

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY
CONSTRUCTION, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, AND RELATED AGENCIES

STATEMENT OF
CARLOS A. RUIZ
SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE MARINE CORPS,
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
BEFORE THE
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION,
VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES
OVERSIGHT HEARING: QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE MILITARY
APRIL 8, 2025

Chairman Carter, Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz, and distinguished members of the committee – thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of your United States Marines.

As we have since our founding 250 years ago, the Marine Corps remains focused on readiness and lethality. The Commandant of the Marine Corps has entrusted me with making quality of life a top priority. To that end, I have identified four key areas that will drive meaningful improvement: housing, a clean audit, Marine Corps Total Fitness, and individual combat equipment. Each of these areas directly impacts recruitment and retention by reinforcing trust in leadership, demonstrating institutional accountability, and ensuring Marines are equipped, housed, and supported to meet the demands of service.

Recruiting and Retention

In Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24), the Marine Corps exceeded its recruiting mission. This achievement reflects not only impressive numbers, but also the unwavering dedication of our recruiters. Their relentless pursuit of excellence inspires those who seek challenge, purpose, and honor through service.

There is a direct correlation between a Marine's success at recruit training and the time they spend preparing with their recruiter. As we look ahead to the rest of FY25, we are on track to meet our goal of 38,000 recruits. This will increase our delayed entry pool, stabilize the entry level training pipeline, and continue to fill our Active and Reserve formations with high-quality Marines.

However, recruiting success is just the first step. We are committed to keeping our most talented Marines in the fight. Our ability to retain experienced, combat-ready professionals is what ensures the Marine Corps remains the world's premier warfighting force. Thanks to continuous refinement of the selection process and initiatives designed to promote and retain the highest qualified Marines, we surpassed our retention goals in FY24. At the halfway mark for FY25, we have achieved 98% for first term and 108% for subsequent term retention.

The message is clear: Marines love being Marines. We will continue to demand the best of them and *for* them. Anything less would be a disservice to our mission, our nation, and our legacy of excellence.

Unaccompanied Housing and Family Housing

The Marine Corps is known for doing more with fewer resources, demonstrating ingenuity and resourcefulness in the means and methods of mission accomplishment. While obtaining the necessary funding is critical, we are also taking deliberate steps to maximize efficiency and ensure every dollar spent enhances our readiness. We are actively renovating, repairing, and repurposing our facilities and materials to avoid unnecessary waste. In 2024, we repaired or renovated 11 barracks that provide housing for approximately 4,200 Marines. In 2025, we have identified 12 additional barracks for repair that will house approximately 3,900 Marines.

In accordance with FY24 NDAA, we are improving the day-to-day maintenance and management of barracks. A new app, QSRMax, enables Marines to report and track urgent

facility needs from their phone. This brings process efficiency and transparency to the lowest levels. We are also transitioning barracks management to be overseen by civilian professionals for consistent oversight, maintenance, and accountability.

Family Housing remains a key focus for the Marine Corps. Through tenant satisfaction surveys, incentive awards, and safety inspections, we uphold the terms of our agreements with our public-private venture (PPV) partners and ensure housing meets the needs of our Marines and their families. The Marine Corps requested over \$201M in family housing construction and operations in FY24, which includes not only materials and equipment, but also the housing management professionals who provide the necessary oversight of over 23,000 PPV homes.

Marines do not seek luxury; they seek the opportunity to win. That opportunity begins with a fighting force that is well-housed, well-trained, and well-equipped. With your continued advocacy and support, we fulfill this commitment and honor the commitments of Marines and their families.

Audit

Over the past two years, the Marine Corps became the first military service to attain and sustain an unmodified or “clean” audit opinion. These accomplishments were not easy to attain but are a testament to the importance that every Marine places on accountability every day. Readiness for the warfighter requires accountability of our assets. This allows for informed, data-driven decisions that ultimately lead to successful mission outcomes.

Audits help us be ready and we look forward to clean audits becoming routine and unremarkable.

Marine Corps Total Fitness

The strength of the Marine Corps is measured not only by its firepower, but also by the resilience, readiness, and well-being of its individual Marines. Marine Corps Total Fitness (MCTF) combines modern science with timeless principles. The key to the program is the people – experts in areas such as cognitive performance, strength and conditioning, sleep regulation, financial literacy, and personal responsibility.

These programs strengthen the foundation of discipline, self-reliance, and a purpose greater than oneself. This approach is proactive rather than reactive. By embedding total fitness into daily life and making it a part of Marine Corps culture, it helps eliminate the stigma around seeking support. Marines will maintain their minds and bodies with the same precision and care they maintain their weapons and gear.

MCTF is designed to meet Marines where they are and give them what they need to succeed. It is not a one-size-fits-all system; instead, it is a collaborative effort that brings together experts from various disciplines to deliver personalized, targeted support. MCTF has been identified as a key resource in every major prevention and advocacy initiative within the Marine Corps. Although the program structured at the institutional level, it remains adaptable to specific needs of the unit, ensuring that every Marine – regardless of their location or mission – has access to these valuable resources.

In a demonstration of faith and investment, units are repurposing, re-tasking, and maximizing existing programs and facilities, stretching every resource to its full potential. With your continued support, we can broaden this model across the force and enhance it for optimal effectiveness.

Individual Combat Equipment

Marines operate where others cannot. Individual Combat Equipment (ICE) – the personal protective equipment Marines wear into combat – must be as effective and adaptable as the Marine wearing it. Our commitment to readiness includes a responsibility to continually improve. The gear that Marines use must evolve to protect against future threats. On tomorrow’s battlefield, an electronic signal can be just as lethal as a bullet. Features that were once considered science fiction are now becoming necessities.

Recent advancements in manufacturing have developed materials that are lighter, stronger, more durable, and capable of providing multidimensional protection from lethal, electronic, and environmental threats.

Moreover, progress in exercise science and human performance, along with decades of combat experience, highlights the importance of offering expanded and customizable sizing options for a precise fit. The Marine Corps is currently conducting an anthropometry study to create an up-to-date and comprehensive database that will inform the design and procurement of ICE across the Force.

Marines train like they fight. We cannot wait for operations to begin for Marines to have access to the most advanced equipment.

Conclusion

The Marine Corps is not just a warfighting force – it is the enabler of the Joint Force. For the Marine Corps to continue providing the unique capabilities that give the President and Combatant Commanders real-world options, we must be properly supported. The Marine Corps has always been, and will continue to be, resourceful, innovative, and efficient.

At the core of every capability and every mission success is our people. It is not programs, policies or equipment alone. Marines are the ones to make the impossible into the possible. Every dollar invested, every decision made, every resource allocated must be done with one goal in mind: ensuring our Marines are ready to fight and win. They are the weapon. They are the difference. They are the reason the Marine Corps remains the “nation’s force in readiness”.