

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY  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

STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

ON

BUDGET REQUEST AND READINESS POSTURE

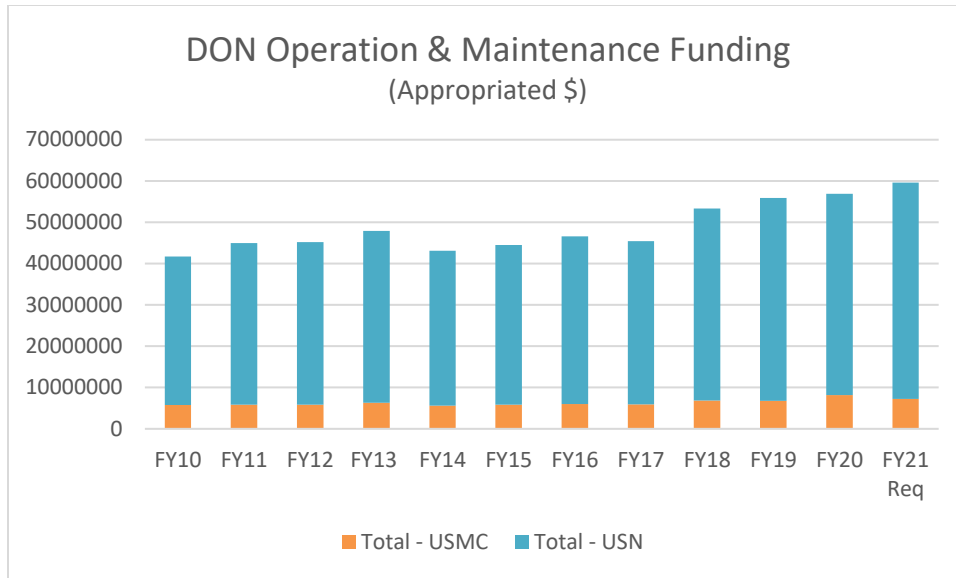
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Chairman Garamendi, Ranking Member Lamborn, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, we are pleased to appear before you today to discuss the readiness posture of the Department of the Navy. On behalf of the Sailors, Marines, civilians, and families serving around the world, thank you for continuing to make critical readiness investments in national defense over the past three years. The steady and reliable flow of resources has made a substantial impact on our ability to maintain international order, adapt to changes in the global security environment, and deter those who challenge us.

The 2018 National Defense Strategy is the first in recent history that addresses by name America's biggest geopolitical, economic, and security threats. It identifies a historical inflection point that is occurring now, as we speak - an age of swift transformation in emerging technologies and complex threats that reduces the size and scope of our competitive edge. To regain our competitive edge and cease the erosion of power, the Department must mold the strategic environment through bold initiatives in modernization, structure, and doctrine, while ensuring American Naval Dominance today and in the future. This requires the right balance of readiness, capability and capacity as well as budget stability and predictability.

The Department's 2018 and 2019 budget execution prioritized readiness recovery and provided key down payments on lethality as we turned to Great Power Competition in alignment with the National Defense Strategy. The integrated naval power of the Navy and Marine Corps is building on that momentum. The Department will be working with the Office of the Secretary of Defense to develop a consensus perspective on our future force structure through robust analysis and wargaming and the inclusion of expertise from our academic institutions (Naval War College, Naval Postgraduate School, Marine Corps University) and independent naval experts. In order to meet the nation's national security needs and remain within budget constraints, we must consider how to shift costs away from high-end platforms to a larger number of smaller, but still highly capable ships. We will continue to iterate and refine the future force structure analysis through wargaming and experimentation and evolution of naval concepts, so that we can begin to move forward with confidence as we make difficult choices today.



We remain fully committed to a larger and more lethal force, as this is truly a national imperative. However, after accounting for inflation, the Department of the Navy’s funding has been essentially flat since 2010. Therefore, the Department will be required to make deep vertical cuts of non-core missions, and continue efforts to improve processes, enhance performance and improve affordability to make up real ground.

Guided by the Department’s Business Operations Plan, we are doing just that. The Department has undertaken a zero-based budget review and continued wholeness balance reviews, where we scrutinized every line of the Department of the Navy’s budget to identify reform efforts such as the divestiture of less capable legacy platforms, contracting and business process improvements, and policy reforms. These reviews resulted in the realignment of nearly \$15 billion in the FY 2021 budget and captured \$1.4 billion in FY 2021 reform savings. These efforts will continue through the Department of the Navy’s Stem-to-Stern review that is charged with finding additional savings within the Department to reinvest in the kind of decisive naval force that will provide for our nation’s future economic and political security.

The resulting FY 2021 budget request prioritizes the allocation of dollars based on alignment to strategy, return on investment, relative value, portfolio optimization and specific outcome metrics in order to provide the best-balanced force in support of the National Defense Strategy, enabling us to deliver the people, platforms, and capabilities necessary to protect American interests around the world.



The Department’s FY 2021 budget submission optimizes use of budget dollars in order to maximize naval power. Our investments are fully aligned with the National Defense Strategy through recapitalization of the strategic ballistic missile submarine (the preponderance of our nation’s strategic nuclear deterrent force) and we are staying the course on investment in readiness recovery, and increased lethality and modernization efforts with the greatest potential to deliver non-linear warfighting advantages.

To support our focus on enduring sustainment, we established a Deputy Assistant Secretary (DASN) for Sustainment that is working to improve our ability to plan, program, budget and execute the Navy’s sustainment mission. DASN Sustainment will oversee and manage Navy and Marine Corps sustainment and life-cycle management policies, allowing the Department to improve and align the complex drivers of maintenance and modernization completion – that in turn will increase output of the Sustainment system to the Fleet.

Mission one for every Sailor and Marine is the operational readiness of the force. Currently the Navy and Marine Corps are engaged in joint integrated operations around the globe, with 51,371 Sailors and 32,900 Marines

deployed or underway on 94 ships, two carrier strike groups, and two expeditionary strike groups. These forward-postured sea-based forces are providing immediate response options, reassuring our allies, and deterring our adversaries.

A Navy and Marine Corps ready to fight today – with a commitment to training, maintenance and modernization – will ensure an integrated force ready to face tomorrow’s challenges. Our current year activities and our FY 2021 budget request are united to deliver a - more ready - and a more lethal, resilient and rapidly innovative force – to ensure we can compete, deter and win.

## **U.S. NAVY READINESS PRIORITIES**

Naval readiness is essential to our national security strategy. As this committee is well aware, over the past 18 years, our Navy has maintained a continuously high operational tempo with a fleet that is approximately half the size of the one we sent to sea during the Cold War. The result has been a backlog of maintenance, procurement, and modernization that we are tirelessly working to remedy now, with deliberate investments provided by Congress. The President's FY 2021 budget request sustains the commitments to improved readiness made in FY 2017 through FY 2020. With consistent funding, we have stopped the decline in readiness and are seeing measurable improvements on all fronts. Based on the assessed requirements, this budget request funds our major afloat and enabling readiness accounts, allowing for more at-sea time and more flying hours (increases corresponding to more ready ships and more mission capable aircraft), more ammunition and spare parts, and completion of critical maintenance, and the improved throughput of both our ship and aviation maintenance enterprises. For example, compared to 65 ship maintenance availabilities funded in FY 2020, the FY 2021 budget request funds 80 ship public and private maintenance availabilities, allowing us to sustain the capital investments we have made in our fleet.

However, we also understand that money alone is not the answer to sustainable readiness. In the past year, we have continued and expanded existing reform efforts, and have initiated many others, all aimed at improving our performance and maximizing the effective use of each and every available tax-payer dollar. Our leaders are thinking differently, preparing for the future, and owning readiness in new ways. For example, we are transforming the processes by which we generate naval aviation readiness. By using best practices from commercial aviation, we have corrected process flows in shops and hangars, continued to reduce variability and drive standardization across maintenance procedures, and adopted data-driven analytical methods to prioritize resources and evaluate our performance. We have worked with our industry partners to resolve supply chain limitations, and are steadily changing the culture of our deck plate aircraft maintainers to look at maintenance from the perspective of the life-cycle of the aircraft, not just the next flight. And our air crews are working together across Squadrons, Wings and even Fleets to optimally move scarce resources to ensure overall Navy readiness, vice hoarding those resources to make their own unit look better – that is real culture change. Our aviation depot-level Periodic Maintenance Interval (PMI) inspection cycles on FA-18 E/F aircraft are

over 57 percent faster, our supply chain is more robust, and our maintenance teams are more efficient. Last October, we achieved 80 percent Mission Capable Super Hornets – for the first time ever. This increased mission readiness is giving our pilots more flight hours to maintain currency while also allowing our Combatant Commanders to meet their warfighting requirements. This demonstrates that a balanced approach to maintenance and operations is possible. Stable, sufficient, and predictable funding is absolutely essential to continue on this glideslope.

We are applying this same holistic reform approach to ship maintenance in both private and public yards as well, making significant changes to our maintenance planning tools, leveraging modern commercial statistical methods, and using a range of contracting options with the authorities (such as the 3-year OPN pilot program) you have given us to properly plan ahead, buy ahead, allow the shipyards to stabilize their workforces, and in the process save the Navy maintenance time and the taxpayers money. Although less mature than our efforts in Naval Aviation, the shipyard efforts are beginning to produce results – nine of the last 10 nuclear aircraft carrier maintenance periods have completed on time in our public shipyards. In the private yards, the combination of efforts have taken us from a 37 percent on-time completion rate to an encouraging 56 percent current on-time completion rate and a projected rate of approximately 70 percent for the entire year. We are launching similar efforts in other critical areas, to include personnel and infrastructure.

We continue to invest in readiness generation improvements in our Surface Force as well. In the FY 2021 budget request, the Navy prioritized \$258 million (\$1.2 billion across the Future Years Defense Program) in support of all Strategic Readiness Review (SRR) and Comprehensive Review (CR) initiatives. As you heard from VADM Rich Brown, Commander, Naval Surface Forces, last month, these efforts are improving safety, manning, training, operations, equipment, governance, funding and command and control. Current and future investments in our Maritime Skills Training Program focuses on Navigation, Seamanship and Shiphandling capabilities, forging classroom and simulator improvements that enhance the development, assessment and sustainment of proficiency at individual and watch team levels. Assisted by Congress's support of SRR/CR initiatives, Navy expedited delivery of Bridge/Combat Information Center integration into our shore training facilities, achieving this integration in all worldwide Fleet Concentration Areas within a 12-month period. Construction continues on a Maritime Skills

Training Center (MSTC) in San Diego. With the \$79 million Congress provided in FY 2020 Military Construction (MILCON) funding, the Navy will award a contract for an MSTC in Norfolk this spring, with construction to begin by the end of FY 2020 and complete in FY 2022. Students of the Junior Officer of the Deck course, a critical component of the revised Surface Warfare Officer training and assessment continuum are already having a positive impact upon the readiness of their ships. Altogether, we have committed \$3.7 billion to individual, watch team and strike group training. Our Surface Force is committed to Fleet Training Wholeness, and broadening the use of instructor-led, immersive virtual reality training as part of our Surface Training Advanced Virtual Environment (STAVE) Program, consistent with the Navy's Ready, Relevant Learning philosophy and technologies. Future efforts will expand this training to ships underway and pier-side, as initial results illustrate the effectiveness of this concept relative to traditional methods. STAVE prepares watch teams to prevail in tomorrow's fight today, by cultivating personnel who can perform with experience and confidence in the most demanding tactical environments. These training enhancements are cornerstones of effective generation of ready forces.



While we have made significant strides in readiness, there are areas where we still need to improve. For example, our Submarine Force maintenance challenges remain one of our most pressing priorities. In FY 2020, we project 600 days of idle submarine operational time in our public shipyards, down over 50 percent from 1,347 days in FY 2019, but still clearly an unacceptable level. We have aggressively pursued this deficit, and identified three main challenges: public shipyard capacity not keeping pace with growing maintenance requirements, shipyard productivity, and parts availability. We are aggressively addressing each issue, although it will take time to resolve them. In our public yards, we are investing in modernization and optimization, work force hiring and training, and improvements in equipment and infrastructure necessary to increase capacity and performance. Working with our industry partners, we have allocated multiple submarines to private shipyards in order to narrow the gap between demand and capacity in our public

shipyards. We continue to work with the private sector to optimize workload and improve their performance. With these efforts, and at sustained levels of maintenance funding, we will continue increasing our efficiency and reducing the maintenance backlog.

Clearly, we need to do more to improve maintenance across our fleet if we are going to effectively sustain a larger, more capable fleet in the near future. In addition to the immediate improvements mentioned above, our 30-year Maintenance and Modernization Plan is an effort to capture all the requirements necessary to maintain mission-ready platforms. This plan will form the basis for predictable future industrial base capacity requirements, making us a better customer for our partners in the private and public yards. A forward-looking approach to sustainment is essential to grow the operational capacity of our Navy over time. In addition to stabilizing industrial base capacity, the 30-year Maintenance and Modernization Plan puts us on a path to optimized business processes, generating a stable demand signal for our industrial base so they can wisely invest and grow, while we do the same to ensure sufficient capacity to support our larger, more complex fleet. Incorporating these efforts across the enterprise will drive more predictable maintenance schedules resulting in improved material condition of our platforms.

The superb dedication and performance of our men and women, both civilian and uniformed, are the key, as none of these improvements in readiness would be possible without them. Their efforts ensure that we will be able to fight tonight if called upon. Last year, despite an extremely competitive employment market, we achieved our second highest active duty accession goals in the last 15 years, and will implement initiatives to mitigate similar market challenges in FY 2020. We continue to leverage our family of Sailor 2025 programs to bring choices, flexibility, and transparency to the Navy's personnel process. Our personnel system transformation system brings those processes into the Digital Age.

This past year we completed the transition of our MyNavy HR organization to a new operating model, emphasizing shared service delivery and consolidated enterprise support functions. We introduced DoD-leading digital apps – like MyPCS Mobile, as part of our new Navy Personnel and Pay system, where Sailors can receive a lean set of orders and a tailored Permanent Change of Station checklist right on their mobile device, as well as the ability to sign up for housing and childcare at their next duty station. They can upload pictures of their receipts, electronically sign and submit their travel voucher right from their smart phone. We



took the first steps towards establishing an Authoritative Data Environment to provide a Single Source of Truth across all our personnel and pay data systems.

Navy continued to implement officer personnel management reforms enacted in the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY 2019 to apply greater flexibility in officer management, while also offering targeted bonuses for hard-to-fill enlisted ratings, when necessary. For our newest Sailors, we increased hands-on training opportunities in core warfighting competencies of firefighting, damage control, seamanship, watch standing, and small arms handling and marksmanship. Our Ready Relevant Learning system is here and it is working. In September 2019, the Operations Specialist rating officially began training in the fully modernized course curriculum and via fully modernized means, allowing Sailors a full virtual “hands-on” experience for the duration of their training. Last year, the Chief of Naval Personnel also put into motion the advancement-to-position program, where talented junior Sailors can negotiate for hard jobs in tough duty stations and receive an advancement, incentivizing duty to locations and jobs where we had previously been applying specialty and incentive pays. Despite the high operational tempo, morale is high and Sailors are excited about the direction of change in the personnel system, and they see evidence that their feedback is resulting in action. The sum of these efforts has resulted in record high first-term Navy-wide retention of 77 percent for the last two years, during an economy that is driving the lowest unemployment rate since 1969. This is evidence that it is not about the money.

Our Sailors and their dedicated families, together with the rest of our combined naval force, are working hard to achieve improved readiness, as you have seen from your visits at sea and ashore. They are fully aware of their vital role at this strategic inflection point. They understand that greater naval strength matters now more than ever, in order to safeguard our own way of life as well as to inspire the confidence of our allies and partners, who look to the United States and our Navy to protect the rights of our current world order by defending the seas for all.

### **U.S. MARINE CORPS READINESS PRIORITIES**

The last three years of reliable funding has substantially impacted the readiness of the Marine Corps, and through that investment, we have made huge improvements. Traditionally, the Marine Corps has sought to balance funding for current readiness of equipment, operations, and manpower with funding to modernize the force into one ready for the future. To meet the

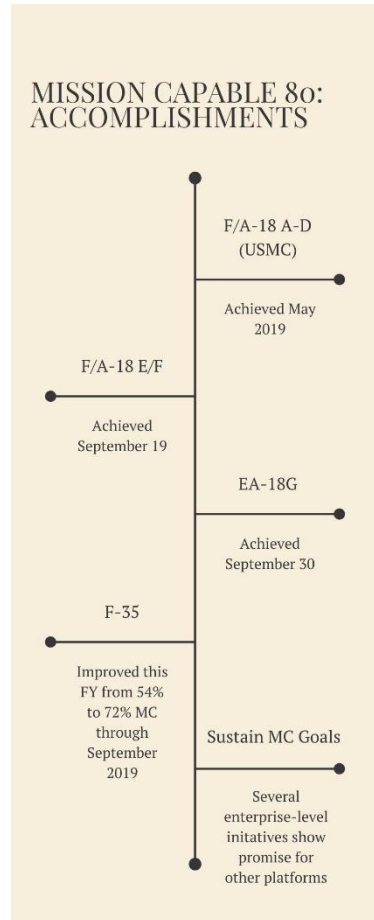
requirements of the National Defense Strategy and an era of Great Power Competition, the Marine Corps must prioritize the design of a new force capable of integrating with the Navy to compete, deter, and, if necessary, defeat our Nation's adversaries. Moving forward, we must acknowledge that we can no longer simply react to the evolving strategic environment; we must instead seek to directly influence that environment in ways that create considerable advantages for our Naval and Joint Forces and impose significant risks and costs to our adversaries. Therefore, the Marine Corps is prioritizing investments to support evolving warfighting concepts and capabilities, while ensuring the proper investment in readiness. To achieve this long-term transformation and vision of our Marine Corps, we will need the help and support of Congress through adequate, sustained, and predictable funding. Combined with stable funding, our business reform initiatives and the diligent use of resources are force multipliers and are key to long-term success. Through your efforts, the Marine Corps will continue to be the Nation's Naval Expeditionary Force in Readiness, today and into the future.

### **Ground Readiness**

Over the last few years, ground equipment readiness rates continued to demonstrate considerable improvement while providing ready forces in a period of modernization. In 2019, the Marine Corps completed the reset of ground equipment employed in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. The reset resulted in 77 percent of retrograde equipment repaired and returned to the Fleet Marine Force, and 23 percent of legacy equipment either divested or replaced through new procurement. In addition, investments across the Marine Corps last year progressed toward two-thirds C1/C2 Active Component readiness while also maintaining ground equipment readiness of 80 percent available supply rating and 90 percent serviceable equipment. Through these efforts and other initiatives, the Fleet Marine Force increased availability to 90 percent, an 8 percent increase, and increased serviceability to 94 percent, a one percent increase, of principal end items in FY 2019. Stemming from predictable funding and process improvements, the Marine Corps continues to support forward postured naval forces critical to the Joint Force.

## Aviation Readiness

Marine Aviation continues to progress through its comprehensive readiness recovery commenced in December 2014 to produce mission capable aircraft with combat ready crews. Initiatives that are designed to increase materiel readiness, improve training levels, and retain



and develop talented Marines have yielded steady progress and supported in-stride modernization transitions across multiple platforms. Returns on readiness investments are apparent, made possible by Congressional funding of readiness enabler accounts to over 90 percent of executable levels. Adequate, stable, and predictable funding to Marine Aviation readiness initiatives is imperative to continue momentum across recovery objectives.

As we near the targeted date of our readiness recovery goal of 75 percent mission capable aircraft by the end of FY 2021, our four lines of effort remain: 1) reduce Non-Mission Capable Supply (NMCS) to 10 percent; 2) reduce Non-Mission Capable Maintenance (NMCM) to 10 percent; 3) reduce in-service repairs to five percent; and 4) increase depot throughput. Building off of last year's success, we remain on track to reach these goals in FY 2021. The FY 2019 fleet aircraft NMCS average of 26.4 percent is slightly below FY 2017 levels, as we are beginning to see the greater investment in spares readiness enabler accounts resulting

in additional parts hitting the supply lines. The F/A-18 was able to achieve an NMCS rate less than 10 percent for two consecutive months in FY 2019, as they are one of the first platforms to benefit from the delivery of the first increased spares supply. Improvement in squadron-level maintenance practices and increased maintainer touch-time on aircraft contributed to a 3.3 percent decrease in the FY 2019 aircraft NMCM rate compared to FY 2017 (and 1.1 percent compared to FY 2018). Implementing dedicated fleet support teams and on site artisans, together with right-sizing the flight line, has reduced in-service repairs, with the Service meeting the goal of less than 5 percent with a 3.3 percent In-Service Repair rate in FY 2019. Due to the success of our Depot Readiness Initiative, 21 aircraft across three platforms returned from the depot to the flight schedule an average of 51 days faster and with a 76 percent reduction in

squadron maintenance man hours. The CH-53E Reset Program returned 29 aircraft to service by the end of FY 2019, with Reset aircraft averaging a 10 percent higher mission capable rate than non-Reset aircraft. In addition, FY 2019 average crew flight hours per month across all Type/Model/Series exceeded the goal required to achieve T-2.0, at 17.2 hours per crew per month.

The F/A-18A-D and F-35B focused on materiel readiness as a result of the Secretary of Defense's TACAIR 80 percent mission capable goal for FY 2019. F/A-18A-D operational squadron mission capable rates increased 16 percent since FY 2017, and the Service met the Active and Reserve 80 percent F/A-18A-D goal on seven separate occasions. The F-35B Active squadrons were able to achieve 80 percent mission capable on one occasion late in FY 2019, as returns on initiatives executed in concert with the Joint Program Office and industry displayed positive results. The F-35B fleet replacement squadron averaged 70 percent mission capable aircraft for FY 2019, which will be instrumental in continued pilot production to fleet squadrons. The Marine Corps' continued aviation readiness recovery will ensure that we are able to provide a lethal aviation component to deter, compete, and win in the future security environment.

### **Amphibious Readiness**

Amphibious Readiness continues to be one of the Marine Corps' top readiness concerns. Over the past year, the amphibious fleet structure supported an average availability of 66 percent, with 31 percent of amphibious ships meeting the Optimized Fleet Response Plan. In addition to amphibious availability, extensive maintenance requirements affecting 59 percent of all amphibious warship maintenance availabilities are expected to exceed planning considerations between FY 2019 and FY 2022. While these shortfalls represent key metrics for Amphibious Readiness, they can be mitigated through a number of initiatives to support the Naval and the Joint Force with combat-credible Amphibious Forces.

Historically, the Marine Corps has looked to ground-based forces to provide crisis response in the face of amphibious shipping shortfalls. This method does not provide the flexibility, survivability, and operational reach that is required to counter adversaries equipped with emerging technologies in the Blunt Layer. The current vision of amphibious operations, in light of the growing risk of the future operating environment, can only be offset by non-traditional employment models. Together with the Navy, the Marine Corps will look to explore

alternate deployment options, to include L-class, E-class, unmanned platforms, stern landing vessels, other ocean-going littoral mobility vessels, Expeditionary Sea Base (ESB) class ships, and other platforms to fill operational requirements and mitigate the potential of future readiness deficiencies in the amphibious fleet. Informed by emerging concepts of Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment (LOCE), Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO), Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) and the body of naval concepts, the Navy and Marine Corps team will design and project Integrated American Naval Power globally in 2030 and beyond. Through integration, we will aim to improve resilience, increase operational reach and capacity, and ensure the ability of the Joint Maritime Force to operate in contested environments. We stand committed with the Navy to increasing readiness through sustainment of necessary legacy systems, mitigating risk through alternative options, and setting the course for future amphibious architecture.

### **Infrastructure Readiness**

The Marine Corps' installations serve as warfighting platforms that enable our Fleet Marine Forces to hone their combat readiness. Our installations complement our forward deployed naval forces and bolster our allies and partners. As we focus on Great Power Competition in the INDOPACIFIC, the modernization of our installations while focusing on defensibility, hardening and resiliency are more critical than ever to our Naval Forces and must become our priority. The Marine Corps' Facilities Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization (FSRM) program supports the maintenance, demolition, restoration, and modernization of Marine Corps installation infrastructure to optimize warfighting, life/health/safety, training, and quality of life. As in the past, the Marine Corps had to make difficult choices in the funding of near-term readiness and long-term modernization efforts. We continue to prioritize the timing of facility investments to achieve the lowest total lifecycle cost, while aligning investments to the Marine Corps' strategic priorities. This approach, combined with a robust demolition program to eliminate obsolete facilities, has greatly reduced the total cost of ownership and will provide the Marine Corps the flexibility to meet future requirements.

Today, the infrastructure reset strategy is still feeling the long lasting effects of Hurricanes Florence and Michael's devastating impact that damaged and destroyed facilities. While we are grateful for your support in helping us recover and rebuild, the Marine Corps will

continue hurricane-related FSRM repairs, manage MILCON requirements, and restore our facilities for the foreseeable future.

The Marine Corps continues to focus on improving our Public-Private Venture housing through engaged leadership, enabling effective management, and implementing the FY 2020 NDAA requirements to ensure we provide housing of the highest quality for our Marines, Sailors, and families. Through your efforts, we are well on our way to ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of the portfolio.

## **Manpower**

Marines, Sailors, and their families remain the foundation of Marine Corps readiness and enable us to project combat power. Without the exceptionally talented young men and women that carry the legacy of our Corps' fighting spirit, we would cease to be the premier professional warfighting organization that we are today. But we must fight every day to recruit, inspire, develop, and retain this vital talent. We must provide world class training and educational opportunities that develop the mind and imbue resilience. Most importantly, we must ensure that all are treated with dignity and respect, and have access to a culture that ensures every Marine is provided opportunity for successful service.

Previously, the Marine Corps grew the force to more than 200,000 in the Active Component (AC) to meet demand of surge and counter-insurgency operations in the Middle East. Since that time, the global situation has changed drastically and the Marine Corps' concept-based, threat-informed force design efforts confirm that we must reduce end strength to continue recovering readiness and accelerating modernization. In the FY 2021 request, the Marine Corps calls for a reduction in end strength to 184,100 AC to support our future initiatives and meet the demands of near and mid-term requirements. A reduction in Marines will generate much needed resources that could be reinvested in critical enabling capabilities against the pacing threat. This reduction in end strength is only the initial estimate. As we continue to refine and adjust the force, and with the support of Congress, the Marine Corps is fully prepared to exchange end strength for modernization dollars.

Few factors affect family readiness, unit readiness, and overall combat effectiveness as much as the operational demands and tempo of our Corps. The Marine Corps expresses operational demand through our units' Deployment-to-Dwell ratio (D2D). The Marine Corps

manages D2D through the Force Management Plan to balance near term rotational demands, near to mid-term surge and crisis response capacity, and mid- to long-term force development requirements. Currently, the D2D ratio for our Reserve Component (RC) is 1:4, and the D2D for our AC is 1:2. While this ratio supports short to mid-term requirements and is a modest increase from last year's ratio, it will be necessary to seize every opportunity to improve this ratio to facilitate adequate training and improve overall readiness. To meet the Marine Corps' goal of a D2D ratio of 1:3 without growing the force substantially, we require a decrease in operational requirements that are not in line with current combatant commander demands.

The Marine Corps is committed to exploring all options to provide our forces with the best opportunities and experiences to ensure we maintain our dedicated and highly trained talent. We are implementing new retention tools and bonuses, placing a new priority on the design and development of our Marines through Professional Military Education reform, and re-aligning senior leader programs. We are committed to exploring all options to combat suicide and sexual assault, including the most effective strategies and experiences not only from our sister services, but also across the nation in colleges and universities. In addition, our Talent Management Oversight Directorate and the Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs have co-sponsored a Center for Naval Analyses study focused on developing an optimized Talent Management Framework for the Marine Corps. These initiatives are designed to strengthen the culture of the Marine Corps, re-invest in Marines and Sailors, and keep our warrior ethos and warfighting edge.

## **CONCLUSION**

On behalf of all of our Marines and Sailors, we thank you for the opportunity to discuss the readiness of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps. The Navy and Marine Corps are working to optimize the fleet and force for the future operating environment and its emerging threats, and we stand ready and determined to answer the Nation's call. To sustain our readiness and modernization efforts for the current and future fight, we require adequate, sustained, and predictable funding that will enable the most lethal force, fully capable of deterring aggression in the shadow of Great Power Competition. With the support of Congress, Industry, and the American people, the combined naval forces will stand with the Joint Force and our Allies and Partners to protect the Nation's interests around the world.