

STATEMENT

OF

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AS DELIVERED TO CONGRESSIONAL DEFENSE COMMITTEES

ON

THE POSTURE OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

Chair, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to report to you on your Marines and your Marine Corps. Your support in the coming years will be critical to the Marine Corps' ability to remain our Nation's premier expeditionary force-in-readiness while simultaneously modernizing for the fights of the future. Together, we will maintain the Corps' commitment to lethality and our warrior ethos.

## **Discipline and our Warrior Ethos**

The Marine Corps is defined by its singular purpose: to fight and win the Nation's battles. As a warfighting organization, everything we do is designed to support the infantryman whose job is to locate, close with, and destroy the enemy.

Discipline is the foundation of our warrior ethos. It sharpens our readiness, forges unbreakable bonds between Marines, and enables us to adapt and overcome in any situation. It allows Marines to make sound decisions amidst chaos, execute complex tasks under extreme conditions, and thrive where others falter. Discipline permeates every aspect of a Marine's life, from the self-discipline required to meet rigorous physical fitness standards to the accountability needed to ensure we are ready to "fight tonight." Without it, we are a collection of individuals; with it, we are an unstoppable, cohesive force ready to fight any adversary.

The Marine Corps has not and will not lower its standards or change its warfighting culture. Our standards, developed over hundreds of campaigns and battles, define what it is to be a Marine. We challenge our citizens to rise to meet these uncompromising standards; combat offers no second chances, and lapses in discipline cost lives. Marines do not train for comfort, fairness, or convenience – we train for war.

## **Current Operating Environment**

As the nation's expeditionary shock troops, forward deployed Marines are a vital element of the Joint Force—they provide our Nation's leaders with a flexible response option in an unpredictable global security environment. Chief among these is the threat posed by China, which seeks to reshape the global order to serve its own authoritarian ambitions. The Chinese Communist Party's aggressive military modernization, coercive economic practices, and actions in the South China Sea directly threaten the principles of a free and open Indo-Pacific. With over

33,000 Marines forward deployed or stationed west of the international date line—ready to fight at a moment’s notice—the Marine Corps plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the U.S. and its allies can deter the Chinese Communist Party’s aggression, protect critical sea lines of communication, and safeguard U.S. interests.

Beyond the Chinese Communist Party’s military ambitions, the Marine Corps stands ready to address other significant threats to U.S. security and interests. In the Middle East, Iran continues to destabilize the region by supporting terrorist organizations, advancing its ballistic missile program, and conducting malign activities through proxy groups. These actors threaten regional stability and endanger global energy supplies. Meanwhile, Russia’s war in Ukraine underscores its willingness to destabilize Europe, disregard international borders, and use cyberattacks as weapons.

At the same time, transnational threats such as terrorism, piracy, and the proliferation of advanced weapons systems further complicate the security environment. Additionally, the security of the U.S. homeland remains paramount, as porous borders and transnational criminal organizations pose risks to national safety and stability.

These challenges demand a Marine Corps capable of campaigning to deter aggression and responding to crises on a global scale to defeat adversaries and set conditions for the Joint Force. From the complexity of the cyber domain to the maritime chokepoints of the Indo-Pacific, Marines remain committed to being the most ready when the Nation is least ready—a force that thrives in chaos and delivers victory whenever and wherever required.

## **Meeting the Challenge**

In order to assist Congress with understanding where your Corps stands today and where we are headed, I have broken down my posture statement into four areas that are nested with my Commandant’s Planning Guidance: Amphibious Readiness and Littoral Mobility; Accelerating Force Design Modernization; Modernizing Barracks and Improving Quality of Life; and Recruiting, Making, and Retaining Marines. Given my Title 10 authorities to man, train, and equip the Marine Corps, I am acutely focused on these four areas in this budget cycle as I believe their achievement will best posture the Corps for both the fights of today and the future.

**Amphibious Readiness and Littoral Mobility** - Achieving a 3.0 Amphibious Ready Group

(ARG)/Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) presence is my top priority. 3.0 ARG/MEU presence is the Marine Corps' North Star. Three continuous, consistent, and simultaneously deployed ARG/MEUs provide lethal response options, creates dilemmas for our adversaries, forward postures forces to deny adversaries decision space and supports campaigning alongside our allies and partners. At the same time, we will pursue organic littoral mobility options to ensure Stand-in-Forces—forward, low-signature units that operate inside adversary threat rings to impose costs across all phases of conflict—can persist and maneuver.

**Accelerate Force Design Modernization** - The Marine Corps must stay agile to remain ahead of evolving threats. We are in the implementation phase of Force Design—integrating new technology, refining organizational structure, and strengthening the Joint Force. We are committed to accelerating this effort to ensure Marines from across our Marine Expeditionary Units, Marine Littoral Regiments, and Marine Expeditionary Forces are lethal, survivable, and one step ahead of the enemy. The character of war is changing and we must continue to evolve—continued congressional support is essential to sustain this momentum and ensure Marines evolve at pace alongside the threat.

**Modernize Barracks and Improve Quality of Life** – Barracks 2030 is the most consequential infrastructure investment in Marine Corps history, aimed at providing safe, modern living conditions for our Marines. Quality of life directly impacts readiness, which is why we're also investing in childcare, spousal employment, and programs that promote total fitness and well-being. Supporting Marines and their families is essential to retaining a ready and resilient force.

**Recruit, Make, and Retain Marines** – Maintaining an elite force begins with recruiting and retaining high-quality individuals. Despite historic challenges, the Marine Corps continues to meet its recruiting goals without lowering standards—thanks to the dedication and hard work of our recruiters. We have implemented data-driven initiatives to strengthen these efforts while upholding our warfighting ethos and caring for Marines and their families.

The following provides additional details on the four areas I believe we need to focus on to better inform Congress on where the Marine Corps stands today and where we are headed in the future.

## **Amphibious Readiness and Littoral Mobility**

The Marine Corps is, first and foremost, a Naval service. Our identity, ethos, and operational success are rooted in our enduring partnership with the U.S. Navy. Amphibious Warfare Ships (AWS) aren't just a number on a spreadsheet—they're a cornerstone of forward-deployed, expeditionary power that uniquely complements and enhances the Nation's broader strategic arsenal. The ARG/MEU is the Swiss Army Knife of the Joint Force. When on station, the ARG/MEU provides lethal response options to national decision-makers, creates dilemmas for adversaries, and supports campaigning alongside our allies—all without requiring Access, Basing, or Overflight (ABO) permissions. When forward deployed, these ships allow the Navy and Marine Corps team to deter our adversaries, and fight and win should deterrence fail.

The MEU, as a forward-deployed, flexible, and self-sustaining Marine Air-Ground Task Force, remains a cornerstone in the defense of our Nation's interests and the deterrence of our adversaries in the maritime domain.

3.0 Amphibious Ready Group / Marine Expeditionary Unit (ARG/MEU) Requirement - My nearly 40 years of military experience—and in my role as a member of the Joint Chiefs—have led to my fundamental conviction that, when on station, the ARG/MEU is the most effective and efficient tool of both the Marine Corps and the Joint Force. It is our premier force offering to support the operational requirements of our Combatant Commanders—providing options within hours, not days or weeks.

A "3.0 ARG/MEU" refers to the continuous, consistent, and simultaneous deployment of three, three-ship ARG/MEUs—one forward deployed from the East Coast, one forward deployed from the West Coast, and one episodically deployed from Okinawa, Japan. This posture provides our Combatant Commanders with the ability to shape events, respond rapidly to threats, and deter adversaries with forward-deployed, sea-based forces. ARG/MEUs offer unmatched flexibility across the range of military operations, including expeditionary strikes, sea denial, seizure of advanced naval bases, cyberspace operations, and amphibious assaults. Historically, Combatant Commander-registered and Joint Staff-validated requirements have consistently exceeded what the Navy and Marine Corps can provide, even before accounting for maintenance

and availability challenges.

Achieving and sustaining a 3.0 ARG/MEU with no fewer than 31 AWS will require significant change—particularly in how we approach amphibious readiness and ship availability. Regardless of AWS readiness challenges, the Marine Corps will always ensure expeditionary forces are ready to respond as the Nation’s expeditionary force-in-readiness. But in the long run, without adequate resourcing of the amphibious warfare fleet, the Joint Force’s ability to campaign forward, deter adversaries, and respond globally will be seriously diminished.

AWS Readiness and Availability Procurement - This is fundamentally an AWS readiness and availability problem. The Navy and Marine Corps remain aligned on the critical role of amphibious forces, but the lack of available AWS has put that role—and the 3.0 ARG/MEU—at risk. Today, AWS readiness hovers below 50 percent, meaning only half the fleet is available to support training and operations at any given time. This shortfall has already disrupted scheduled MEU deployments across all three Marine Expeditionary Forces—not because we lack trained Marines, but because we lack the ships to move them forward. If this trend continues, unit proficiency will erode, amphibious experience will degrade, and risk—to both training and future combat operations—will increase. Reversing this decline is essential if we are to meet Joint Force requirements, sustain global responsiveness, and provide Combatant Commanders with the ready, sea-based forces they consistently require.

AWS delivery delays and shipbuilding constraints further threaten our ability to build and sustain a 3.0 ARG/MEU over the long term. During the Cold War, LHAs were built on one-year centers—meaning a new ship entered construction each year, keeping a steady cadence of production. Today, because of increased complexity and a thinned industrial base, those same ships are started on four-year centers—and even then, deliveries are behind schedule. Without on-time construction of AWS and restored readiness across the existing fleet, we will continue to fall farther behind Combatant Commander requirements and further erode a critical capability of our National Defense.

The Acting Chief of Naval Operations and I have committed to work together to increase AWS readiness. His recent decision to convene the Amphibious Ship Maintenance Performance review provided critical insight into actionable steps that can be taken to improve AWS readiness. We are grateful for the Navy’s recent initiatives to adopt civilian-standard world class

185 planning principles to repair availabilities; employ “signature availabilities” for AWS which will  
186 award contracts for substantial yard periods one-year out, vice A-120; and resourcing a critical  
187 systems acquisition strategy to steam repair for our LHDs and LSDs.

188 I also agree with the Acting Chief of Naval Operations that persistently maintaining,  
189 without replacing, our older AWS is not a sustainable strategy. We are grateful for the President  
190 and Congress’ initiatives to strengthen and maintain the Maritime Industrial Base and to continue  
191 timely procurement of our LPDs and LHAs. The recent decision to execute a multi-ship contract  
192 saves the American people money, gets our Marines forward, and sends a strong signal to  
193 industry. Restoring a 3.0 ARG/MEU presence will not be solved overnight—it will require  
194 sustained commitment and deliberate action over the next two decades. Now is the time to begin  
195 that work in earnest—future generations of Marines depend on us to take action.

196  
197 Medium Landing Ship (LSM) - Mobility in the littorals is essential for the maneuver and  
198 persistence of Stand-in Forces. This is especially true as these forces maneuver throughout the  
199 first and second island chains in the Indo-Pacific. Early in the development of Force Design and  
200 the Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) concept—which emphasizes temporary,  
201 austere, and operationally relevant positions to support sea control and denial—the Marine Corps  
202 identified a key mobility gap. In partnership with the Navy, it is now pursuing the LSM to close  
203 that gap in the priority theater. Separate from, but complementary to traditional amphibious  
204 ships, the LSM is being designed for mobility, beach access, and sustainment in contested  
205 environments. To accelerate delivery and ensure operational impact, the Marine Corps is  
206 pursuing a three-phased approach: first, a Littoral Maneuver Bridging Solution (LMBS) to  
207 rapidly enhance movement within the First Island Chain; second, LSM Block I as an initial non-  
208 developmental vessel; and ultimately, LSM Block Next—a fully mature, optimized solution.

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210 Phase 1: Littoral Maneuver Bridging Solution (LMBS) - The LMBS will serve as an  
211 interim capability to support Stand-in Forces in the Indo-Pacific while the LSM program  
212 advances toward Initial Operational Capability. LMBS addresses the urgent need for intra-theater  
213 mobility and tactical maneuver by leveraging a mix of existing platforms, experimental vessels,  
214 and chartered solutions, mitigating the near-term gap in organic littoral mobility and maneuver.  
215 Expeditionary Fast Transports (T-EPF), Landing Craft Utility (LCU) variants, and Maritime

Prepositioning Ships are providing critical operational and tactical support for dispersed units conducting EABO. Experimental and chartered vessels are also being used to refine tactics, techniques, and procedures, providing valuable lessons for the future LSM program. While LMBS cannot fully replicate the capabilities of the LSM, it enhances mobility and sustainment, ensuring Stand-in Forces remain agile and combat-ready in contested littoral environments for the near future. Absent this bridging solution, the Marine Corps would be accepting unnecessary operational risk. LMBS gives us a practical way to reduce that risk while gaining insight and momentum toward future capability. We will deliberately transition away from this interim capability as LSM Block I becomes available.

Phase 2: LSM Block I - LSM Block I is the mid-term solution to support the Marine Corps' shore-to-shore littoral mobility requirement. Originally, the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) approved LSM capabilities development document (CDD) proposals were deemed unaffordable and late-to-need. Due to the threat window, we recognized the need to balance requirements with cost and schedule. Therefore, the Marine Corps revisited LSM requirements to ensure capability is delivered within cost and schedule, and we are naming this effort LSM Block I. While the Navy's initial fielding plan includes 18 ships, the Marine Corps ultimately needs 35 LSMs. We are thankful for Congress's support in the FY24 NDAA provision which permits the Navy and the Marine Corps to purchase a non-developmental vessel, which will lower costs substantially while greatly speeding the time-to-field. As we field LSM Block I, we will continue to refine requirements for the long-term solution, referred to as LSM Block Next.

Phase 3: LSM Block Next - The final phase, LSM Block Next, will incorporate advanced technologies and lessons learned from LMBS and LSM Block I to further enhance the ship's capabilities. This phase represents the long-term evolution of the LSM program, ensuring the platform remains relevant in future operational environments. By continuously refining the design and integrating new capabilities, LSM Block Next will maximize the platform's effectiveness as a key enabler of littoral mobility, operational flexibility, and sustained expeditionary posture in the Indo-Pacific.



## Accelerate Force Design Modernization

Now in its sixth year, Force Design is transforming the Marine Corps to meet the challenges of future conflict. This effort has required tough decisions on the part of the Marine Corps, including the divestment of legacy systems and reinvestments within our topline—enabled by Congress’ strong support. Over five budget cycles, we have identified efficiencies, eliminated outdated capabilities, and ensured every dollar advances our lethality and readiness. For the second year in a row, we achieved an unmodified, or “clean,” financial audit—an institutional milestone that reflects our commitment to transparency, accountability, and responsible stewardship of taxpayer resources. That trust and discipline are what make Force Design possible—every dollar accounted for is a dollar that can be reinvested into modernization, ensuring we deliver a more capable, lethal force for the future fight.

### **Priority Capabilities:**

The service is intensifying experimentation with prototype platforms and leveraging multi-vendor contracts to foster competition and innovation within the defense industry. We have greatly expanded our portfolio of classified investments to remain focused on cutting-edge technology. The integration of advanced sensors, the Family of Integrated Targeting Cells, artificial intelligence, Navy/Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS), and one-way attack drones are greatly improving our ability to sense, make sense, and deliver precision fires. Our Campaign of Learning is a conscious effort to constantly reassess our modernization efforts and make in-stride adjustments when necessary. Bolstered by lessons from the current conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, our Campaign of Learning has sharpened our focus on three critical capability areas that are essential to realizing the vision of Force Design and enabling the Stand-in-Forces:

1. Joint / Coalition Kill Webs and Combined Joint All Domain Command and Control (CJADC2)
2. Organic Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) and Automated Systems
3. Contested Logistics

Joint / Coalition Kill Webs and CJADC2 – As a member of the Joint Chiefs, I see firsthand how critical it is for U.S. forces to share information and work together in real time—across services,

allies, and partners. To win in today's fight, we must link our forces and sensors together so commanders can make better decisions faster and act decisively.

The Marine Corps is doing its part to make this a reality. We're focused on being the forward edge of the Joint Force—what we call Stand-in Forces. Our role is to sense the environment first; pass that information up the chain; and help drive faster, smarter decisions. Just as importantly, we must be able to receive direction from higher headquarters and act without delay.

To support this, we are investing in systems that help build these "kill webs"—the process of finding, tracking, and engaging targets. Our contributions include:

- **Advanced sensors** to detect threats early and accurately.
- **Electronic sensing systems** like Electronic Remote Sensors (ERS).
- **Improvements to our TPS-80 Ground/Air Task-Oriented Radar (G/ATOR).**
- **New sensing techniques** such as bi-static and multi-static radars.
- **A variety of Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) payloads** across different platforms.
- **Marine Electronic Warfare Ground Family of Systems (MEGFoS)** to detect and disrupt enemy electronic signals.

We are also making sure that the systems we're building can easily connect and share data with the rest of the Joint Force. Our systems aren't being built in a vacuum—from the very beginning they're designed to work with Navy, Army, Air Force, and Allied systems. This "born Joint" approach avoids stovepipes and ensures the Marine Corps can meaningfully contribute to the larger fight. Some examples of how we are doing this include:

- Our electronic warfare systems are tied directly into the Joint Spectrum Services Framework (SSF), helping all services share information about the electromagnetic environment.
- We are moving to a modern data architecture—shifting from Tactical Services Oriented Architecture to the Tactical Data Orchestration Layer, which plugs directly into CJADC2's broader data-sharing network.
- We're integrating proven joint systems like Minotaur and Maven Smart System (MSS) into our own intelligence platforms so we can contribute to the Joint Force's Common

Operational Picture and receive data from it.

- We're fielding Family of Integrated Targeting Cells in collaboration with the Navy and Army—ensuring that targeting data is fused quickly and precisely.

The Marine Corps is fully committed to making CJADC2 a reality for the Joint Force, with the Stand-in-Forces as the eyes and ears of an interconnected and interoperable network.

ISR and Autonomous Systems – The Marine Corps is investing in a family of autonomous systems—ranging from long endurance ISR platforms to lethal drones—to extend our operational reach, increase the survivability of our forces, and support distributed operations in contested environments. These capabilities provide our commanders with enhanced situational awareness and precision strike options while enabling Stand-in-Forces to impose dilemmas on the adversary at scale and at speed. Key examples include:

- **MQ-9A:** We are employing the MQ-9A extensively in the Indo-Pacific, providing long-range surveillance and real-time intelligence to forward-deployed forces and the interagency. These platforms connect Marines in the field with commanders across the globe. We are now moving to the next phase, Increment II, which adds advanced capabilities in electronic warfare, edge-based artificial intelligence, and improved satellite communications. Increment II will be fully fielded by Fiscal Year 26.
- **Organic Precision Fires (OPF):** OPF remains a priority effort and is a critical element of Force Design. It provides an organic, loitering, beyond line-of-sight precision strike capability to rapidly engage the enemy beyond the range of direct-fire weapons while minimizing collateral damage and exposure to enemy direct and indirect fires. OPF—Light, the only funded capability at this time, is the near-term effort to provide platoons and squads with anti-personnel and anti-material precision effects on the objective or in an engagement area in a man-packable, dismounted configuration.
- **Lethal Drones and the Replicator Program:** The Marine Corps is fully leveraging the Department of Defense's Replicator initiative as an integrating effort to accelerate the fielding of lethal drones and autonomous systems at scale. Replicator's focus on commercially available, scalable systems allows us to rapidly experiment, iterate, and field capabilities that enable stand-in forces to hold targets at risk across the depth of the

battlespace. These systems will enhance the survivability and lethality of Marine formations by complicating adversary targeting, enabling kill webs, and imposing unfavorable cost-exchange ratios on potential aggressors. Replicator is also providing access to a family of loitering and autonomous strike systems across multiple domains and is informing our Organic Precision Fires portfolio. Furthermore, the Marine Corps has partnered with the Defense Innovation Unit to expand our options for delivering massed, precision strike effects while maintaining affordability and operational flexibility—key attributes for distributed maritime operations.

- **Combat Collaborative Aircraft (CCA):** We are experimenting with unmanned aircraft like the XQ-58 Valkyrie working alongside crewed platforms such as the F-35. Recent tests validated their ability to conduct electronic warfare, execute autonomous tasks, and support Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses (SEAD) missions—all of which improve the survivability and effectiveness of manned Marine aviation in high-threat environments.

These investments ensure that Marines can operate effectively in contested spaces, while reducing risk to personnel and increasing the speed and accuracy of decision making.

Contested Logistics - Sustaining Marines in contested environments is just as critical as sensing the enemy or maintaining command and control. The Marine Corps is shifting from traditional supply chains to a more agile, resilient sustainment network—one designed to maneuver under threat, reinforce dispersed forces, and sustain operations across the vast distances of the Indo-Pacific. This includes investments in mobility and sustainment platforms, prepositioned equipment and supplies, and strategic sealift capacity.

Key elements of this effort include:

- **Global Positioning Network (GPN):** We are expanding prepositioned stocks and equipment in key locations across the Indo-Pacific to reduce dependency on long, vulnerable supply lines and ensure Marines have the resources they need where and when it matters most.
- **Emerging Distribution Technologies:** We are advancing new ways to maneuver and sustain forces in contested areas, including:

- **Ultra-Light Tactical Vehicles (ULTVs):** 504 vehicles have been delivered to infantry battalions and MARSOC.
- **Tactical Resupply Unmanned Aircraft Systems (TRUAS):** 63 systems have been fielded across the Fleet Marine Force.
- **Autonomous Low-Profile Vessels:** Under development with the Navy, Army, and partners to enhance littoral sustainment.
- **Expeditionary Manufacturing:** Portable fabrication labs (XFAB and TACFAB) are being fielded to logistics and maintenance units, enabling in-theater repair and production.
- **Expeditionary Medical Support:** We are modernizing medical capabilities to meet distributed operations requirements, including smaller, mobile surgical teams, patient holding, and long-range casualty evacuation.
- **Restoring the Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF):** Over the past decade, the Navy's MPF fleet has been reduced from 16 ships to 7 in full operating status, with 2 additional ships in reduced status. This has created a significant shortfall—our requirement is 2.1 million square feet of lift; today, we have only 1.3 million. This gap limits our ability to rapidly deploy and sustain forces in a crisis, removes redundancy, and increases risk to mission. We are working closely with the Navy to recapitalize this essential capability.

These efforts ensure Marines can maneuver, sustain, and fight in contested environments—without relying on fragile, unpredictable supply lines. To be clear, supporting contested logistics at scale is only achievable with the LSM—the LSM is our bid for success.

#### **Additional Capabilities:**

Beyond these critical capability areas, the Marine Corps is committed to sustaining other key priorities outlined below, which underpin our warfighting excellence. Force Design and modernization efforts are about more than technology – they are about ensuring every Marine has the tools, training, and support needed to thrive in the future fight. By maintaining this focus, the Marine Corps will remain the Nation's most ready, forward-deployed force.

Long Range Precision Fires (LRPF) - The Marine Corps continues to invest in long-range precision fires to complement our advanced sensing and reconnaissance capabilities. These systems are essential to enabling the Stand-in-Force to hold adversary naval and land forces at risk and, when necessary, strike decisively—all while maintaining a small, agile, and survivable footprint. Our LRPF portfolio includes several key programs:

- **Navy/Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS):** A ground based anti-ship missile system consisting of a Remotely Operated Ground Unit for Expeditionary Fires (ROGUE-Fires) carrier equipped with two Naval Strike Missiles (NSM). NMESIS provides a highly mobile, expeditionary capability to target enemy surface vessels at extended ranges.
- **ROGUE-Fires:** A remotely operated ground vehicle based on the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) chassis, designed to provide mobility for precision fires systems. In addition to the NMESIS, we are currently integrating the Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) Family of Munitions (MFOM) onto the ROGUE-Fires to expand the munitions that can be employed from that platform and provide additional range and flexibility to the Service.

Together, these capabilities provide the Marine Corps with the ability to complicate an adversary's decision-making, disrupt their freedom of maneuver, and impose real costs in the maritime domain—all from highly mobile, dispersed, and hard-to-target platforms.

Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems (C-UAS) - The proliferation of Unmanned Aircraft Systems poses a growing threat to U.S. forces across all domains of warfare. To counter these challenges, the Marine Corps is fielding a layered defense system with four key programs: Marine Air Defense Integrated System (MADIS), Light-MADIS (L-MADIS), Medium Range Intercept Capability (MRIC), and dismounted C-UAS systems.

- **MADIS:** Mounted on JLTVs, neutralizes threats from manned aircraft to Group 3-5 UAS and disrupts Group 1-3 UAS using electromagnetic warfare.
- **L-MADIS:** A lighter solution for ULTVs, offers similar capabilities and supports agile, distributed operations.
- **MRIC:** Provides high-end defense, defeating cruise missiles and large UAS. A U.S.-

based production facility will ensure a steady supply of interceptors.

- **Dismounted C-UAS:** Dismounted C-UAS systems provide individual Marines with low-size, low-weight, and low-power solutions to counter Group 1-2 UAS. Prototypes are in use, and accelerated fielding is underway.

To address urgent threats, the Marine Corps is deploying commercial solutions while refining long-term Programs of Record. Enhanced training and tactics ensure the effective use of organic weapons and sensors to complement these systems. The Marine Corps remains committed to staying ahead of the evolving UAS threat through rapid fielding and continued innovation.

### **Marine Littoral Regiments (MLR)**

The foundation of our Force Design progress is our Marine Littoral Regiments (MLR), specialized and purpose-built units designed for dispersed, task-organized operations that integrate advanced command, control, communications, computers, combat systems, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C5ISR) capabilities. These regiments enhance the ability to rapidly find, fix, track, target, engage, and assess (F2T2EA) threats in support of maritime commanders, the Joint Force, and allied partners.

The 3rd MLR, based at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, has achieved Initial Operational Capability (IOC) with the activation of its subordinate units: the 3rd Littoral Combat Team, 3rd Littoral Anti-Air Battalion and 3rd Littoral Logistics Battalion. In 2024, the 3rd MLR participated in exercises BALIKATAN, ARCHIPELAGIC COASTAL DEFENSE, and Marine Aviation Support Activity in the Philippines, validating its capacity to operate in dispersed maritime environments alongside allies. Similarly, the 12th MLR, stationed in Okinawa, Japan, has activated its Littoral Logistics Battalion and plans to establish its Littoral Anti-Air Battalion and Littoral Combat Team by the end of FY25. The 12th MLR has engaged in joint and bilateral exercises, including RESOLUTE DRAGON and KEEN SWORD, in strategically vital locations such as the Sakishima Islands, bolstering deterrence and readiness in the Indo-Pacific region.

## **Barracks Modernization & Quality of Life**

The quality of life of our Marines and their families is inseparable from the readiness and

resilience of our force. Marines who are well-supported in their personal lives are better prepared to meet the demands of the mission. The Marine Corps recognizes that our most valuable resource is our people, and we are committed to ensuring they have access to safe housing, reliable childcare, high-quality healthcare, and the resources necessary to thrive.

In recent years, we have made substantial progress in improving the quality of life for Marines and their families. From targeted investments in unaccompanied housing through the Barracks 2030 initiative to expanded childcare options and enhanced fitness and dining facilities, we are taking deliberate steps to support the physical, mental, and social well-being of our Marines. These efforts will remain a top priority as we continue to invest in the programs and infrastructure that enable our force to remain ready and lethal.

#### **Installations:**

Barracks 2030 - In December 2024, I directed a generational investment in Marine Corps barracks infrastructure, known as Barracks 2030. This initiative is a critical step toward restoring faith with our Marines and Sailors. It aligns with the Department of Defense's Quality of Service effort and directly responds to enduring challenges in recruiting, retention, and readiness. Our objective is clear: to provide safe, healthy, and professionally managed living quarters that allow Marines to rest and recover after demanding training or operational deployments.

Marine feedback—captured through exit surveys and direct engagement—consistently points to poor barracks conditions as a major factor impacting morale, welfare, and retention. The scale of the problem demands sustained, resourced action.

Facilities Sustainment, Restoration and Modernization (FSRM) - The Marine Corps continues to face significant facility challenges within the constraints of available resources. Rising material costs, inflation, and workforce shortages in the construction sector all impact our ability to deliver projects on time and within budget.

#### **Quality of Life:**

Marine Corps Total Fitness - The Marine Corps Total Fitness (MCTF) program is a comprehensive framework designed to enhance the readiness, resilience, and overall well-being of Marines, their families, and the broader Marine Corps community. By focusing on four key



pillars—physical, mental, spiritual, and social fitness—MCTF aims to strengthen individual performance, sustain long-term force effectiveness, and foster a culture of holistic well-being. More than just a fitness initiative, MCTF integrates training, support systems, and leadership engagement to ensure Marines are equipped to thrive in both operational and personal environments. Through this approach, the Marine Corps seeks to cultivate a force that is not only physically prepared for the demands of service but also mentally resilient, spiritually grounded, and socially connected, ensuring sustained readiness and mission success.

Military Compensation - Competitive compensation remains essential to sustaining the all-volunteer force and directly impacts both recruiting and retention. Today, Marine Corps pay and benefits—including housing, healthcare, bonuses, and tax advantages—remain highly competitive. According to the 14th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, officer pay ranks in the top 24 percent compared to civilian counterparts, while enlisted pay ranks in the top 17 percent. We appreciate Congress' support in approving a 4.5 percent basic pay increase for all Marines, and an additional 10 percent for our most junior Marines. Beyond basic pay, we employ targeted incentives to retain and properly assign Marines based on experience and skill. Selective Retention Bonuses help shape the force by focusing on critical military occupational specialties and encouraging lateral moves to meet emerging requirements. We continue to pair monetary incentives with non-monetary options tailored to individual Marines, ensuring we retain the talent needed to maintain readiness and warfighting excellence.

Spouse Employment - The employment of Marine spouses directly impacts the financial stability, readiness, and retention of our Marines. We remain committed to supporting career opportunities for military spouses through programs like the Family Member Employment Assistance Program, which offers career coaching, job search support, and referrals for education and employment services. To further assist, we have implemented a Relocation Tool within our personnel system, enabling spouses employed by Marine Corps Community Services to identify transfer opportunities in advance of their next move. Additionally, we reimburse eligible spouses up to \$1,000 for costs associated with professional licensure or business relocation when moving to a new state—an initiative that has already supported over 500 Marine families. We appreciate Congress' recent expansion of this program and continued efforts to help our families thrive.

Child Care - Sixteen Marine Corps installations operate Child Development Centers (CDCs), but five locations—MCB Quantico, MCB Lejeune/MCAS New River, MCAS Beaufort/MCRD Parris Island, MCB Pendleton, and MCB Hawaii—account for 75 percent of the Marine Corps' childcare waitlist. Wait times vary based on child age, family type, and care start date, with Priority 1 personnel (Child Development Program Direct Care Staff, single/dual active duty, single/dual Guard or Reserve member on Active Duty or Inactive Duty Training status, and Service members with full-time working spouses) receiving the highest priority.

To address these shortages, the Marine Corps is investing in childcare-related MILCON projects. A \$44.1M CDC at MCB Camp Pendleton (P-2401) is under construction to add 250 childcare spaces, eliminating waitlists for Priority 1 personnel. At NSA Andersen AFB, Guam, a \$105.2M CDC (P-415) was awarded in May 2024 to support 276 children as part of the Marine Corps' buildup in the region. Future projects include a \$79.1M CDC replacement at MCB Quantico (P-732) in FY27, a \$58M investment at MCB Camp Butler (P-309) for two new School Age Care (SAC) facilities, and an OSD-funded CDC at MCAS Miramar in FY27, complementing a \$3.2M renovation. Additionally, a \$37.7M CDC (P-250) completed in November 2023 added 412 new childcare spaces, bringing Miramar's total capacity to 929 children once the FY27 project is complete. The Marine Corps also provides Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood (MCCYN) fee assistance for families without access to on-base childcare to alleviate waitlists.

These efforts ensure greater access to quality and affordable childcare, directly supporting Marine families and enhancing overall force readiness.

## **Recruit, Make, and Retain Marines**

Maintaining an elite force begins with recruiting young men and women of the highest character, mental aptitude, and physical fitness and retaining the talented Marines who define our warfighting ethos. Recruiting today is more challenging than it has been in decades, with historic lows in the number of Americans eligible to serve and a declining propensity to join. Despite these headwinds, I am proud to report that the Marine Corps has exceeded recruiting and retention goals without lowering our high standards. I am equally proud of the work our Marines are doing in recruiting. We select the very best for this demanding mission and reward them for

their dedication and success. Their efforts ensure we continue to recruit individuals who meet and exceed the standards required to earn the title of Marine.

Recruiting, making, and retaining the right individuals is essential to our institutional success and directly impacts our readiness. To this end, the Marine Corps has undertaken several initiatives to bolster recruiting efforts, improve quality of service, and retain our most talented Marines. These efforts are guided by a data-driven approach rooted in our enduring ethos as a warfighting organization and our responsibility to care for Marines and their families. Bottom Line: We must recruit high-quality people, transform them into Marines, and keep them in our ranks.

#### **Recruiting:**

Despite recruiting challenges, we are continuing to meet our recruiting goals. Your Marine Corps made its recruiting mission in FY24 and is currently on track to meet it again in FY25. Service as a Marine continues to attract those who meet our standards and aspire to prove themselves worthy of earning the title. While FY25 is a slightly higher mission, we will approach it with the same planning factors as FY24 to ensure we recruit to our Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) needs. The Marine Corps exceeds the minimum Department of Defense standards for enlistment to send the best Marine possible to the Fleet, and I intend to keep it that way—the Marine Corps will not lower standards.

Despite our success, we must remain mindful of the long-game—recruiting will continue to be difficult into the future, requiring hard choices and continued investment in personnel and advertising to ensure future success. While we have achieved the first “Start Pool” increase since FY22—we are still in a nascent recovery and cannot declare victory. Our 28 percent FY25 Start Pool is relative to the 20-year historical average Start Pool of approximately 52 percent. Start Pool continues to be the most significant predictor of mission success.

#### **Retention:**

Retention is critical to the Marine Corps' ability to maintain a highly trained, experienced, and ready force. Retaining skilled Marines reduces the need for constant recruitment and training, ensuring a more capable and combat-ready force. High retention rates preserve institutional knowledge, enhance unit cohesion, and improve overall effectiveness. Additionally,

investing in retention strengthens leadership development as seasoned Marines mentor and train the next generation. Retention also optimizes personnel investment, reducing recruiting and initial training costs. By fostering a culture that values professional growth, career progression, and quality of life, the Marine Corps retains the best talent to meet operational demands and sustain warfighting excellence.

Commandant's Retention Program (CRP), Active and Reserve - The FY25 CRP cohort yielded over 1,400 reenlistments, accounting for nearly 20 percent of the overall First Term Alignment Plan (FTAP) mission for FY25. We secured over 7,900 FTAP reenlistments for the Active Component, achieving 114 percent of our goal. For the inaugural year of the Reserve Component CRP, we secured 248 reenlistments and drilling obligations from the first-year cohort, reaching 103 percent of our goal. The CRP remains critical in incentivizing the reenlistment of our high-performing Marines.

Multiple-Year Reenlistment Cohorts - Beginning with the FY25 retention campaign, our expanded FTAP model allows the Active Component to reenlist Marines from the FY24-FY27 retention cohorts simultaneously. The expanded FTAP retention model has yielded a greater overall retention rate and Primary MOS (PMOS) skillset match. We will continue looking at ways beyond FY25 to expand reenlistment windows, providing additional agency and decision space for Marines to achieve their career goals.

Lateral Moves - In FY24, incentivization efforts and a streamlined lateral move process led to 1,014 enlisted Marines from the FY24 FTAP and STAP retention cohorts executing a lateral move with reenlistment. This is a roughly 20 percent increase in lateral moves compared to FY23. To exploit this success and strengthen MOS health across the force, we will continue to offer various monetary and non-monetary incentives, as well as earlier submission periods and active identification of qualified Marines for lateral move opportunities.

Dual-Military Assignments - As of November 2024, over 11,000 active-duty and active reserve Marines are married to other service members. Recognizing the importance of keeping families together while ensuring Service requirements are met, we are optimizing the assignment process

for dual-military Marines. A key enabler in this improved process is our Dual-Military Coordinator, responsible for maintaining transparent working relationships with service monitors (active and active reserve) and adjacent service detailers, synchronizing geolocation selection and timeline execution, and facilitating waivers.

Manpower Information Technology Systems Modernization (MITSM) – We have identified the need to modernize our manpower information technologies and have therefore developed the Manpower Information Technology Systems Modernization (MITSM) strategy, which seeks to employ adaptive acquisition pathways to generate rapid prototyping and state-of-the-art commercial technology. As of September 2024, the MITSM strategy has been the driving force behind awarding six major contracts across Headquarters Marine Corps. Efforts underway include an IT/Data Modernization Strategy, a Talent Marketplace—released this year as the Talent Management Engagement Platform (TMEP)—TFRS 2.0, and Models Modernization. TMEP is an internally developed prototype intended to increase command input and provide monitors and their assignable Marines with more accessible and transparent information. Since May 2024, TMEP has been tested by approximately 12,000 enlisted Marines across 10 MOSs and released to Active Component Marines in the ranks of second lieutenant through colonel, consisting of roughly 16,000 Marines. Marines are already seeing some of the initial benefits of these efforts, including TMEP and TFRS 2.0, both of which Marines helped test and refine during the development process. Through MITSM, we will remain aggressive in optimizing analytics to improve institutional decision-making related to personnel-related functions.

Performance Evaluation Reform—Aligned with the recent Government Accountability Office study on “Military Officer Performance,” released November 2024, DC, M&RA is evaluating and assessing the need for performance evaluation reform to better align Marines' innate capabilities with the needs of the Fleet Marine Forces. Applying dramatic advancements in information technology over the past several decades will help us better mentor, evaluate, and report on our Marines to support their career development and progression.

Additionally, we are analyzing our Assignment Incentive Pay (AIP) program and exploring other ways to incentivize service in geographically challenging locations. Finally, we are digesting information gleaned from a recent total force incentives Operational Planning Team

to identify and optimize current and potential monetary and non-monetary incentives to improve Fleet Marine Forces readiness.

## Enduring Efforts

### **Marine Forces Reserve:**

The Marine Corps Reserve remains a cornerstone of the Total Force, delivering critical combat-ready forces and supporting the Active Component (AC) in global operations, joint training, and community engagement. In FY24, Marine Forces Reserve (MARFORRES) expanded its contributions to the Global Force Management Allocation Plan (GFMAP), increased its participation in Service-Level and Joint Training Exercises, and invested in facilities and equipment to enhance readiness.

Global Force Management - In FY24, the Marine Corps activated nearly 600 Reserve Marines to support Joint Force Commanders across Southwest Asia, South America, Africa, Europe, and the Pacific. This marked a significant increase in operational tempo compared to FY23. In FY25, activations are expected to double, with nearly 1,500 Reserve Marines mobilizing to meet global commitments. These activations include large combat formations such as infantry battalions, artillery batteries, and aviation squadrons, as well as unique enabler capabilities like civil affairs, foreign advisors, and other specialized skill sets essential to modern operations.

Reserve Modernization – As the service continues to rely on its reserve component to fulfill its role as an operational force provider, I have directed the Marine Corps Reserve to modernize and grow to maximize its contribution to the Total Force in support of global competition, crisis response, and conflict. Force Design modernization plans for the active and the reserves balance the need to maximize “Total Force” lethality and capacity during a period of increased risk while optimizing resource allocation. Modernization plans include synchronizing reserve and active efforts to ensure there are no decrements to total force offerings as units undergo modernization. In coordination with Marine Corps Recruiting Command, Marine Forces Reserve is pursuing a long-term comprehensive plan for reserve component infantry unit modernization and distribution across the country in a manner that maximizes recruiting potential, personnel readiness, facility suitability, and access to training.

Community Engagement and Facilities Investments - MARFORRES maintains a vital presence in communities nationwide through initiatives like Toys for Tots and Military Funeral Honors (MFH). In FY24, MARFORRES distributed over 25.5 million toys to more than 10.3 million children and conducted over 20,400 MFHs—demonstrating the Marine Corps’ enduring commitment to "Once a Marine, always a Marine." Additionally, facility investments totaling over \$45 million in FY24 improved training environments, enhanced unit morale, and supported retention efforts.

Personnel, Training, and Equipment Challenges - Despite these achievements, MARFORRES faces readiness challenges in personnel, training, and equipment. With a shortage of 3,764 Marines—most notably in the reserve infantry community—only 41 percent of SMCR units meet the 85 percent personnel readiness threshold. To address this, MARFORRES is implementing retention incentives, MOS retraining programs, and adjustments to unit locations to align with shifting population centers. Training remains constrained by the authorized 48 Inactive Duty Training periods and 15 annual training days, limiting opportunities to keep pace with evolving tactics and technology. To mitigate this, units maximize volunteer training and extend active-duty support, particularly for pre-activation units.

Equipment disparities also hinder integration with Active Component counterparts. MARFORRES relies on National Guard and Reserve Equipment Allocation (NGREA) funding to close this gap but has received less than 1.5 percent of total NGREA allocations since 2016. Advocacy efforts continue to secure a larger share of these funds to enhance readiness. Despite these challenges, MARFORRES remains an indispensable component of the Total Force, strengthening the Marine Corps through strategic investments, innovative training, and community engagement.

#### **Training and Education Command (TECOM) Initiatives:**

The Marine Corps is transforming training and education to ensure Marines are prepared for the complexities of modern warfare. Through a combination of Professional Military Education (PME) modernization, integration of lessons learned from recent conflicts, and

cutting-edge training initiatives, the Marine Corps is strengthening its ability to develop adaptable, decisive warfighters. Lessons from Ukraine and Gaza have reinforced the need for integrated fires, dispersed operations, and resilience in contested environments, shaping updates to both training exercises and curriculum development. At the same time, Project Triumph, Project Trident, and Project Tripoli are revolutionizing how the Marine Corps trains, educates, and prepares forces for future conflicts.

Project Tripoli - Project Tripoli is the Marine Corps' initiative to establish a persistent, globally accessible, all-domain, and all-echelon live, virtual, and constructive training environment (LVC-TE). The project is in the execution phase with the deployment of the Marine Training Enterprise Network (MTEN), fully integrated with the Navy Continuous Training Environment (NCTE) and Joint Training and Experimentation Network (JTEN). The Joint Live Virtual Constructive (JLVC) Federation, featuring 16 advanced simulations, enhances multi-echelon Command Post Exercises (CPX) and other constructive training capabilities. Key developments include the deployment of 250 Marine Common Virtual Platforms (MCVP), providing tools for fires, Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TC3), maintenance, ISR emulation, and decision-making. The Marine Corps plans to complete procurement of the Marine Corps Tactical Instrumentation System (MCTIS) in 2025, alongside a Contracted Logistics Support (CLS) contract to sustain comprehensive training events and maintenance at fielded locations. Continued testing will further integrate MCTIS into the LVC-TE, while prototyping efforts for MCTIS-Vehicle and Weapon Surrogate programs and Small UAS remain ongoing to enhance training realism.

Project Trident - Project Trident enhances combat readiness by integrating all-domain fires and effects into individual and unit-level training. A key milestone is the designation of Commander, Pacific Fleet, as the Maritime Fires Executive Agent (MFEA), with Commander, Marine Forces Pacific, serving as Deputy MFEA, which strengthens Naval Service integration. Service-Level Training Exercise (SLTE) enhancements now incorporate non-kinetic effects and maritime operations, featuring real-time electronic warfare, cybersecurity, and signals intelligence adversary forces to refine multi-domain warfare execution. Looking ahead, Project Trident will expand formal instruction in all-domain fires through new courses such as the Littoral Targeting and Fires Course, Naval Expeditionary Operations Planners Course (NEOPC), and Advanced



Fires and Effects Course (AFEC). Additional training in Maritime ISR, expeditionary communications, and MAGTF fires will ensure seamless Navy-Marine Corps integration, preparing Marines to execute and sustain complex, all-domain operations in support of naval and joint forces.

Project Triumph - Project Triumph modernizes training and education by shifting to an outcomes-based, learner-centric model that enhances warfighter proficiency and instructor effectiveness. Emphasizing critical thinking, adaptability, and decision-making under stress, this approach ensures that Marines are prepared for the challenges of modern warfare. A key initiative, the Instructor Development and Recognition Program (IDRP), standardizes instructor training across all levels, improving professional development, evaluation, and retention. Early results show Infantry Marine Course (IMC) graduates demonstrating greater combat proficiency than those trained under previous methods. Looking ahead, Project Triumph will expand IDRP, integrate AI-driven adaptive learning, simulations, and digital tools, and enhance instructor incentives and professional development. Pilot programs at the Basic School (TBS) and School of Infantry (SOI) are refining these methods for force-wide implementation, ensuring Marines are highly capable, adaptable, and ready for future conflict.

Professional Military Education - The Marine Corps is modernizing Professional Military Education (PME) to develop adaptive, strategic leaders capable of operating in multi-domain environments. Enlisted PME is being restructured to align with warfighting requirements, incorporating maneuver warfare, leadership under stress, and joint operations, with the new Staff Non-Commissioned Officer (SNCO) Leadership Course enhancing leadership development. The College of Distance Education and Training (CDET) is expanding AI-driven adaptive learning to personalize coursework. Marine Corps University (MCU) has expanded its curriculum to include advanced wargaming, threat-based scenario planning, and an increased focus on naval integration, ensuring alignment with the Joint Warfighting Concept and service concepts. The introduction of the Joint All Domain Officer (JADO) Program at Command and Staff College is to bridge current education gaps that lack classified, real-world capability and can address modern threats with agile, cross-domain education. The Commandant's Research Fellows Program strengthens ties with top civilian institutions and expanding international PME

partnerships foster interoperability with allies. These initiatives ensure PME remains rigorous, relevant, and fully aligned with modern warfare, preparing Marines to excel in future conflicts.

#### **Personnel Readiness:**

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program (SAPR) - The Marine Corps remains committed to fostering a culture of safety and respect, ensuring that all Marines feel secure in their units and that sexual assault is not tolerated. We take a data-driven approach to preventing sexual assault within our ranks while providing comprehensive response services to those affected by this horrible crime. In FY24, the Marine Corps received 1,239 reports of sexual assault—similar to recent years. Clearly, this is not where we want to be. The only acceptable number of sexual assaults is zero. Through data-informed training and leadership engagement, the Marine Corps remains dedicated to preventing sexual assault. We hold leadership accountable for further reductions in the occurrence of these crimes and for ensuring that every Marine can engage assistance and recovery services as desired.

Suicide Prevention – According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. is experiencing its highest suicide rate since 1941, with increases in both 2022 and 2023. The Marine Corps, like the rest of the nation, continues to confront this challenge. Preliminary Calendar Year (CY) 24 data shows a slight decrease from the CY23; however – official rates will not be released until the official Annual Report on Suicide in the Military is published later in 2025. The Marine Corps continues to track suicide deaths daily to monitor the health of their Marines.

The Marine Corps is committed to a public health approach to primary prevention, leveraging the Command Individual Risk and Resiliency Assessment System (CIRRAS) to facilitate communication across all levels of command, helping identify risk factors early. The Force Preservation Council develops mitigation strategies and connects at-risk Marines with resources before issues escalate. Additionally, the Marine Intercept Program (MIP) provides voluntary support for Marines experiencing suicidal ideations or who have attempted suicide. The program offers periodic outreach, care coordination, ongoing risk assessment, coping skill development through personalized safety plans, and communication with the individual's command. Through these efforts, the Marine Corps remains focused on early intervention,

support, and prevention to safeguard the well-being of its Marines.

Substance Assessment and Counseling Program (SACP) – Formerly the Substance Abuse Program (SAP), SACP provides training, education, and non-medical counseling to reduce substance misuse. SACP includes three areas: The drug demand reduction program (DDRP), alcohol misuse prevention, and non-medical counseling services. The Drug Demand Reduction Program (DDRP) utilizes targeted urinalysis testing to deter illicit drug use and prescription drug misuse. In FY24, the Marine Corps recorded 2,138 unique positive results for wrongful drug use, representing a measurable decrease from the 2,370 cases reported in FY23. This data reflects the effectiveness of current deterrence and accountability measures across the force.

#### **Materiel Readiness:**

Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) - The ACV remains an essential element of our Corps' modernization. By May 2025, it is anticipated that 278 of the planned 632 ACVs will be fielded across the force. This includes three ACV companies at I MEF, one ACV company at II MEF, and one ACV platoon at III MEF, as well as training assets at the Assault Amphibian School. Additionally, test articles will be retained by the Program Manager Advanced Amphibious Assault (PM AAA) and the Amphibious Vehicle Test Branch (AVTB). Of these, 263 will be personnel variants (ACV-P), while the remaining 15 will be command variants (ACV-C). The ACV recently made its inaugural deployment with the 15th MEU, demonstrating its role in strengthening the Fleet Marine Force while enhancing capabilities for the Joint Force. This program remains on schedule and on budget, playing a critical role in ship-to-shore movement capability. We continue to collaborate with industry and the supply base to improve readiness and sustainment.

F-35 - By May 2025, the Marine Corps will have 218 F-35s in the fleet, including 170 F-35Bs and 48 F-35Cs. To align with evolving operational requirements, we have updated our F-35 procurement profile to expand the number of F-35C squadrons. As part of the TACAIR Transition Plan, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232 (VMFA-232) and VMFA-323 will transition to F-35C squadrons. The program of record remains at 420 total aircraft, comprising 310 F-35Bs and 110 F-35Cs, supporting 12 F-35B squadrons and 6 F-35C squadrons. While

these figures reflect the current plan, the mix of F-35B and F-35C aircraft will remain adaptable to accommodate future adjustments. Additionally, I want to express my appreciation for Congress's continued support of AN/APG-85 radar development and production. Delivering a fully functional radar in sufficient quantities as quickly as possible is critical to ensuring the F-35 remains a dominant force in the battlespace.

MV-22 - In service since 2007, the MV-22 has completed 109 operational deployments and accumulated over 630,000 flight hours, maintaining a strong safety record with a Class A mishap rate of 3.04 per 100,000 flight hours—consistent with other military aircraft performing similar roles. However, the grounding of the MV-22 from February to August 2024 prevented new students from entering training and disrupted essential flight operations, which are crucial for maintaining proficiency and readiness. Following extensive engineering analysis, NAVAIR has certified the V-22 as safe to fly with caveats, and all pilots and crew have undergone retraining, including comprehensive maintenance checks, emergency procedures, and flight operations.

CH-53K - The Marine Corps remains committed to fielding and integrating the CH-53K King Stallion to meet its heavy-lift requirements, fully replacing the CH-53E Super Stallion by FY32. Since the establishment of HMM-461—the first operational CH-53K squadron in FY22—the platform has demonstrated unmatched heavy-lift assault support capability, interoperability, survivability, reliability, and maintainability in distributed maritime and expeditionary environments. The first deployment of the CH-53K is anticipated in FY26. Due to fiscal reduction, the Marine Corps is currently reviewing plans to procure a total of 200 CH-53Ks, but the distribution plan across the fleet currently remains unchanged: 6 active squadrons x 16 CH-53K; 1 reserve squadron x 16 CH-53K; 1 fleet replacement squadron x 17 CH-53K; 1 operational test detachment x 2 CH-53K; and 1 developmental test detachment x 2 CH-53K.

#### **Marine Special Operations Forces (MARSOC):**

MARSOC continues to modernize in alignment with the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance and Combatant Command priorities, ensuring readiness for complex, multi-domain operations. Integrated with Naval forces, allies, and interagency partners, MARSOC remains agile, resilient, and ready to transition rapidly to conflict. Innovations like the RAIDER

Spectrum Analysis tool—developed with the Marine Corps Software Factory—enhance force protection and planning through advanced communications analysis. Task Force AYUNGIN has bolstered regional security in the South China Sea by uniting key Special Operations Force elements to address rising tensions. MARSOC’s emphasis on sensor tech, intelligence fusion, and joint fires keeps it ahead of emerging threats and reinforces its role as a Stand-in-Force accelerator across the Special Operations Community.

## Conclusion

The Marine Corps will be ready to respond to any crisis or contingency in the future, just as we have in the past. I remain committed to ensuring the Marine Corps remains our Nation’s force-in-readiness. We will never lower our standards or sacrifice the reputation associated with our sacred title, “Marine”—and will remain innovative and agile in our approach to warfighting. After five budget cycles under the “divest-to-invest” approach, we have identified efficiencies, eliminated outdated capabilities, and ensured every dollar spent directly supports our mission to build a more lethal, capable force. Our commitment to transparency and accountability is evident in achieving a second consecutive unmodified—or “clean”—financial audit, with Ernst & Young’s ranking the Marine Corps as comparable to a “top 120” large company in the U.S. in financial management.

With your help, we will ensure your Marines are provided with world-class training, improved quality of life, and the capabilities required to win our Nation’s battles against any adversary. Every dollar invested will deliver the greatest return in lethality, readiness, and the well-being of our Marines and their families. I thank the Committee for your continued advocacy and support for your Marines. Semper Fidelis.