

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL
RELEASED BY THE HOUSE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION,
VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES,
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

STATEMENT OF

MR. TODD SCHAFER
ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
(ENERGY, INSTALLATIONS AND ENVIRONMENT)

BEFORE THE

HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION,
VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

MAY 13, 2021

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL
RELEASED BY THE HOUSE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION,
VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES,
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Introduction

Chairwoman Wasserman Schultz, Ranking Member Carter, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on Navy and Marine Corps installations. As the Department of Navy (DoN) balances today's urgent readiness needs with investments in the future force and business reforms, we are compelled to make tough investment decisions regarding our current and future infrastructure. The DoN appreciates this committee's continued support of Navy and Marine Corps installations, which directly enable the lethality and warfighting readiness of our maritime forces.

Privatized Family Housing

Military members and their families must receive safe, quality, well-maintained housing and fair treatment from the Military Housing Privatization Initiative (MHPI) project companies that own, operate, and maintain privatized housing. Over the past two years, all levels of DoN leadership have been laser-focused on improving the privatized housing experience for Sailors, Marines and their families. Installation Commanding Officers are personally involved in resolving privatized housing issues and advocating for military families. Although work remains, we are beginning to see improvement in the operation, maintenance and customer service provided by our MHPI partners. We have made significant progress on near-term efforts to better advocate for Service members and their families, increase awareness of the problem resolution process, and increase involvement of the Navy government housing team. We appreciate this committee's support as we increased the number of DoN personnel in our housing offices to provide better oversight, quality control and advocacy at the installation, regional and headquarters levels.

The DoN continues to move forward with addressing the significant MHPI reforms in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 and FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAAs). In February 2020, the Secretary of Defense and the Secretaries of the Military Departments signed a partial Tenants Bill of Rights which certified 14 of the 18 rights available to service members and their families through existing business agreements. The DoN is working with the MHPI partners to implement the remaining four rights: the 7-year Maintenance History, Universal Lease, Dispute Resolution and Rent Withhold. We expect these rights to be available to the majority of our residents in June 2021.

Fallon Range Training Complex (FRTC) Modernization

Our Naval forces must have the right facilities to train, fight, and win, even as various demands on the land, sea, and air reduce the available area for military training. The DoN appreciates this committee's continued attention to the urgent need to modernize the Navy's premier aviation training range, the Fallon Range Training Complex (FRTC) in Nevada. The FRTC plays a central role in the readiness of every Naval Aviator and Navy Sea, Air and Land (SEAL) forces, but the existing footprint is simply too small to support training requirements for today's longer range weapons. Within existing capacity, our aviators are unable to sufficiently train with longer-range weapons and our SEALs cannot perform ground mobility maneuver training or fire their organic weapons in a realistic tactical environment.

The FRTC consists of four live-fire ranges, one non-firing range used for electronic warfare and low-level helicopter overflights and supporting special use airspace. The complex currently consists of 231,069 acres, of which 202,864 acres are public land withdrawn from the Department of the Interior (DoI) for military purposes. We appreciate that Congress extended the existing withdrawal of 202,864 acres via the FY 2021 NDAA, but this withdrawal extension does not meet our training requirements, as it does not accommodate the capability of precision guided munitions nor the aircraft that employ them. FRTC modernization will include multiple military construction projects for purchase of the non-federal lands, the relocation of a portion of Nevada Route 361, relocation of a portion of a privately owned six-inch natural gas pipeline, and range infrastructure improvements. Failure to modernize the FRTC will degrade readiness as our aviators and SEALs will not be able to train as they would fight. We appreciate this committee's funding of \$29 million for the first phase of non-federal land purchase in FY 2021.

Earlier this year, the Department collaborated with the Secretary of the Interior to establish the FRTC Intergovernmental Executive Committee to obtain views of stakeholders on FRTC modernization. The committee consists of representatives from the DoN, DoI, the State of Nevada and five of its counties, and multiple interested Tribes. We are committed to working closely with Tribal governments, environmental organizations and the local community to develop a solution that meets the desires of the local community while providing our warfighters a range complex that meets their critical training and readiness needs.

Climate Change and Installation Resilience

Climate change presents a growing threat to United States national security interests and defense objectives. The changing climate is altering the global security and operating environments, affecting the Department's missions, plans and installations. In addition to supporting the Department of Defense (DoD) Climate Working Group, the DoN is developing a Climate Strategic Plan to align the Navy-Marine Corps Team in incorporating DoD climate goals into all of our work. This plan will include the development of new energy solutions to strengthen resiliency of key capabilities at installations, and the integration of climate considerations into strategy, planning and programming processes at all levels of decision making across the Navy and Marine Corps.

As the DoN tackles installation resiliency challenges posed by climate change, extreme weather and other natural events, we are collaborating with local communities, States, other federal agencies, commercial and industry leaders. As directed by the FY 2020 NDAA, the DoN is adding a resiliency component to our installation master plans. We are also using the Navy's Climate Change Adaptation and Resiliency Handbook and incorporating sea level rise and other scientific models and tools into our processes.

We continue to pursue an array of energy solutions to meet our mission requirements and are implementing state-of-the-art energy technologies and approaches on our installations. In many areas, we have been able to achieve impressive results. Last month, Marine Corps Logistics Base (MCLB) Albany became the first United States Marine Corps installation to achieve "Net Zero" energy status, which means the installation produces as much electricity from renewable "green" energy sources as it consumes. By achieving "net zero," we improve the resiliency of the base while reducing our reliance on traditional energy sources and greenhouse gas emissions.

The DoN values the innovation and resources that the private sector is able to offer, and we have taken advantage of their expertise by leveraging third-party financed contracting vehicles like Energy Savings Performance Contracts (ESPCs) to implement energy resilience projects. We continue to focus on enhancing our military readiness and warfighting capabilities by increasing energy efficiency, leveraging renewable energy sources, reducing energy vulnerabilities, adding redundancy and improving energy management. For example, at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, we partnered with industry to improve energy reliability and reduce

costs at the installation – optimizing shipyard operations by installing a cogeneration plant, battery energy storage and a micro-grid control system.

As we seek to improve our water security posture and ensure access to sustainable water sources in drought-prone areas, the DoN is also working on cooperative regional management action plans and a review of water rights to mutually benefit both the DoN and local communities.

The DoN appreciates Congress' continued support for the Energy Resilience and Conservation Improvement Program, which enables the Navy and Marine Corps to fund projects that improve energy resilience, contribute to mission assurance, save energy and reduce energy costs. However, appropriated Military Construction funding can only be part of the solution. We will continue to fully leverage all Congressional authorities through Intergovernmental Support Agreements, Other Transaction Authority, Utility Privatization, ESPCs, Utility Energy Service Contracts, Enhanced Use Leases, and the Defense Community Infrastructure Program.

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

We remain committed to the health and safety of our men and women in uniform, their families, and the communities in which we serve. Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) are organic chemicals that are part of a larger group of chemicals referred to as PFAS, which were used to make carpets, clothing, furniture fabric, food packaging and cookware resistant to water, grease or stains. At Navy and Marine Corps installations, PFOS and PFOA are also found in the Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) used for firefighting. The DoN is implementing a comprehensive strategy to manage and address known or potential releases of PFAS from DoN activities on Navy and Marine Corps installations through a multi-pronged approach:

- *Ensure Safe Drinking Water on DoN Installations.* Testing is complete at all Navy and Marine Corps installations to ensure drinking water does not contain PFOS/PFOA above the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) lifetime health advisory level.
- *Eliminate PFOS or PFOA Drinking Water Exposure to Off-Installation Public and Private Drinking Water.* The DoN has proactively identified locations where PFOS/PFOA may have migrated to off-installation drinking water sources and gathered water samples from drinking

water wells for testing. If drinking water contains PFOS/PFOA levels that exceed the EPA's lifetime health advisory level, we will provide alternate water and seek a long-term solution.

- *Investigate and Respond to PFAS Releases under the DoN Environmental Restoration Program.* If we release PFAS during our firefighting operations, the DoN immediately takes action to respond to and mitigate the risks and impacts of the release.
- *Replace Legacy AFFF.* The DoN is actively supporting DoD's research and development effort to identify suitable replacements to transition to a PFAS-free firefighting alternative on installations.
- *Work closely and communicate early with the public and stakeholders.* The DoN will continue open and timely communication with the public, regulators and congressional partners.

As the Acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Energy Installations and Environment), I am proud to serve as the DoN's representative on the DoD PFAS Task Force. I look forward to continued dialogue with Congress and interagency partners to address this national issue.

Closing

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I look forward to working with you to further enhance the readiness of Navy and Marine Corps installations, address climate change and environmental issues, and support DoN quality of life programs.