

**STATEMENT**  
**OF**  
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**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**  
**DEPUTY COMMANDANT PLANS, POLICIES, AND OPERATIONS**  
**BEFORE THE**  
**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS**  
**ON**  
**MARINE CORPS READINESS**  
**6 MARCH 2018**

## **Introduction**

Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Bordallo, and distinguished members of the House Subcommittee on Readiness, I thank you for the continued support of the United States Marine Corps. I appreciate the opportunity to present the readiness of our total force along with our Deputy Commandant for Installations and Logistics and the Commander of our reserve forces. The 82nd and 114th Congress stated that the Marine Corps must be the most ready when the nation is least ready, providing a balanced force in readiness for a naval campaign. The Marine Corps, partnered with the Navy, continues to fulfill that mandate as the Nation's expeditionary-force in-readiness.

After years of prioritizing readiness to meet recurring requirements largely centered on countering violent extremist organizations, our strategy now defines readiness as our ability to compete, deter, and win against nation state threats. We will measure readiness by whether we possess the required capability and capacity to defeat threats as outlined in the National Defense Strategy (NDS). The Marine Corps Operating Concept published in September 2016 is fully consistent with the recently published NDS where our forward deployed units, routinely integrated with the Navy, operate within the contact and blunt layers to assure our partners, deter our adversaries, and ensure unimpeded access to the global commons. As part of the blunt layer, forward-stationed forces delay, disrupt, and deny regional hegemony's objectives. Marines and Sailors who constitute the surge layer at their home stations are prepared to rapidly aggregate and project power as part of a larger war-winning joint force.

The Marine Corps operating forces continue to maintain a high deployment tempo. In the past year, Marine Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs) provided support to Iraqi forces and Syrian Democratic Forces enabling our partners to defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Our Marines continue to train, advise, assist, and build military capacity with key partners around the globe. Land and sea-based Marines provided immediate disaster response in the aftermath of four hurricanes. III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), our vanguard in the Pacific, stands ready to defend our allies on the Korean peninsula against North Korea aggression.

The Marine Corps continues to adapt our organization, training, equipment, and posture to meet the challenges of inter-state and near peer competition. The NDS also directs us to modernize our capabilities to achieve increased lethality and resilience. Current operations and global combatant command requirements continue to stress our legacy systems and impact our ability to build comprehensive readiness.

### **Modernization**

Modernization is a vital component of our readiness – our ability to deter and defeat technologically sophisticated state actors. Previous decrements to our modernization accounts deferred future capabilities and infrastructure improvements which prolonged our reliance on legacy systems that lack the required capabilities for the future. Over time, legacy systems cost more to repair and sustain. Prioritizing modernization, particularly where we can leverage joint buys, will reduce average unit procurement costs and achieve efficiencies for the Department. Our major investment areas include information warfare, long range precision fires, air defense, command and control, and protected mobility/enhanced maneuver.

Our modernization programs are designed to achieve overmatch in capabilities against our most technologically advanced competitor while ensuring a competitive advantage is maintained across the range of military operations. The overall theme for PB19, *Modernizing for the Future Force*, focuses on three key budget priorities – *modernization, readiness, and manpower* – directly aligning with the Secretary of Defense’s guidance to improve warfighting readiness, achieve program balance, and increase lethality. Our capability investment strategy, Marine Corps Force 2025, modernizes the force toward implementing the Marine Corps Operating Concept. We are in the process of building a more lethal, maneuverable, and resilient force that retains the ability to operate and project power within and across all domains. The Marine Corps remains committed to building the most ready force our Nation can afford, allocating \$40.4 billion to our ground and aviation baseline budget, and an additional \$3.1 billion in Overseas Contingency Operations funding as part of the PB19 submission – a 7% increase over last year’s

submission. Additionally, we plan to resource our infrastructure reset, Asia-Pacific rebalance, new structure, materiel, munitions, maintenance and training requirements that together generate the required capability and capacity.

The Corps will also invest in advanced simulation training systems, particularly for ground units. The Marine Corps has focused its immersive training efforts on improving the infantry squad leader's ability to make tactically, morally, and ethically sound decisions under simulated combat conditions. Currently there are three Infantry Immersive Trainers, one located with each MEF. Thanks to the Congress, in FY19 construction will begin for a new Immersive Training facility for Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

During 2017, Secretary Mattis chartered a close combat strategic portfolio review to improve small unit combat lethality and resiliency. The Secretary of Defense's review resulted in the establishment of a Close Combat Lethality Task Force that will yield significant material and non-material improvements for ground combat formations. The first phase of the effort resulted in \$550 million for the Marine Corps over a multi-year period. These funds are being applied to fielding the M3A1, Multi-Role Anti-Armor Anti-Personnel Weapon System or "Carl Gustaf." Current plans will enable fielding of 1,073 systems across Marine Corps infantry at an accelerated rate. Additionally, we will field an enhanced thermal imager for our ground combat units during FY20. We will leverage the work and resources of the Lethality Task Force in combination with our Marine Corps Warfighting Lab and Combat Development Directorate to increase the lethality of all of our ground combat formations, to include; artillery, reconnaissance, light armored reconnaissance, and combat engineer units.

### **Information Domain: Transforming C2 Capabilities**

The current and next generation Marine Corps must maintain access, freedom of maneuver, and the ability to project power in all domains. We must enable and protect our ability to command and control (C2) widely distributed units. We will transform MAGTF C2 capabilities through a network that is secure and horizontally and vertically integrated with the joint force

and coalition partners. Our Common Aviation Command & Control System (CAC2S) enhances the MAGTF with the required capabilities to command, control and coordinate air operations integrated with the joint force from platforms afloat or ashore. The Ground/Air Task Oriented Radar (G/ATOR) will replace five legacy systems with one expeditionary radar, providing the MAGTF an unmatched ability to maintain situational understanding of the battlespace. As warfare evolves into a battle of signatures and detection, improvements such as these are vital to maximize our Marines' protection and effectiveness.

### **Amphibious, Maritime, Expeditionary Capability & Capacity**

We appreciate Congress' commitment to building a 38-ship amphibious force and providing the requisite maintenance funding to ensure 30 ships are operationally available. Resilient and lethal amphibious platforms provide the strategic mobility, logistical support, operational reach, and forcible entry capability required to deter and defeat our Nation's adversaries. Our amphibious capability is integral to achieving our diplomatic, economic, and military objectives around the globe. Amphibious forces do not require host nation permissions to establish a combat credible presence or to influence the local dynamic. Amphibious ships with modern connectors remain paramount to our readiness, responsiveness, and execution of the NDS. To augment amphibious capacity, we employ alternative maritime platforms to provide additional seabasing options. These ships can add capacity to Amphibious Ready Groups/Marine Expeditionary Units (ARG/MEU) particularly in response to lower end contingencies. Supporting the Navy's 30-year shipbuilding plan, providing adequate funding for maintenance, and technological improvements to our L-class ships will further enable the Nation to maintain credible combat capability inside the anti-access/area denial defenses of our adversaries.

### **Aviation Modernization and Readiness**

During FY17, Congress funded critical aviation shortfalls. Most notably, there was a 14 percent increase in average flight hours per crew per month over FY16. This investment produced direct, quantifiable readiness gains. However, continuing resolutions (CRs) impact aviation readiness by inhibiting our ability to execute a year-long funding strategy, specifically

investments in spares and repair parts. Without consistent and predictable appropriations, costs are driven higher as we are unable to put contracts in place with primary suppliers or are forced to purchase parts below the optimal quantities. Through predictable budgets and on-time appropriations, we can achieve our comprehensive aviation recovery plan.

CRs have resulted in shallow acquisition ramps for the F-35B/C and CH-53K which has required us to continue sustaining and operating legacy aircraft that are rapidly approaching the end of their service lives. The single most effective way to meet our NDS responsibilities, improve overall readiness, and gain the competitive advantage required for combat against state threats is through the modernization of our aviation platforms.

Last year, our first operational F-35 squadron relocated to Iwakuni, Japan, enhanced our warfighting capabilities, demonstrated commitment to our allies in the Western Pacific, and improved overall tactical aircraft readiness. Next month we will deploy the first F-35B detachment with a MEU. The CH-53K Heavy Lift Replacement remains critical to maintain and improve the battlefield mobility our amphibious force requires; consistent funding will ensure complete fielding by FY28. The CH-53K will nearly triple the lift capacity of the CH-53E. During FY17 Congress also funded a counter-unmanned aircraft systems capability which is currently supporting our forward deployed forces; however, more work and more investment is required. The Marine Corps is grateful for the continued support to sustain our acquisition objectives that will widen our competitive advantage.

### **Ground Modernization and Readiness**

Thanks to Congressional support, our ground equipment readiness continues to improve. Our depot level maintenance facilities at Albany and Barstow remain an essential component to our ground equipment readiness strategy. FY17 appropriations were used to address intermediate and organizational maintenance challenges, increase availability of secondary repairable parts, improve the readiness of our engineer, communications, ordnance, and motor transportation units, and also funded critical munitions shortfalls.

Despite the noted readiness improvements, our most important legacy capabilities continue to age as modernization efforts fail to keep pace with our requirements. The current CRs may potentially delay the contract award of the production option for Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) 1.1, currently scheduled for June 2018. Such delays directly impact the Marine Corps' ability to divest of legacy Amphibious Assault Vehicles and invest in the lethality and mobility upgrades of the ACV. To modernize our ground combat element and ensure success against increasingly capable 21st Century threats, we need to accelerate investments in our ground systems and critical munitions.

### **Installation Infrastructure**

Our bases and stations are strategic and operational power projection platforms from which our blunt and surge layer forces deploy, fight, and win. In past years, we took risk in our installation portfolio to support near-term operational readiness.

As outlined in the NDS, our installations must prove resilient against current and emerging threats. We must selectively harden our installations to mitigate the risk to force. Additional investment is required for the modernization of training ranges to replicate future threats and exercise the technology that is enabling the 5<sup>th</sup> Generation MAGTF. Marine Corps Air-Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, California, is uniquely capable of accommodating a full-scale, live-fire Marine Expeditionary Brigade exercise. The center's expansion, made possible with significant congressional support, has enhanced the Marine Corps' ability to expand training for high end combined arms operations. However, the Marine Corps is still negotiating issues with the airspace above the expanded lands, which continues to limit the use of aviation and other select supporting arms. Your continued support is crucial to the modernization of our training infrastructure.

### **High Quality People**

Our most valuable asset is the high quality people who play the essential role in maintaining Marine Corps' readiness. Incentives are essential to the active and reserve components for

recruiting and retaining the most talented personnel within the necessary rank structure and military occupational specialties. While we expect to meet our retention goals this FY, we are faced with a competitive civilian job market particularly for Marines with highly transferable skills such as those trained in cyber operations and aviation maintenance. Special incentive pays are a critical component in achieving our retention goals. To offer such incentives, we need predictable funding in order to most effectively manage our personnel.

### **Conclusion**

On behalf of Marines, Sailors, civil servants, and our families, I thank you for the opportunity to address Marine Corps readiness. With your continued support, the United States Marine Corps will continue to be forward deployed, ready, and responsive across the range of military operations to attain our national security objectives.