both the fights of today and the future. To ensure the Corps remains the Nation's premier expeditionary force in readiness—capable of deterring, responding, and winning in any clime or place—we are focused on: restoring a 3.0 Amphibious Ready Group and Marine Expeditionary Unit presence, setting the theater, accelerating modernization and lethality, and building and sustaining a lethal force.

Discipline and Warrior Ethos

The Marine Corps' warfighting advantage has always begun with the individual Marine. Every capability—new or legacy, modernized or in transition—ultimately depends on Marines who hold themselves to the highest standard of conduct and performance. This expectation starts in entry-level training, where discipline is instilled through shared hardship and a clear understanding of responsibility to one's fellow Marine, unit, and country. This transformation from a civilian is sustained across a Marine's career through constant assessment, rigorous training, and professional development that strengthens competence and judgement.

Our warrior ethos remains essential as the service prepares to operate in environments that are more transparent, faster-paced, and less forgiving than in previous decades. Marines must

assume they will be contested in every domain from the opening moments of any crisis, and that tactical decisions can have strategic consequences. The combination of discipline and readiness is therefore not just a cultural strength but a warfighting requirement. It enables Marines to succeed when communications are degraded, when logistics are strained, and when adversaries employ complex combinations of kinetic and non-kinetic tools to disrupt friendly operations.

The Corps continues to hold itself accountable to the standards expected of an expeditionary force. This includes investment in training that mirrors the conditions Marines will face in contested littorals, with an emphasis on distributed leadership that can execute commander's intent under pressure, and a commitment to maintaining readiness that ensures the force can deploy quickly and fight immediately. Individual discipline remains the foundation upon which every emerging capability depends.

Current Operating Environment

The current operating environment reflects a world where threats are increasingly geographically dispersed, technologically sophisticated, and strategically interconnected. These conditions have persisted and intensified in recent years, even when the nation was at peace.

Within the current environment, the defense of the homeland is shaped by persistent, complex challenges short of armed conflict. These include transnational criminal networks, illicit trafficking, malign foreign influence, and instability in the maritime approaches to the United States. Such threats exploit geography, seams between authorities, and the transparency of the modern information environment, creating conditions that can undermine security well before they reach American shores. In the Western Hemisphere, these dynamics are most visible in the littoral and border regions, where criminal organizations and hostile actors seek to contest governance, disrupt maritime security, and erode regional stability. Defending the homeland and the American people—whether at the land borders or across the maritime approaches—remains the Marine Corps' top priority as the Nation's premier expeditionary force-in-readiness.

At the same time the Indo-Pacific remains the region where military competition is most intense and where strategic risk is most concentrated. The region's vast distances, dense maritime terrain, and economic centrality create an environment in which control of key sea lanes, freedom of maneuver, and access to forward areas are increasingly contested. The People's Republic of China continues to modernize its military forces, expand its surveillance and strike capabilities, and apply pressure across the maritime domain in ways designed to challenge United States and allied freedom of action. These conditions define China as the Marine Corps' pacing threat and reinforce the importance of maintaining a strong deterrent posture in the Indo-Pacific.

Beyond the defense of our homeland and commitment to our most consequential theater the Indo-Pacific, the Marine Corps stands ready to defend our Nation and its interests. In the Middle East, Iran and its proxies continue to destabilize the region with malign activities. And in Europe, Russia's protracted war in Ukraine continues to threaten European security.

Collectively, these conditions demand a force that is forward deployed or forward stationed, capable of responding at speed, and able to operate wherever our Nation requires. These units must be able to deter and, if necessary, respond to threats before they escalate into crisis, while operating with limited warning, constrained access, and degraded infrastructure. This environment places a premium on forces that are globally responsive, maritime in character, and capable of integrating seamlessly with naval, joint, and interagency partners. It also requires formations that can operate independently when required, sustain themselves across distance and time, and maintain readiness even as competition unfolds below the threshold of armed conflict. **The Marine Corps is purpose-built to meet these demands.**

Marine Corps Forward Deployed Forces and Global Posture

Marine forces forward positioned provide the capability required by this environment to deter adversaries and, if deterrence fails, to fight and win, making them the most visible expression of the Corps' readiness. Our units routinely operate in contested regions, integrate with naval forces, and offer the Nation options that uphold peace and security through visible strength and readiness.

In the Western Hemisphere, Marines are contributing directly to homeland defense by reinforcing security along the southern border and across the maritime littorals, supporting interagency partners, and enabling the broader Joint Force to counter illicit networks that threaten the homeland. The 22d Marine Expeditionary Unit exemplifies this role through their persistent presence, capacity for rapid employment, and ability to respond to crises with little warning. Operation Southern Spear, conducted in the littorals of the Caribbean, underscores the unique utility of Marine Air-Ground Task Forces operating forward from the sea. These deployments highlight the Corps' ability to sustain forces at sea, maneuver in complex littoral terrain, seamlessly integrate with Joint Forces to extend the Joint Force commanders' operational reach, and work alongside partners to strengthen regional security in ways that complement other elements of national power.

Simultaneously, through Task Force Forge and Task Force Ripper, Marines support missions central to the defense of the homeland. These forces disrupt narcotics networks that exploit instability across the region. Marine's actions and presence directly protect Americans by denying transnational criminal organizations freedom of action along the United States' borders.

In accordance with our Nation's current and recent historical strategic documents, the Indo-Pacific remains a core focus of effort where the Marine Corps' forward posture carries the greatest strategic weight, deterring aggression and enabling rapid response to crisis. Marines deployed across the First Island Chain provide the United States with a highly mobile force capable of meeting the challenges posed by a rapidly modernizing adversary. III Marine Expeditionary Force continues to operate in demanding conditions that require low signatures, rapid mobility, and close integration with naval forces. Their activities demonstrate the Corps' ability to maneuver across dispersed maritime terrain, conduct operations in contested littorals, and provide joint commanders with immediate options that complicate adversary planning. Our units represent the fusion of rapid modernization with continuous training and sustained readiness that defines the Corps' current approach to deterrence in the region.

Priorities

To sustain the advantages of forward posture and maintain momentum in an increasingly demanding operating environment, we are focused on a set of priorities that preserve the Marine Corps' ability to deter, respond, fight, and win in any clime or place. While this posture statement provides updates, it is important to note that the Force Design Update (October 2025) remains the authoritative source for comprehensive force design information, with this posture statement highlighting only the key changes since its release. Additionally, the 2026 Marine Corps Aviation Plan (February 2026) outlines necessary steps for modernizing aviation assets to ensure the Marine Corps retains the flexibility, mobility, and close air support capabilities essential for effective expeditionary operations.

Amphibious Ready Group / Marine Expeditionary Unit

The Amphibious Ready Group and Marine Expeditionary Unit (ARG/MEU) is central to how the Marine Corps remains forward, ready, and responsive—an ARG/MEU can respond within hours of tasking, with combat credible, multi-domain capabilities. Its deterrent effect is invaluable. My best military advice is that a continuous 3.0 ARG/MEU presence is required to provide Geographic Combatant Commanders, and our Nation, with the forces they need to meet the challenges presented across the globe. A 3.0 ARG/MEU presence means three continuously forward deployed ARG/MEU teams, one sourced from the East Coast, one from the West Coast, and one forward stationed from Okinawa.

Each ARG/MEU requires at least three amphibious warfare ships: a large-deck amphibious assault ship (LHA/LHD) and two additional ships with well-decks (LPD/LSD). This combination provides the necessary capacity to bring a Marine Air-Ground Task Force that is capable of delivering immediate combat power, self-sustaining and executing multi-domain effects across the full spectrum of military operations. This construct ensures rapid, sovereign action and enables national leaders and combatant commanders to respond within hours rather than days or weeks, preserving decision space and strengthening deterrence in a rapidly evolving global environment.

The ARG/MEU punches well above its weight-class. It offers flexibility, lethality, and endurance, making it well suited for both crisis response and conflict scenarios. Its global utility is demonstrated through its ability to transition between missions without the need for reconstitution—it can operate independently, integrate with the fleet, or enhance joint and allied formations across the globe. In the Caribbean, and more recently the Middle East, this value is especially evident. The regions' complex security dynamics and maritime terrain create conditions where a flexible amphibious force is uniquely suited to protect American interests. This same force construct applies across theaters, reinforcing deterrence while remaining prepared to respond decisively when required.

The Marine Corps' statutory responsibility to define amphibious warfare ship requirements underscores the criticality of the Corps' ability to respond when called upon and the necessity of maintaining a credible amphibious capability. But the current fleet faces significant readiness challenges. By statute, the fleet must consist of no fewer than 31 operationally available

amphibious warfare ships—to include no fewer than 10 LHAs and LHDs. Although we have an inventory of 32 amphibious warfare ships, we fall short of the statutorily required 10 “big deck” amphibious assault ships. The statutory requirement of 31 operationally available amphibious warfare ships was calculated with assumed readiness levels that we have not been able to achieve in the ensuing five years. Our inability to achieve these assumed readiness levels has hindered our ability to fully support global commitments.

Through the Amphibious Force Readiness Board, the Chief of Naval Operations and I are committed to addressing persistent gaps in ship readiness and availability, particularly as our aging amphibious fleet continues to experience maintenance delays and growing backlogs. We are enhancing readiness through a focused approach in three areas. First, we are optimizing maintenance schedules and force generation models to get more out of the ships we already have. Second, we are making targeted investments in service life extensions to keep our fleet ready and relevant for longer periods of time. Finally, we are moving forward with the procurement of new and more capable ships.

We are extremely grateful for the unwavering support and actions of the President, Congress, the Secretary of War and the Department of the Navy to make ARG/MEU readiness a reality. This investment shows a commitment to reach long-term ARG/MEU presence requirements. Together we are committed to this multi-year, multi-billion-dollar effort to ensure an appropriate ARG/MEU presence is achieved and sustained. This is an investment we owe for future generations.

Benefits of Multi-Ship Procurement

The ability to maintain a credible amphibious force depends on long-term investment in the necessary ships. Multi-ship procurement provides the industrial base the stability it needs to maintain production capacity, reduce per-ship costs, and ensure the availability of amphibious warships to support global operations. The Navy and Marine Corps' recent multi-ship contracts for LHA and LPD ships, as supported by PB27, enables the Department of the Navy to execute its shipbuilding plan, while saving the taxpayer significant costs.

Amphibious Warship Maintenance and Sustainment

Sustaining the amphibious warfare ship fleet is essential for maintaining operational readiness. The fleet must evolve to integrate emerging technologies and remain capable of projecting power in contested maritime spaces. Current challenges in amphibious warship readiness have directly impacted ARG/MEU deployments.

To bridge this gap, prioritizing amphibious warship modernization and investing in a more reliable supply chain is essential. Additionally important is the need to implement a robust and proactive program to target amphibious warship platforms requiring Service Life Extensions to generate more effective planning and resource allocation. The Navy’s investment in multi-ship contracts must be complemented by proactive maintenance, proactive contracting strategies and targeted support to extend service life, reducing the need for cannibalization and ensuring the fleet’s full operational capacity.

Setting the Theater

The Marine Corps remains fully committed to "Setting the Theater" to protect interests, deter adversaries, reassure allies, and create a more agile and resilient sustainment network—one that is designed to seamlessly integrate with Joint Force capabilities. This includes ensuring an optimized force posture, investing in littoral mobility to quickly maneuver and sustain distributed forces, prepositioning equipment and supplies to support distributed forces, and enhancing installation resilience to generate and sustain forces.

Indo-Pacific Force Posture

The Marine Corps' current force posture in the Indo-Pacific reflects a deliberate and effective alignment of forces in support of national security objectives and the defense of our interests in the region. This forward positioning preserves the Corps' ability to act decisively when time and proximity are critical. Marine Corps forces are currently optimally postured relative to the challenges they are designed to meet, increasing responsiveness in a theater where power projection and speed are central to deterrence.

Littoral Mobility

The ability to maneuver forces across littoral terrain remains essential to how the Marine Corps sustains forward posture and operates in contested maritime environments. Littoral mobility enables Marines to reposition forces inside adversary weapons engagement zones, move laterally between maritime positions, and sustain distributed operations without reliance on fixed ports or predictable lines of communication. As adversaries continue to invest in long-range fires, surveillance, and maritime denial, the Corps' ability to maneuver unpredictably within the littorals remains a foundational requirement for deterrence and combat credibility.

Littoral mobility extends the reach of amphibious shipping by enabling operations in shallow, constrained, and austere environments beyond the limits of the well deck. Together, amphibious warships and littoral maneuver platforms allow Marines to disperse, concentrate, and reaggregate as conditions dictate, complicating adversary targeting and preserving operational tempo. This combination underpins the Marine Corps' contribution to naval campaigns, supports persistent forward posture, and enables rapid response across a range of contingencies.

<u>Medium Landing Ship – Selection of LST-100</u>

The selection of the LST-100 design for the Medium Landing Ship (LSM) reflects a deliberate balance between operational utility, technical maturity, and speed to fielding. We are grateful for the support and decisive actions of the President, Congress, and our Navy partners to acquire this critical capability. Leveraging a non-developmental design enables construction to begin sooner while delivering the payload, range, and beaching capability required to support maneuver and sustainment in contested littorals. The ship's size and draft allow access to shallow waters and austere shorelines where larger amphibious ships cannot operate, directly supporting distributed maritime operations.

Equally important, this approach reduces cost, shortens timelines to realizing initial operational capability, and supports industrial base stability through predictable production. Initial funding supports construction of the first vessel and follow-on ships, with plans to accelerate delivery through multiple shipyards. The Marine Corps hopes to see multiple shipyards actively constructing ships within the year, ensuring that the momentum of this program delivers

meaningful capability sooner. While the Medium Landing Ship will arrive later than originally planned, recent decisions have restored momentum and set conditions for fielding the first vessels in the coming decade.

Littoral Maneuver Bridging Strategy

Until the Medium Landing Ship is fielded in sufficient numbers, the Littoral Maneuver Bridging Strategy provides a necessary near-term solution to address critical mobility gaps. The strategy integrates contractor owned/contractor operated chartered vessels, hybrid-crewed expeditionary fast transport platforms, experimentation efforts, and selective modernization to sustain operational mobility for stand-in and forward-deployed forces. Current efforts have enabled continued campaigning in the Indo-Pacific, but they require sustained funding to remain viable beyond the near term.

The Littoral Maneuver Bridging Strategy preserves freedom of maneuver while mitigating risk created by delayed procurement timelines. It allows the Corps to maintain operational relevance, continue experimentation, and inform future requirements, but it is an interim solution by design. Without continued investment, the risk to sustained forward mobility increases as operational demand persists.

Connector Requirements – Autonomous Low-Profile Vessel, Multi-Mission Reconnaissance Craft, LCU 1710

A family of connectors remains essential to sustaining littoral mobility across diverse operational conditions. Platforms such as the Autonomous Low-Profile Vessel, Multi-Mission Reconnaissance Craft, and LCU 1710 provide complementary capabilities that enable tactical maneuver, logistics distribution, and reconnaissance in shallow and austere environments. These systems reduce reliance on large, predictable platforms and expand the Corps' ability to operate across constrained maritime terrain.

Increasing capacity across this connector portfolio ensures the Marine Corps can adapt to region-specific challenges while sustaining combat power forward. Together with interim solutions and future purpose-built platforms, these connectors provide the flexibility required to support distributed operations today while the Corps transitions to a more resilient littoral mobility architecture.

Logistics in a Contested Environment

Modern operations require sustainment systems capable of operating under persistent surveillance, long-range precision targeting, and deliberate adversary efforts to disrupt logistics networks. In contested environments, sustainment is no longer a rear-area function but a forward warfighting requirement. The Marine Corps continues to refine its approach to logistics by prioritizing resilience, speed, and adaptability, ensuring forces can sustain tempo while operating at range and under observation.

This approach leverages prepositioned stocks, strengthens the resilience of the global positioning network, and invests in capabilities that shorten sustainment timelines and reduces signatures. These efforts are informed by the operational experience of forward-deployed units that routinely

contend with constrained access, contested distribution routes, and the need to operate without predictable logistics nodes.

Maritime Prepositioning Force and Global Positioning Network

The Maritime Prepositioning Force remains central to contested logistics. It reduces deployment timelines and enables Marine forces to access critical equipment during the initial phases of a crisis, preserving momentum and enabling rapid transition to operations. Complemented by the Global Positioning Network, ashore prepositioned stocks, equipment, and contracting allow the Corps to close forces quickly while reducing reliance on extended and vulnerable supply lines. Together, these capabilities underpin the Marine Corps' ability to respond rapidly and sustain combat power forward.

Magazine Depth and Ammunition

Sustaining lethality in contested environments requires sufficient magazine depth to support extended operations. The Marine Corps continues to prioritize ammunition availability to ensure forces can maintain combat effectiveness during protracted conflict. Adequate magazine depth preserves freedom of action, reduces operational risk, and allows commanders to operate without constraint imposed by resupply limitations in contested maritime terrain.

The fielding of Naval Strike Missiles (NSM) to support the Navy-Marine Corps Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS) enhances the Corps' ability to sustain combat power in maritime and littoral environments. Long Range Anti-Ship Missiles (LRASM) and Precision Attack Strike Munition (PASM), along with the Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) Family of Munitions (MFOM), provide critical support in a protracted conflict, ensuring the Marine Corps can project sustained power across vast distances. These munitions are essential for maintaining the Corps' ability to deter and, if necessary, decisively engage adversaries while minimizing the risks posed by resupply limitations in the face of extended operations.

Digital Manufacturing

Digital manufacturing expands the Corps' ability to generate sustainment forward and reinforces the expeditionary ethos. The Marine Corps is shifting advanced manufacturing from a narrow supply and maintenance tool toward a warfighting capability that pushes production closer to the tactical edge and reduces predictable logistics targets. Updated policy now enables lower-level commanders to employ advanced-manufactured items for a wider set of applications when technical data rights exist and risk is acceptable, but fielding remains constrained by capacity and resourcing. The Tactical Fabrication, Expeditionary Fabrication, and Advanced Integrated Mobile Machine Shop systems are our solution to employing advanced-manufacturing at the lower-level. We are working to address constraints and field these capabilities as rapidly as possible. At the same time, the digital manufacturing data vault has grown to approximately 650 approved repair parts and designs, but broad employment remains limited by technical data rights constraints and cybersecurity policies that complicate access to the full dataset when forward-deployed.

Casualty Care and Room-Temperature Blood

Casualty care remains a critical component of contested logistics. As future conflicts extend evacuation timelines under long-range fires, electronic warfare, and access constraints, the Corps

is modernizing austere medical support toward a more distributed system designed for dispersed maritime operations and stand-in forces. The development of room-temperature blood products and freeze-dried plasma aims to address these challenges by enabling life-saving interventions in the field without the need for complex cold-chain logistics. These efforts strengthen survivability and preserve combat power when evacuation is delayed and access to established medical facilities is limited.

Installation Resilience

Installations remain the foundation upon which readiness and warfighting proficiency are built. They support training, sustainment, pre-deployment preparation, and the daily activities that enable Marines to deploy ready to fight. Enhancing installation resilience is therefore essential to the Marine Corps' ability to generate and sustain forces in contested environments. The Corps is modernizing installation communications by eliminating antiquated analog systems, improving the installation communications grid, and embedding Operational Technology (OT) into facilities and utilities operations to secure, monitor, and defend facility-related control systems. Delivering a modern installation communications grid that is capable of meeting emerging requirements is a priority. Additionally, the Corps is developing a regional network security operations center concept as an integration point for local cyber response.

Modernization and Lethality

The Marine Corps continues to modernize at a pace shaped by the demands of the operating environment and the lessons drawn from forward-deployed forces. We are grateful for the Department of War's recent initiative to reform the acquisition system to maximize combat readiness by prioritizing the timely and urgent delivery of operational capabilities to the warfighter. Modern conflict requires formations that can sense, shoot, maneuver, and communicate under persistent surveillance and long-range precision threat. The Corps' modernization efforts are focused on ensuring Marines can fight and prevail in contested littorals while supporting the naval and joint team.

Precision Fires

Modernization of precision fires provides commanders with the ability to engage targets at extended ranges with increased accuracy and responsiveness. These capabilities allow Marine forces to shape adversary decision making, hold key systems at risk, and extend the reach of naval and joint fires. Precision fires enhance the Corps' ability to contribute meaningfully to joint kill chains while remaining mobile and survivable in contested environments.

The Naval Strike Missile (NSM), fired from the Navy-Marine Corps Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS), provides a critical capability for surface warfare with a range exceeding 100 nautical miles. This ground-based anti-ship missile system, capable of launching from a highly mobile platform, enhances the Marine Corps' ability to disrupt enemy maritime operations across large areas of the Indo-Pacific. NMESIS has completed multiple successful live-fire events, reinforcing the Corps' role in sea-denial operations. The system will be further expanded with Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) Family of Munitions (MFOM) Launch Unit (MLU), currently under development, to provide enhanced flexibility and targeting options from the same platform.

Additionally, the Precision Strike Missile (PrSM), integrated with the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), provides the Marine Corps with precision strike capabilities that exceed current ranges. HIMARS, now operational in both the Active and Reserve components, forms a core part of the Marine Corps' surface-based long-range precision fires capability, enabling long-range engagements while maintaining rapid mobility.

Ground Based Air Defense (GBAD) – Family of Systems

Ground-based air defense capabilities continue to evolve in response to the growing threat posed by unmanned systems, cruise missiles, and other aerial platforms. The Corps is developing and fielding a family of ground-based air defense systems that provides layered protection across dispersed formations. These capabilities enable Marines to maneuver with greater confidence, preserve freedom of action, and operate under increasingly complex aerial threat conditions.

The Organic Counter Small Unmanned Aircraft System (O-CsUAS) initiative provides a force protection solution against small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS) across every element of the Marine Corps. O-CsUAS integrates active and passive sensors, electromagnetic warfare jammers, and kinetic defeat capabilities, such as anti-drone cartridges, remote weapon stations, and drone interceptors. These systems leverage existing weapon systems within Marine formations and includes dismounted systems for squad-level use, mounted systems for vehicle integration, and expeditionary systems for protecting command and control nodes, logistics hubs, and operationally-fixed expeditionary sites. We are working to field these systems across the force as rapidly as possible.

The Installation Counter Small Unmanned Aircraft System (I-CsUAS) is designed to protect critical assets on Marine Corps installations, both within the Continental United States and on overseas territories. I-CsUAS integrates a combination of active and passive sensors, electromagnetic warfare jammers, drone interceptors, and command-and-control software to detect, track, identify, and defeat sUAS threats. These systems are tailored to each installation's unique needs and will be employed by base personnel to protect key infrastructure. Initial capabilities are now being fielded at select installations. It is projected that the program will continue to expand, with capabilities being fielded to installations across the entire Marine Corps.

The Marine Air Defense Integrated System (MADIS) is a cornerstone of the Corps' air defense modernization. Mounted on Joint Light Tactical Vehicles (JLTVs), MADIS counters a range of aerial threats, including Group 1-3 UAS, rotary-wing, and fixed-wing aircraft. The Corps has fielded the initial systems, and the capability will be further expanded with the integration of additional munitions, improved sensors, command and control capabilities, and electromagnetic warfare enhancements.

Building on this, the Light-Marine Air Defense Integrated System (L-MADIS) offers an upgradeable and lighter solution for protecting forces against Group 1-3 UAS, rotary-wing, and fixed-wing aircraft at low altitudes. The Mk-1 variant of L-MADIS is equipped with shoulder-fired Stinger missiles, while the Mk-2 serves as a command-and-control node, integrating active and passive detection and electromagnetic warfare capabilities. The L-MADIS system will provide a mobile, expeditionary air defense solution for agile, distributed operations.

The Medium Range Intercept Capability (MRIC) system further enhances the Corps' layered defense by defending forward-deployed forces against cruise missiles and larger UAS threats. MRIC integrates the TPS-80 G/ATOR and the Common Aviation Command and Control System (CAC2S) with Tamir interceptors and key components from the Iron Dome Defense System to provide high-end defense against complex aerial threats. The initial system was delivered to III MEF, with an eventual goal of increasing the total number of systems across the Marine Corps.

Unmanned Systems and Counter-Unmanned Systems

Unmanned and counter-unmanned systems enhance the Marine Corps' ability to sense, strike, and sustain while complicating adversary targeting. These systems increase situational awareness, enable distributed decision-making, and reduce risk to Marines by complementing manned platforms. Ongoing experimentation and integration are improving resilience and lethality, allowing the Corps to persist within threat envelopes and support joint operations.

The Marine Corps is accelerating the integration of first-person view (FPV) and one-way attack drones into formations across the Fleet Marine Force to enhance individual and unit lethality. Through the Marine Corps Attack Drone Team's aggressive training and experimentation, the Corps is rapidly integrating FPV and one-way attack drone training into units at every echelon and fielding capabilities to formations across the globe. This has enabled Marines to further refine employment tactics, techniques, and procedures and accelerate proficiency. The Marine Corps is working towards service-level implementation and incorporating the FPV drone curriculum into entry level training. The Marine Corps is fully committed to organizing, training, and equipping forces with the lethal drones the modern battlefield requires.

The Marine Corps is advancing its unmanned systems portfolio, with significant progress in both ground and aerial platforms. The MQ-9A Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) is being used extensively in the Indo-Pacific, supporting long-range surveillance and intelligence gathering. The Tactical Resupply UAS (TRUAS) has been integrated into logistical operations enabling autonomous resupply missions with greater situational awareness.

In the Counter-Unmanned Systems domain, the Marine Corps is fielding systems like MADIS and L-MADIS to provide defense against aerial threats, while also expanding its Unmanned Common Controller to allow for the management of multiple unmanned platforms from a single interface. These developments are designed to enhance operational flexibility, ensuring the Corps can effectively counter adversary UAS and remain agile in contested environments.

These advancements position the Marine Corps to operate effectively in contested environments, maintaining decision advantage and combat readiness across multiple domains.

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance

ISR capabilities continue to mature through the integration of multi-domain sensing networks that provide persistent awareness in contested environments. These systems enhance commanders' understanding of the battlespace, enabling rapid responses to changing conditions. The Marine Corps is prioritizing organic ISR systems to improve maritime domain awareness and operational flexibility.

Key advancements include the MQ-9A Unmanned Aircraft System, which provides long-range surveillance and real-time intelligence for forward-deployed forces. Additionally, the TPS-80 Ground/Air Task-Oriented Radar (G/ATOR) system, now operational, supports integrated air and missile defense, while also enhancing joint targeting and battlespace awareness.

The Family of Integrated Targeting Cells (FITC) supports the Corps' role in closing kill webs and improving integration with joint and coalition forces. This system ensures Marines have access to critical data, even in contested and degraded environments, by correlating sensor feeds across multiple platforms. The Terrestrial Collection Systems (TCS), including Ground-Based Maritime Sensors and Unattended Ground Sensors, provide organic, near-real-time intelligence to Marine Air-Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs), reducing reliance on external intelligence networks.

The Marine Corps is also expanding its contribution to the space domain. Marines serve as a key component for United States Space Command delivering expeditionary space capability through the Electromagnetic Reconnaissance System (ERS) and the prototype Enos system. Marines are actively contributing to the Joint Force by providing a range of critical capabilities from space-based ISR to space control.

These capabilities ensure that the Marine Corps remains ready to respond rapidly and effectively, sustaining its operational advantage and enhancing mission success in multi-domain operations.

Aviation Modernization

Key modernization initiatives within the 2026 Marine Corps Aviation Plan include the Tactical Aircraft Transition Plan, modernization of MV-22s and H-1s, CH-53K Transition Plan, and integration of Collaborative Combat Aircraft for advanced manned-unmanned teaming capabilities.

The phased transition of tactical aircraft provides the Corps with the capacity to compete in near-peer, high-risk environments in support of the MAGTF and Joint Force. The F-35 program is going through a focused period of upgrades and modernization to close and accelerate kill chains and increase survivability against modern defenses.

Modernization efforts for the MV-22 are focused on platform modernization and aircraft inventory management ensuring the fleet continues to meet evolving safety and operational requirements. These efforts are intended to extend the platform's service life into the 2050s.

The H-1 program's modernization plan over the next 10 years presents a lethal, survivable, and versatile tool for the MAGTF and Joint Force to combat peer-adversary malign behavior across the range of military operations in any clime and place. The modernization plan is oriented around three principal priorities: lethality, digital interoperability, and survivability. The backbone of H-1 Mid-Life Modernization is Structural and Power Improvement for Next-gen Effects, which provides greater electrical power capacity to expand current warfighting capabilities and increased ability to integrate future weapons.

The phased transition from the CH-53E Super Stallion to the CH-53K King Stallion ensures uninterrupted heavy lift capability while modernizing for future operational demands. CH-53K priorities include aircraft, parts, and spares procurement and deliveries to support transition, training, and deployment.

Finally, the Marine Corps continues to be the leading service pursuing rapid prototyping and fielding of our Collaborative Combat Aircraft that provides an unmanned capability partnered with F-35 to enhance lethality, survivability, and capacity of missions across a wide range of developing threat environments.

Command and Control – Project Dynamis

Modernization of command and control is essential for the Marine Corps to operate effectively in degraded and contested information environments. Project Dynamis is central to this transformation, enhancing information sharing, increasing resilience to adversary disruption, and supporting operations across dispersed maritime terrain.

Dynamis enables Artificial Intelligence-powered decision advantage by integrating commercial technologies with Marine Corps warfighting functions. The system supports the rapid processing and sharing of fused data across the Joint Force, providing commanders with real-time, actionable intelligence. As part of its ongoing development, Task Force Maven is expanding the Marine Corps' access to the Maven Smart System (MSS), which connects sensors, systems, and data streams across multiple domains, ensuring Marines can act at the speed and scale of relevance in joint operations.

Dynamis' ability to sustain resilient, end-to-end dynamic targeting is a key advantage for the Marine Corps. As the system continues to mature, it will enhance the Corps' ability to conduct distributed operations, maintain operational tempo, and stay ahead of adversary targeting efforts. The integration of MSS, now used by over 4,900 Marines, exemplifies the Corps' commitment to leveraging Artificial Intelligence to shape decision-making at all echelons, improving the Corps' joint kill chain capabilities in real-time operations.

Electromagnetic Warfare

Electromagnetic warfare remains a priority as the electromagnetic spectrum becomes increasingly contested, congested, and relevant to operations across all domains. The Marine Corps is aggressively pursuing new generations of distributed electromagnetic warfare systems, grounded in open architectures, to ensure rapid and continuous capability modernization and delivery. We must maintain the ability detect, deny, and degrade adversary use of the electromagnetic spectrum and ensure Marines remain adaptable and effective in it.

To achieve full integration of electromagnetic warfare, the Marine Corps is also professionalizing its Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations (EMSO) force. This initiative establishes a formal career path for technical experts charged with orchestrating electromagnetic spectrum maneuver at tactical and operational levels. These efforts will enhance operational readiness, reduce training redundancy, and provide the MAGTF with the specialized expertise necessary to command advanced non-kinetic systems while denying adversary access to the spectrum.

Modernize Training Ranges and Education Systems

Modern training ranges and professional military education (PME) continue to evolve alongside the development of new technologies and warfighting capabilities. Updated ranges, improved instrumentation, and advanced education systems ensure Marines are equipped to train realistically, integrate emerging technologies, and develop the judgment required for complex operations in increasingly contested environments.

In FY25, Marine Corps University (MCU) modernized its PME system to address the growing complexity of modern warfare. This includes the consolidation of Staff Noncommissioned Officer (SNCO) PME, which streamlines leadership development and better equips Marines to perform at the tactical and operational levels. This consolidation allows for more relevant, performance-based training that directly reflects the high-tempo, real-world challenges faced by Marines in the field.

Simultaneously, wargaming innovations have enhanced training across the Fleet Marine Force. The MCU Wargaming Cloud, offering over 15 wargames, supports global participation in company-level training, encouraging calculated decision-making under uncertainty. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the PME curriculum has further expanded Marines' understanding of emerging technologies and enhanced their ability to operate in a digital warfare environment.

The Marine Corps also invested in range modernization in FY26, focusing on expanding airspace and improving simulation systems, such as the Marine Corps Tactical Instrumentation System (MCTIS). These upgrades provide unambiguous feedback, enabling real-time adjudication of target engagements and improving overall proficiency. By FY27, these enhancements will support integrated air-ground training, including the use of unmanned systems, facilitating joint and combined arms exercises in increasingly complex environments.

These efforts strengthen the Corps' ability to adapt, experiment, and train for the multi-domain battlespace, ensuring Marines are ready for the evolving challenges of modern warfare.

Third Consecutive Clean Audit Opinion

The Marine Corps has now achieved its third consecutive clean audit opinion, establishing a reliable trend in financial management. This milestone highlights ongoing improvements in accountability and resource stewardship. By consistently meeting audit standards, the Corps demonstrates its ability to manage resources effectively while adapting to a complex operational environment. Strong financial stewardship will remain critical as the Marine Corps continues its modernization efforts and ensures resources are allocated efficiently to sustain momentum.

Building and Sustaining a Lethal Force

The strength of the Marine Corps begins with the Marines themselves. As a warfighting organization, the Corps' focus remains on readiness, and caring for Marines is an essential component of that mission. Building and sustaining a lethal force requires a deliberate investment in the people who fight, lead, and sustain the Corps, ensuring they remain prepared to meet the challenges of demanding operational conditions.

Barracks 2030

Barracks 2030 advances readiness by providing Marines with modern, safe living conditions essential for the Corps' expeditionary mission. The initiative focuses on improving management, modernization, and material, aiming to provide functional housing that enhances operational readiness.

This effort is not seen as an amenity but as a critical readiness infrastructure component. Barracks modernization supports retention and discipline by promoting stability and reducing distractions. Continued investment ensures sustained improvements.

By modernizing housing, the Marine Corps aligns with the Secretary of War's Barracks Task Force vision, reinforcing a culture of readiness and improving quality of life for Marines, directly impacting retention and long-term operational effectiveness.

Marine Corps Total Fitness

Marine Corps Total Fitness (MCTF) provides a comprehensive approach to physical, mental, spiritual, and social readiness. This framework reflects the reality that Marines must operate under stress, adapt rapidly, and sustain performance over time. In FY25, the Marine Corps began implementing the Warrior Athlete Readiness and Resilience (WARR) program, expanding its focus on mental and physical health to improve Marines' overall resilience. The program emphasizes combat readiness and the ability to thrive in high-stress, dynamic environments.

Marine Corps Total Fitness strengthens individual Marines while reinforcing unit cohesion and combat effectiveness. The Personal Readiness Seminar (PRS), retooled in FY25, provides Marines with skills across financial literacy, mental health awareness, and physical conditioning. In addition, Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) programs have been implemented at all levels, ensuring Marines are prepared to handle stress and build resilience under pressure.

Total Compensation – Pay, Benefits, Skills, and Services

Quality of life is best understood through the lens of total compensation. Regular Military Compensation, which represents cash payment of basic pay, subsistence and housing allowances, and a federal tax advantage, is above the 75th percentile for both enlisted members and officers when compared to civilian pay. A broad range of targeted bonuses, special pay, and incentive pay support the Service's recruiting and retention missions. Marines also receive a comprehensive package that includes access to housing, healthcare, meals in-kind, childcare, education, and transition benefits, all of which directly support readiness. Equally important, the Corps invests heavily in training and skill development that translates beyond military service. This full package compares favorably with civilian opportunities and must be understood as an integrated system that enables Marines to focus on mission execution.

In FY25, the Marine Corps expanded initiatives to improve family support, including enhancing childcare access and streamlining professional development programs for spouses. Through the Spouse Relicensing and Business Reimbursement Program, over $235,000 has been provided to 587 spouses between FY19 and FY25, helping them maintain career continuity during Permanent Change of Station (PCS) transitions. While this initiative has made significant strides

in addressing challenges related to professional licensure reciprocity, more work remains to ensure that military spouses can maintain stable, mobile careers despite frequent relocations.

These efforts, aimed at reducing family stress and increasing stability, do not dilute the Corps' standards or ethos; rather, they reinforce them by enabling Marines to focus on their mission, reducing distractions, and fostering resilience. By supporting Marines and their families with stable living conditions, career development, and a supportive environment, the Corps ensures sustained readiness, operational effectiveness, and long-term retention.

Enduring Responsibilities

The Marine Corps remains committed to addressing enduring responsibilities, including preventing sexual assault, reducing suicide, and countering substance abuse. These efforts are essential for maintaining discipline, trust, and professionalism. The Corps has continued to evolve its Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) program, leveraging data-informed strategies and leadership engagement to reduce incidents. In FY25, SAPR recorded a slight decrease in reports, though we remain committed to protecting our Marines and holding offenders appropriately accountable.

Suicide prevention is also a top priority. Marine Corps Total Fitness (MCTF) and Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) are key to our suicide prevention strategy. OSCAR operationalizes MCTF through peer-to-peer engagement and opportunities to build skills across the spiritual, social, mental, and physical domains to better prepare Marines for the stressors they will experience on the battlefield and in life thus enhancing readiness and resilience. The Marine Corps continues to utilize Command Individual Risk and Resiliency Assessment System (CIRRAS) to further help identify at-risk Marines, facilitating early intervention through the Force Preservation Council and the Marine Intercept Program (MIP). The Corps has further strengthened its Substance Assessment and Counseling Program (SACP), offering support, outreach, and prevention education to reduce misuse. In FY25, more than 9,100 Marines participated in SACP alcohol education classes and SACP counselors convened more than 10,000 counseling sessions.

These efforts remain essential to maintaining discipline, trust, and professionalism. The Corps recognizes that combat effectiveness depends on the character and health of Marines as much as on the capabilities they employ. Upholding these standards reinforces the moral foundation that has guided the Corps since its founding and remains essential.

Recruit, Make, and Retain Marines

Recruiting, making, and retaining Marines remains essential to meeting operational requirements. In FY25, the Marine Corps met its mission by component and category, overcoming challenges like decreased high school access and COVID-19 aftermath. Despite these obstacles, the Corps exceeded its Start Pool goal by growing it to 39 percent, marking a 10 percent increase from the previous year.

Retention efforts are equally important. In FY25, the Marine Corps retained 17,044 Marines, achieving 107 percent of its First Term Alignment Plan (FTAP) goal, surpassing expectations and demonstrating strong retention success. This success was driven in part by the use of

Selective Retention Bonuses (SRB) and the Commandant's Retention Program (CRP), which played a crucial role in retaining high-demand skill Marines.

In FY26, the Marine Corps met its retention goal within the first month of the fiscal year, demonstrating strong momentum. Additionally, the expansion of career development programs ensures Marines remain engaged, focused, and prepared for future leadership roles.

As also supported by PB27, the Marine Corps is executing a Force Structure Review Group, to responsibly design the future force structure with an achievable growth trajectory. Driven by strategic guidance and service-level priorities, this effort will detail recruiting and retention efforts, changes to force structure, changes to training and education, operational employment, and required resources. The Marine Corps will establish a new objective force with an executable force trajectory that is assessed, optimized, and implemented via the DOTMLPF-C framework to identify the fully burdened cost.

Reserve Optimization

The Reserve Component provides depth, experience, and a vital link to communities across the country. Optimizing reserve activation and utilization ensures the total force remains integrated and responsive. In FY25, the Marine Corps Reserve contributed significantly to the Global Force Management Allocation Plan (GFMAP), activating nearly 1,000 Reserve Marines for operations across Southwest Asia, South America, and Africa. In addition, approximately 9,770 Reserve Marines integrated with Joint Forces and partners across the globe to support more than 50 exercises. This increased activation demonstrates the Reserve Component's growing role in supporting the Active Component across global missions.

A well-aligned reserve force enhances surge capacity and reinforces the Marine Corps' ability to respond rapidly when required. Reserve modernization plans aim to synchronize active and reserve efforts, ensuring no decrements to force offerings as units undergo modernization. Key initiatives, such as Marine Corps Forces Reserves' expansion of reserve infantry unit modernization, training investment, and equipment availability and readiness are integral to this effort. These actions ensure the Marine Corps' Reserve remains a ready, reliable force, contributing effectively to joint operations, crisis response, and global competition.

Conclusion

The Marine Corps remains a forward, ready, and lethal naval expeditionary force, poised to deter, respond, and fight when called upon. Our global posture, reinforced by forward-deployed forces and a sustained ARG/MEU presence, ensures national leaders and combatant commanders have scalable options that preserve decision space and strengthen deterrence, particularly in contested regions.

Investments to set the theater, including littoral mobility and contested logistics, enhance our ability to maneuver and sustain combat power, even under persistent surveillance and long-range threats. These capabilities ensure Marines can operate at the speed demanded by modern warfare.

Modernization continues to gain momentum, shifting from experimentation to fielding, with a focus on precision fires, air defense, unmanned systems, resilient command and control, and electromagnetic warfare. These advances, along with disciplined resource management and sustained investment in Marines, reinforce our commitment to readiness and ensure unmatched lethality.

With your continued support, we will build on this momentum to maintain a Marine Corps that is capable, resilient, and prepared to meet the challenges of the future. As we mark our 250th year, we stand committed to sustaining the ethos that has always guided the Corps and will continue to ensure its effectiveness for years to come.