

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE  
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

**STATEMENT OF**

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**OPERATIONS, PLANS, AND STRATEGY**

**ON**

**AMPHIBIOUS WARFARE READINESS AND TRAINING – INTEROPERABILITY,**

**SHORTFALLS, AND THE WAY AHEAD**

**BEFORE THE**

**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS**

**DECEMBER 1, 2017**

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Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Bordallo, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, we appreciate the opportunity to testify today.

The Navy and Marine Corps team is forward deployed and standing the watch. Today Sailors and Marines are at sea aboard the AMERICA ARG and 15 MEU in Central Command, USS ESSEX in the Pacific and IWO JIMA ARG and 26 MEU in the Atlantic. We are on the tip of the spear and working every day to sharpen it.

The Navy and Marine Corps have reviewed the GAO report GAO-17-477C “NAVY AND MARINE CORPS TRAINING – Further Planning Needed for Amphibious Operations Training” and agree with the study, its findings, and its recommendations. Today’s testimony provides the Navy and Marine Corps team the opportunity to inform the Readiness Subcommittee on the challenges associated with Navy and Marine Corps’ amphibious operations training and integration, discuss our shortfalls, and layout our projected way ahead.

The GAO report finds the Navy’s shortage of amphibious ships to be detrimental to our ability to train for “other amphibious priorities” beyond the Amphibious Ready Group/ Marine Expeditionary Unit (ARG/MEU) requirements. As a result of the Budget Control Act and ongoing Continuing Resolutions, the shortage of amphibious ships is the primary challenge to our Amphibious Training. The Navy’s 2016 Force Structure Assessment established a requirement of 38 amphibious warships. The amphibious force structure is projected to grow to a total of 34 ships starting in FY 2021.

While the on hand number of amphibious warships falls short of the mutually agreed upon 38 ship requirement, the current 30-year shipbuilding plan supports a 38-ship amphibious fleet. The Marine Corps fully supports the 38 ship amphibious fleet and the allocation requisite funding to improve the readiness of the current amphibious fleet. Amphibious ships are

deployed to meet both CCMD operational requirements and required contingency operations, such as hurricane or tsunami relief, which impacts the ability of the Navy and Marine Corps to train as an integrated force. Until we reach 38 ships contingency responses and extended shipyard availabilities have a significant potential to impact training and lead to delays in fulfilling enduring requirements. The JSF/CANES modernization period for the LHDs has grown from the originally planned 7-10 months to 16 months, which reduced ARG/MEU availability (LHD Mods will continue thru FY25). These gaps, in addition to our amphibious warship shortage, add layers of risk in preparing the naval service to neutralize an enemy lodgment in a forcible entry operation and operate in a contested environment.

At the direction of CNO and the CMC, through the Naval Board, the services incorporated processes to posture for increased training and integration. The ARG/MEU shall retain unity of command/effort in all employment configurations. The Joint Staff will reflect command relationships for an ARG/MEU such that each ARG/MEU shall be OPCON to a single combatant commander, as adjudicated by the Joint Staff, that most requires its capabilities. In these instances, when another combatant commander requires support from that ARG/MEU, select forces will be provided Tactical Control (TACON) to that combatant commander. The ARG/MEU command elements onboard the LHD will maintain unity of command of ARG/MEU elements operating TACON across CCMD boundaries. This practice will be referred to as “distributed”.

To achieve a fully integrated naval force requires a new approach to training. We must train as we intend to fight. The Navy and Marine Corps have established service level agreements that prioritize limited amphibious assets and outlines service responsibilities with regards to amphibious training, experimentation and concept development. This requires global

force management teams to align Navy and Marine Corps deployment requirements, prioritize critical warship resources, and maximize unit level and MAGTF amphibious training. Both USFF/MARFORCOM and CPF/MARFORPAC have approved Campaign Plans for Amphibious Operational Training (CPAOT) that are rolling 5-yr schedules of USN/USMC amphibious training exercises ranging from Table Top Exercises to Fleet Exercises such as BOLD ALLIGATOR series.

Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command (USFLTFORCOM) and Commander, U.S. Marine Forces Command (MARFORCOM) established a co-led Maritime Working Group (MWG) to provide an enduring inter-service collaborative process that integrates capabilities, force development, experimentation, and emerging requirements with exercise planning, scheduling and resourcing to advance naval concepts and warfighting readiness. Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet and Commander, U.S. Marine Forces Pacific also developed the Pacific Naval Integration Working Group (PNIWG) to incorporate PACOM issues into the MWG.

Eight years of Continuing Resolutions (CRs) and caps imposed by the Budget Control Act have impacted our ability to plan and schedule training, ship maintenance, and modernization. While we have prioritized our maintenance and readiness dollars, the positive effects of funding will not remove this deficit in the near term. Restoring the short-term readiness of the fleet requires predictable funding. This funding will ensure that we can conduct the required maintenance on our ships. It would also enable the Navy to restore stocks of necessary parts, getting more ships to sea and better preparing Sailors and Marines for deployment.

CR funding threatens fleet readiness. For example, USS GUNSTON HALL (LSD-44) had maintenance cancelled in 2011 due to CR restrictions. The ship received its deferred

maintenance, for which the operational and monetary costs increased from 270 days to 696 days and from \$44.7M to \$111M. These are days and dollars that are lost to train our amphibious forces

The recent post-hurricane Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) and Foreign Disaster Relief (FDR) operations resulted in the IWO JIMA ARG plus USS KEARSARGE missing the valuable pre-deployment training exercises such as BOLD ALLIGATOR and operational delays to their future deployment. The USS WASP, our first F-35B ready LHD, which participated in the DSCA operations, has been delayed in reaching the Pacific Fleet due to emergent maintenance repairs, and has been forced to reschedule pre-deployment training. WASP is underway now for a homeport shift to Sasebo, Japan to become part of the Navy's Forward Deployed Naval Forces.

The Navy and Marine Corps are working diligently to integrate capabilities, synchronize efforts, and move forward as a unified force, ready and able to meet all challenges across the range of military operations. Naval integration requires training as a single unit because we will fight as a single unit. A current example of this focus is the evolution of the sea control mission. Modern sea control against a near peer competitor is an integrated naval mission that leverages concepts and capabilities such as the Expeditionary Advance Base Operations (EABO) and the F-35B to seize and maintain sea control.

On behalf of all of our Marines, Sailors, civilians and their families, we thank the Congress and this committee for this opportunity to discuss the key challenges your Navy and Marine Corps face. The President's Fiscal Year 2018 request looks toward fleet wholeness, funding to man, train, and equip the Navy and Marine Corps. These funds will only work if they

are approved in a consistent and predictable manner. With your help, we will overcome these constraints and reshape your Navy and Marine Corps to meet the challenges of the 21st century.