

Advance Policy Questions for Lieutenant General Robert B. Neller, USMC
Nominee for Commandant of the Marine Corps

Defense Reforms

The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and the Special Operations reforms have strengthened the warfighting readiness of our Armed Forces. They have enhanced civilian control and the chain of command by clearly delineating the Combatant Commanders' responsibilities and authorities and the role of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. These reforms have also vastly improved cooperation between the services and the Combatant Commanders, among other things, in joint training and education and in the execution of military operations.

1. Do you see the need for modifications of any Goldwater-Nichols Act provisions?

No, not at this time.

2. If so, what areas do you believe might be appropriate to address in these modifications?

N/A.

3. Should service chiefs be given greater authority over and responsibility for their service's acquisition programs?

I am in favor of ensuring that Service Chiefs have an appropriate balance of authority and responsibility over their service's acquisition programs, and believe there must be appropriate accountability throughout the process. Understanding that many of these programs are lengthy, complicated and expensive, I share the frustration of many in the services that we cannot produce an important combat capability in a more timely and affordable manner.

Duties

4. What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the Commandant of the Marine Corps?

Section 5043 in Title 10 of United States Code clearly prescribes the duties and functions of the Commandant of the Marine Corps. The Commandant, subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of the Navy, leads the

recruiting, training, organizing, and equipping of the Marine Corps to support military operations by Combatant Commanders. As a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Commandant is responsible for advising the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense.

5. What background and experience, including joint duty assignments, do you possess that you believe qualifies you to perform these duties?

In my over 40 year career as a Marine, I have served in a variety of key service and joint assignments that I believe qualify me to perform the duties of Commandant. I have commanded Marines at all levels including general officer commands as Commanding General, 3rd Marine Division, Commander, Marine Forces Central Command, and my current assignment as Commander, U.S. Marine Forces Command and Commander, U.S. Marine Forces Europe. Other successful general officer assignments have included Director of Operations on the Joint Staff and President, Marine Corps University. In addition to these leadership assignments, I have served as the Director, Operations Division, Plans, Policies and Operations (PP&O) Directorate, Headquarters Marine Corps, Director of Operations, II Marine Expeditionary Force, and Deputy Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) during Operation Iraqi Freedom 05-07.

6. Do you believe that there are any steps that you need to take to enhance your ability to perform the duties of the Commandant of the Marine Corps?

I do not at this time see the need for significant changes in activities or structures to enhance my ability to perform the duties of the office to which I have been nominated. However, I am confident that opportunities for improvement can and should be pursued. If confirmed, I will continue to study and seek to better understand the full range of issues affecting the Marine Corps and our broader National Security.

Relationships

7. Other sections of law and traditional practice establish important relationships between the Commandant of the Marine Corps and other officials. Please describe your understanding of the relationship of the Commandant to the following officials:

Secretary of Defense

The Secretary of Defense is the principal assistant to the President in all matters relating to the Department of Defense. Subject to the direction of the President, the Secretary of Defense has authority, direction, and control over the Department.

Deputy Secretary of Defense

The Deputy Secretary of Defense is the Chief Management Officer of the Department, acting for and on behalf of the Secretary, performing duties and exercising authority the Secretary of Defense prescribes. Subject to the authority, direction and control of the Secretary of the Navy, I would be responsible to the Secretary of Defense and the Deputy Secretary of Defense for the operation of the United States Marine Corps.

The Under Secretaries of Defense

The Under Secretaries of Defense are the principal staff assistants and advisers to the Secretary regarding matters related to their functional areas. Within their areas, Under Secretaries exercise policy and oversight functions. They may issue instructions and directive type memoranda that implement policy approved by the Secretary applicable to all DoD components.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

The Chairman is the principal military advisor to the President and Secretary of Defense. The President directs communications between himself and the Secretary of Defense to the Combatant Commanders via the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and may assign duties to the Chairman to assist the President and the Secretary of Defense in performing their command function. If confirmed, I would cooperate fully with the Chairman in the performance of his responsibilities.

The Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

The Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff performs his duties as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other duties as assigned by the Chairman with the approval of the Secretary of Defense. If confirmed, I would cooperate fully with the Vice Chairman in the performance of his responsibilities.

The Secretary of the Navy

The Secretary of the Navy is the head of the Department of the Navy and is responsible for, and has authority to conduct, all of its affairs. Except for the Title 10 duties and responsibilities as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Commandant performs his duties under the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of the Navy and is directly responsible to the Secretary. The function of the Headquarters, Marine Corps, is to assist the Secretary of the Navy in carrying out his responsibilities. As a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Commandant is responsible for advising the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense.

The Under Secretary of the Navy

The Under Secretary of the Navy is the deputy and principal assistant to the Secretary, and acts with full authority of the Secretary in managing the Department. The Under Secretary serves as the Chief of Staff of the Secretariat and the Chief Operating Officer of the Department. He acts for and on behalf of the

Secretary, performing duties and exercising authority the Secretary prescribes. If confirmed, I would be responsible to the Secretary of Navy and the Under Secretary for the operation of the United States Marine Corps.

The Assistant Secretaries of the Navy

The four Assistant Secretaries of the Navy set the Department of the Navy's strategic direction by developing and overseeing policies and programs within their respective functional areas. If confirmed, I will ensure coordination with the Assistant Secretaries in addressing matters that may impact their respective domains.

The General Counsel of the Navy

The General Counsel is the chief legal and ethics officer of the Department of Navy and serves as counsel to the Secretary and other Secretariat officials. The General Counsel's duties include providing legal and policy advice to officials of the Department of the Navy, as well as making the controlling legal determinations within the Department. If confirmed, I would establish and maintain a close professional relationship with the General Counsel and his staff, and would actively seek his guidance to ensure that United States Marine Corps policies and practices are in strict accord with the law and the highest principles of ethical conduct.

The Judge Advocate General of the Navy

The Judge Advocate General of the Navy provides legal and policy advice to the Secretary of the Navy, directs the Judge Advocate General's Corps, and is primarily responsible for providing legal advice and services regarding the Uniform Code of Military Justice. In coordination with the General Counsel of the Navy, the Judge Advocate General serves as military legal advisor to the Secretary of the Navy. The Judge Advocate General maintains a close relationship with the General Counsel and the Staff Judge Advocate to the Commandant on matters of common interest.

The Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps

With the approval of the Secretary of the Navy, the Assistant Commandant has the authority and duties with respect to the Marine Corps as the Commandant delegates or assigns to him. Orders issued by the Assistant Commandant in performing such duties have the same effect as those issued by the Commandant. If confirmed, the Assistant Commandant and I will work seamlessly to ensure the successful operation of the United States Marine Corps.

The Chiefs of Staff of the Army and Air Force

The Chiefs of Staff of the Services organize, train, and equip their respective forces. Combatant Commanders cannot ensure preparedness of their assigned forces without the full cooperation and support of the Service Chiefs. As a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Service Chiefs are obligated to provide military advice. The experience and judgment of the Service Chiefs provide an invaluable resource for the Combatant Commanders and the national command authority. If confirmed, I

will continue the close bond between the Commandant of the Marine Corps and the Service Chiefs.

The Combatant Commanders

The Combatant Commanders are responsible to the President and to the Secretary of Defense for the performance of missions assigned by the President or by the Secretary with the approval of the President. Subject to the direction of the President, the commander of a combatant command performs duties under the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense; and is directly responsible to the Secretary for the preparedness of the command to carry out missions assigned to the command. Title 10 makes the Commandant of the Marine Corps responsible for organizing, training, and equipping forces in support of Combatant Commanders. Fundamentally, these duties and responsibilities are to prepare the Marine Corps to fight and win on the battlefield. Provision of the service specific and joint capabilities required by Combatant Commanders to perform their missions – today and in the future - forms a large basis of the Commandant’s responsibility. Today’s security environment dictates that the USMC work closely with the Combatant Commanders to execute our national military strategy.

Major Challenges and Priorities

8. In your view, what are the major challenges that will confront the next Commandant of the Marine Corps?

The next Commandant of the Marine Corps will continue to be faced with the readiness challenges that exist during a period of fiscal austerity. The Marine Corps is the nation’s force-in-readiness, and the next Commandant will be responsible for ensuring the nation has that immediate response capability when they need it. Other significant challenges confronting the next Commandant will include modernization and recapitalization of equipment for the future force.

9. Assuming you are confirmed, what plans do you have for addressing these challenges?

The current Commandant and the Corps’ senior leadership have been wrestling with these challenges for the past several years. Today our Marines are operating forward around the globe performing the mission of America’s expeditionary force-in-readiness. If confirmed, I will ensure those Marines deployed and those next to respond have the resources and training they need to be successful. I will also continue some of the initiatives instituted to meet our readiness and training challenges such as developing better readiness metrics, improving leader-to-led ratios, identifying key enlisted leader billets and

investing more time in the development of those key leaders. And if confirmed, I will also work with the Congress on reforming our acquisitions process to achieve a faster, more cost effective means of getting the equipment that our warfighters need for today and tomorrow.

10. If confirmed, what broad priorities would you establish in terms of issues which must be addressed by the Commandant of the Marine Corps?

If confirmed, readiness will remain a top priority. I will ensure that the American people have a Marine Corps that's ready to respond when the nation is least ready.

We are a people organization. We have the finest young men and women in our ranks that the nation has to offer. I will look at ways and means to continue to recruit and retain the highest quality individuals and provide the best opportunities for each Marine to be successful.

Most Serious Problems

11. What do you consider to be the most serious problems in the execution of the functions of the Commandant?

The most serious problems in the execution of the functions of the Commandant are the ability to meet the Title X responsibilities of manning, training, and equipping the expeditionary crisis response force needs of the Combatant Commanders in today's security environment within the fiscal constraints of the current economic landscape. The task of applying resources in a way that successfully addresses both near-term and long-term challenges is a difficult one for every service even in a normal budget process. The request for forces in response to the "New Normal" security environment challenge clearly presents problems to both the Services who provide forces and Combatant Commanders who request them. More immediately, the continuation of sequestration or of 'sequestration-like' budgeting practices affixes every Service Chief in a position where short-term remediation efforts begin to dominate their time, at the expense of long-term service planning, concept development and human capital management.

12. If confirmed, what management actions and associated timelines would you establish to address these problems?

If confirmed, I will pursue institutional reforms to improve readiness reporting and assessment. To mitigate fiscal challenges I will seek balance between current readiness demands and future modernization through a strategy

development process that examines today's security requirements and future challenges.

Organize, Train, and Equip Responsibility

The Commandant of the Marine Corps is responsible for organizing, training and equipping forces provided to Corps and component commanders, including the prioritization of funding and effort to meet these needs in the near term, while developing capabilities for the far term.

13. How would you characterize your experience in force management and capability requirement decisions?

I would characterize my experience as well versed and justly qualified. Over the last three years, I served two years as Commander, Marine Forces Central Command, and the last year as Commander, U.S. Marine Forces Command and Commander, U.S. Marine Forces Europe. I was primarily responsible for force management and capability requirement decisions in all three capacities to promote regional security, maintain proven partnerships and interagency cooperation, and deter and defeat transnational threats.

14. What innovative ideas are you considering for organizing, training and equipping the Marine Corps?

The Marine Corps has proven itself in combat throughout its history, but more pertinently, over the past 14 years in Iraq and Afghanistan. The unique organization of America's force-in-readiness as an air-ground team, naval in character and expeditionary in nature, has been proven as relevant to address the nation's crisis and contingency response options. If confirmed, I will continue to exercise the Title X responsibilities of the Commandant of the Marine Corps to meet this relevant and necessary national requirement.

I will continue to look at ways to improve how Marines are trained and educated to meet future security challenges, exercise experimentation to identify ways to improve how our Marine Air-Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs) are employed, and leverage new systems and innovative technologies to improve how we perform our mission.

Security Strategies and Guidance

15. How would you characterize current trends in the range and diversity of threats to national security we face today?

Current trends are producing an increasingly complex security environment. State and non-state actors alike present a challenge to U.S. and international security. Proliferation of nuclear weapons and technology among non-nuclear states and non-state actors will remain a top concern. Adversaries have access to advanced, dual use technologies, scientific techniques, and open source knowledge that could result in the engineering of chemical and biological weapons and improved dispersal methods. Terrorists continue to seek capability to conduct a significant attack against the United States, and cyberspace will increase as a contested domain.

Should major operations and campaigns occur, they are likely to have a significant maritime and littoral dimension.

The Defense Strategic Guidance issued January 2012 took into account a \$487 billion dollar reduction in defense resources.

16. With the additional \$500 billion in cuts to the Department of Defense as a result of sequestration, is the Defense Strategic Guidance still valid?

I concur with what Chairman Dempsey testified to earlier this year, that we are on the edge of acceptable risk. Further cuts will require a reassessment of the strategy.

17. In your view, as Russian aggression and the emergence of ISIL have occurred since the Defense Strategic Guidance was issued in January 2012, is that strategic guidance still appropriate for the threats we face today or do you think an update is warranted?

Although Russia has asserted more opportunistic aggression since the DSG was published, engagement remains an important means to achieving regional stability. Enhancing the capabilities of partner nations and conducting interoperable coalition operations remains significant. As for ISIL, DSG objectives of security, non-proliferation, countering violent extremists, and upholding commitments remain valid. The DSG appropriately identifies continued U.S and allied presence in the region to achieve these objectives.

18. In your view, is our defense strategy and current establishment optimally structured, with the roles and missions of the military departments appropriately distributed, and U.S. forces properly armed, trained, and equipped to meet security challenges the Nation faces today and into the next decade?

The Defense Strategy as laid out in the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review and the Defense Strategic Guidance is still valid, with the roles and missions of the Military departments adequately distributed to meet current and potential threats.

19. If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you propose to the capabilities, structure, roles, and missions of the defense establishment?

I believe continual assessment is necessary to ensure the Department is optimally aligned to safeguard our national defense. If I identify an area that needs change, I will address it in the appropriate forums.

Military Capabilities in Support of Defense Strategy

20. In your opinion, do current military plans include the necessary capabilities to meet the defense strategy stated in the 2014 QDR? Please identify areas of higher risk.

Yes, but I am very concerned that over the past few years, the Marine Corps' ability to recapitalize and modernize for the future security environment has been undermined due to lower than optimal budgets and the need to fully resource deployed and next-to-deploy Marines.

21. Does the 2014 QDR specify the correct set of capabilities to decisively win in future high-intensity warfare?

The 2014 QDR correctly specifies the set of capabilities needed to win decisively in future high-intensity warfare, but the Marine Corps needs to keep its technological advantage by investing more in the long-term modernization of its warfighting equipment. I do not believe that the current budget levels allow for that modernization to occur given the other demands on the Marine Corps.

According to the force sizing construct in the 2014 QDR, American forces should be able to “defeat a regional adversary in a large-scale multi-phased campaign, and deny the objectives of – or impose unacceptable costs on – another aggressor in another region.”

22. In your opinion, does the Department's force sizing construct provide adequate capability to address the country's current threat environment?

The Marine Corps is the Nation's force-in-readiness and is sized to 182,000 Marines to meet the current guidance. In my opinion, this is the maximum allowable risk that the Marine Corps can accept in the current threat environment. We are operating at a 1 to 2 deployment to dwell ratio, which is not sustainable over the long term.

23. Is the Marine Corps adequately sized to meet this requirement?

The Marine Corps is adequately sized to meet the current requirement in the short term, but I am concerned about our capacity to meet unexpected operational demands, especially in the event of a Major Contingency Operation. We would be “all in,” and would be unable to support other commitments around the world to include theater security cooperation.

24. If the Marine Corps cannot meet the demands placed on it, how will you address this issue?

The Marine Corps is the Nation’s force-in-readiness and I will ensure that those Marines deployed and next-to-deploy are fully supported. I will take risk in home station units readiness, which is our Ready Force that can respond to crises or major combat operations.

Defense Reduction

In your view, what have been/will be the impacts of the following defense budget reductions on the Marine Corps’ capability, capacity, and readiness:

25. Initial Budget Control Act reduction of \$487 billion?

The passage of the Budget Control Act coincided with our planned reduction in force structure. Since our end strength above 182,000 was financed in OCO, we were able to operate effectively. However, we already had to accept risk by reducing our end strength to 182,000.

26. Sequestration in FY 2013?

The Marine Corps was able to absorb the mandated cuts due to sequestration in 2013 primarily by leveraging unencumbered Overseas Contingency Operations funds and unexpended investment resources. However, the furlough of civilians during the summer of 2013 severely damaged the morale of our Civilian Marines.

27. Reduction of \$115 billion in projected spending in the FY 2015 budget, in line with the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review?

The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 provided the Marine Corps with a stable funding profile for both Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015. Even with this stability, the funding levels were below the optimal level to achieve balance across the force in terms of readiness and modernization. I have concerns about underfunding our investment programs, which is critical to the long-term readiness of the Marine Corps.

28. Sequestered Budget Control Act discretionary caps starting in FY 2016 onward?

If the Marine Corps budget for FY 2016 and beyond is capped at the Budget Control Act levels, the Marine Corps will be unable to meet its obligations to the Defense Strategic Guidance and the National Security Strategy. The permanent end strength of the Marine Corps would need to be reduced below the planned levels of 182,000. I would need to rely on Overseas Contingency Operations funding, which are not subject to the discretionary caps, to meet the obligations under the DSG and the NSS.

The fiscal year 2016 budget request assumes that the Budget Control Act will be amended in fiscal year 2016. The fiscal year 2016 Budget Resolution passed by the Senate and House of Representatives do not assume this, but instead provides \$38 billion of the requested spending through the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) budget.

29. Should this OCO funding not be available, what recommendations would you have, if confirmed, for how the Marine Corps should manage additional cuts for fiscal year 2016?

Without OCO, the Marine Corps would not be able to meet the requirements of the current Defense Strategic Guidance and would result in a Marine Corps with fewer trained and ready active duty battalions and squadrons than would be required for a single major contingency.

30. What are your views on the impact that these cuts could have on readiness for the Corps?

We are relying on OCO funding today for many requirements that have become enduring. Without OCO, the readiness of the Marine Corps will be significantly impacted, especially to home-station units. I will shift as many resources as needed to ensure the readiness of units deployed and those next-to-deploy.

31. What are your views on the impact that these cuts could have on Marine capabilities?

The capabilities of the Marine Corps will be diminished.

International Partnerships

Interactions between the naval and marine forces of different countries are often conducted at the Chief of service level, including international exercises, Foreign Military Sales, educational exchanges, and protocols for operations.

32. If confirmed, how do you plan to ensure the Marine Corps continues to build strong partnerships, overcome challenges, and exploit opportunities in international cooperation?

I believe that in order to be postured as the nation's crisis response force, we must continuously engage with ally and partner security forces around the globe, to gain access and build relationships. The Marine Corps does this through its component headquarters to the Combatant Commands. The current security climate and fiscal uncertainty call for increased cooperation with our allies and partners to encourage burden-sharing, project United States presence, and build security globally. Security Cooperation activities, such as those executed by the Marine Expeditionary Units and Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Forces, enable our own operational readiness while developing interoperability with our strategic partners and building partner security force capabilities to support more effective coalition operations and contribute to their own defense. However, our strategic engagement should focus not only on our most capable partners, but also on the partner security forces who can benefit from the ethos, professionalism, and relatively smaller size of the Marine Corps.

If confirmed, I would seek to maintain the current initiatives that have made the Marine Corps the partner of choice for amphibious operations and combined arms, while orienting the Service for the future operating environment.

33. How would you characterize your familiarity with international marine leaders, forums, and processes?

As a result of my previous experiences, including most recently my positions at Marine Forces Central Command and Marine Forces Europe, I am very familiar with international Marine and Naval Infantry leaders, as well as leaders of other international allies and partners who share similar mission sets. If confirmed, I will continue to leverage various means to build and reinforce personal relationships to cooperatively build a more secure and stable international environment. These engagement opportunities will range from senior-level conferences and formal staff talks to personal interaction during travel to partner nations or visits by partner nation leaders to the U.S. I will continue to leverage service programs, such as Foreign Military Sales and personnel exchanges, to advance U.S. government and Department of Defense objectives.

Joint Operations

Naval operations are becoming increasingly "joint" as Marines plan to deploy in larger numbers and on a wider range of ships; the U.S. Army and Air Force begin to invest in counter-maritime capabilities; and air and naval forces continue to develop and implement interoperable capabilities to defeat anti-access and area-denial (A2/AD) networks – a process that started with the Air-Sea Battle Concept in 2010.

34. How would you characterize your familiarity with the other services' capabilities and how they organize, train and equip their forces?

In my current position I have become very familiar with how the Army and Air Force organize, train, and equip and as Marines we work side by side with and share a similar approach to problem solving as the Navy. The most salient aspect of Joint Force capabilities is that we are all reliant on the capabilities of the other Services, Special Operations Command, other departments within the U.S. Government, and our closest allies to execute the diverse set of missions needed to ensure our continued security.

35. Are there other innovative ideas you are considering to increase Joint interoperability and ensure opportunities to improve cross-domain capability and capacity are not missed?

As our Nation's premier crisis response force in readiness, there is a high probability that forward stationed and deployed Marine Expeditionary Forces will be the first forces on the scene of a developing crisis. As such Marines will provide critical enabling capabilities for follow-on Joint Forces. Therefore, interoperability is a must.

If confirmed, I will work closely with the other Service Chiefs and Combatant Commanders to increase our ability to share information in an environment where we are likely to lose communications or security for periods of time. In the current and future threat environment it is essential that the services continue to develop our compatibility, through equipment procurement, electronic systems, and training regimens. In this way, the Marine Corps, as the Nation's force in readiness, will not only be the most ready when the Nation is least ready, but also be able to bring other services into the fight when necessary.

Capacity and End Strength

36. Is the Marine Corps' end strength large enough to execute the 2015 National Military Strategy? (CD&I)

The currently budgeted force, which decreases to 182k in FY17, remains the force that assumes the maximum allowable risk that can meet the current Defense Strategic Guidance. The Marine Corps has yet to fully analyze the 2015 National Military Strategy to determine if the planned force size is adequate to meet the new strategy.

37. Is the capacity of the Corp's sufficient? Is the balance between the institutional support base and the deployable combat units about right? (CD&I)

The current budgeted force is the maximum allowable risk that I am willing to accept. We are operating at a 1 to 2 deployment to dwell ratio, which is not sustainable over the long term. Our capacity to meet unexpected operational demands is stressed, especially in the event of a Major Contingency Operation.

38. What is your view as how to best leverage the Marine Corps Reserves?

The Marine Corps Reserve and its associated programs exist to augment, reinforce and sustain the active component as an integral part of the Marine Corps Total Force. In addition to providing operational and strategic depth, they provide individual augmentation to regional Marine Forces and Marine Expeditionary Force staffs to reinforce the Active Component across all warfighting functions.

39. Are the end strength, capabilities and readiness of the Marine Reserves adequate to reinforce the active component for current operations? For planned contingencies?

Yes, however many of the same concerns regarding readiness, training, and education that I expressed for the active force also apply to the reserves.

Headquarters Streamlining

The Senate-passed Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act directs reforms to consolidate the headquarters functions of the Department of Defense and the military departments.

40. If confirmed, and if the provisions in the bill become law, what would be your role in streamlining functions, as well as identifying and implementing reductions in the Marine Corps headquarters?

I will appoint key representatives to work with counterparts from the Department of Defense and our sister services to consider functions that could potentially be consolidated or streamlined. We will first and foremost make recommendations and decisions that are critical to the mission. If any decisions result in reductions in personnel, the Marine Corps will make those decisions following a strategic review of our workforce.

41. What areas and functions, specifically and if any, do you consider to be the priorities for possible consolidation or reductions within the Marine Corps?

I have no specific recommendations at this time. We would obviously look for areas of redundancy or where consolidation or reductions would be the least impactful. The potential for consolidation or reduction of functions is not

something to take lightly. A thorough review and analysis of what we do now, what could be done better, what makes sense, and the resulting impact on our personnel, both military and civilian, must be completed before any recommendations and decisions are made.

42. To the extent that the Corps has functions that overlap with the Department of Defense, Joint Staff, or other military departments, what would be your approach to consolidating and reducing redundancy?

These decisions would need to be made on a case-by-case basis. I would first require a thorough analysis of what is currently being done by all staffs and departments, what could be done better, what makes sense and the resulting impact on our personnel, both military and civilian. These steps must be completed before any recommendations and decisions are made. If decisions require reductions in personnel, the Marine Corps will make those decisions following a strategic review of our workforce.

43. Is the Marine Corps on track to reduce the size of its headquarters in accordance with Secretary of Defense's directive of 2013?

The Marine Corps is on track to meet the Secretary of Defense's direction to reduce the size of its headquarters, to include the number of civilians and military personnel. I will commit to working with the Secretary and the Congress to keep our headquarters as lean as possible while providing support to the operating forces throughout the world.

Readiness

44. What is your general assessment of the current state of readiness of the Marine Corps?

For over a decade, Marines have proven their mettle in responding to a wide range of crises worldwide. Doing so, however, has caused stress on home station units. We have appropriately prioritized the readiness of those Marines who are forward deployed and in harm's way. I am concerned about the long term implications to our equipment modernization and infrastructure sustainment should sequestration-level funding return.

45. Are the infantry regiments and battalions of the Marine Corps at acceptable levels of readiness?

Our deployed infantry battalions and regimental command elements are ready to operate across the range of military operations. However, full spectrum readiness varies among home station infantry units. We depend on a budget that protects current unit readiness and long-term investments--this is all part of

balanced institutional readiness. Currently, institutional readiness is out of balance as resources that would otherwise have been applied to non-deployed units and investment accounts are re-prioritized to deployed and next-to-deploy units to safeguard near-term operational unit level readiness. The availability of amphibious shipping for training further complicates the attainment of full spectrum readiness for all infantry units.

46. Are units in the key supporting arms (i.e. armored reconnaissance, tank, artillery and engineers) at acceptable levels of readiness?

Our forward deployed and forward engaged units are ready to operate across the range of military operations. However, full spectrum readiness varies among home station units.

Since the Marine Corps deploys task organized forces to meet combatant commander requirements, key supporting arms units continue to balance the demands of providing ready units to task organized forces for worldwide employment against the requirement to generate whole unit capabilities to operate across the full range of military operations.

47. What is the level of readiness in the fixed and rotary winged squadrons and wings? Is this adequate?

Over a decade of sustained combat operations and high operations tempo, coupled with chronic underfunding of sustainment activities and the current fiscal environment has led to degraded readiness in Marine Aviation. We are currently able to meet all operational commitments with ready forces, but these forces often achieve the required level of readiness just prior to deployment. Prioritizing forward deployed readiness comes at the expense of next-to-deploy and non-deployed units.

Current levels of readiness are not adequate for our nation's force-in-readiness. Across the Marine Aviation fleet, our non-deployed squadrons are 20% short of the required number of aircraft needed to train or to respond to contingency or crisis. Among the factors contributing to readiness shortfalls are: aviation depot capacity and throughput shortfalls; underfunding in flying hour and other sustainment and logistics accounts; lack of experienced and qualified personnel; slower than needed procurement funding for recapitalization of legacy aircraft.

48. How deep is the "bench" of ready units available for deployment beyond the deployed MAGTFs and Special Purpose MAGTFs?

Home station units constitute the ready force that would respond to unforeseen crises or major contingency. The Marine Corps retains the capacity to support its portion of the strategy; however, I am concerned about our ability to generate

ready follow-on or surge forces should they be requested by the Combatant Commanders. Since the Marine Corps fights as task organized forces, I am particularly concerned about Marine Corps aviation readiness. Our ready aviation “bench” is too shallow and does not have the resources it needs to train and be ready for future challenges. Specific details cannot be discussed in this unclassified forum.

49. Given current operational tempo is the Corps able to maintain its desired BOG dwell ratios for its ground and air units?

The Marines Corps seeks to allocate forces supporting current operations with a deployment-to-dwell range of 1:2 to 1:3 for the majority of our units. We will work with the Combatant Commanders and provide forces that support operational and Service requirements.

50. If readiness is not at acceptable levels, what is your vision and plan to achieve required levels?

The Marine Corps continues to reconstitute to a ready force after over a decade of persistent conflict. As the Nation’s ready force, the Marine Corps does not have the luxury to take an operational pause after completing major operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. I will prioritize the resetting of Marine Corps equipment and restore home station readiness. Near-term readiness remains a top priority. I will work with the Department’s leadership and the Congress to ensure the Marine Corps is properly resourced to deliver a ready Marine Corps today and in the future.

51. If confirmed, what will be your priorities for maintaining readiness in the near term, while modernizing the Corps to ensure readiness in the out years?

Near-term operational readiness and the readiness of those Marines who are forward deployed and forward engaged remain my top priority. I will ensure that our manning, training, and equipping processes support the next generation of ready Marines to answer the Nation’s call. I will work with the Department’s leadership and the Congress to ensure the Marine Corps is properly resourced to deliver a ready Marine Corps today and in the future.

Budget

52. Is the Marine Corps’ budget adequate to execute operations, maintain readiness, procure needed weapons and equipment, modernize, and sustain quality of life?

The FY 2016 budget represents the limit of acceptable risk for the Marine Corps in terms of both end strength and funding; while we can meet the requirements of the

Defense Strategic Guidance today, there is no margin. The budget rightly prioritizes near-term readiness at the expense of modernization and facilities, which is not sustainable in the long-term.

Financial Management and Audit

The Department of Defense Office of Inspector General recently withdrew its previously clean opinion on the Marine Corps' FY12 Statement of Budgetary Activity (SBA). This is a significant setback not only for the Marine Corps, but also for the Department, as the Marine Corps was supposed to be the first service to attempt an audit, and the clean opinion was initially hailed as evidence of the Department's progress on audit.

53. Should the Marine Corps have declared it was audit ready in FY14, given the fact it has not corrected its known financial management weaknesses?

Yes, we were ready for the FY14 audit. We had successfully completed all the work and answered all the audit questions from the auditors for both the FY12 and FY13 audits, and we were prepared to do the same for FY14. We also knew the nature and impact of previously identified Marine Corps and DOD financial management and system weaknesses, and we understood the status of ongoing corrective actions. None of these known weaknesses were showstoppers for the audit, and corrective actions frequently take multiple years to fully implement. Conducting the FY14 audit helped identify additional Marine Corps improvement areas, and resulted in the DoDIG and our Independent Public Accounting firm identifying a significant DOD-wide accounting issue.

54. If confirmed, how will you ensure that the Marine Corps is implementing corrections to its financial management systems and processes necessary to ensure it can undergo audit of its full financial statement in FY18?

The Marine Corps has a well-established plan to be ready for the full financial statement audit by FY18 and to implement improvements to its financial management and business processes and systems. Success in achieving full auditability is a top priority as we demonstrate good stewardship of the nation's resources, and we are committed to making fiscally informed decisions.

Recruiting and Retention

55. What do you consider to be the key to the Marine Corps' success in recruiting the highest caliber American youth for service and retaining the best personnel for leadership responsibilities?

The key to Marine Corps' recruiting success is the continued focus on finding highly qualified young men and women who are seeking the challenge of serving

their nation. Continued access by recruiters to high schools and colleges not only assures the opportunity to engage a diverse and quality market, but also a market with the proven mental abilities to serve in technically challenging fields. Another key component of our recruiting success is the Marine Corps' image of smart, tough, elite warriors. The time proven intangible benefits of service, pride of belonging, leadership, challenges, and discipline are what we offer. Those attributes are what allows us to remain America's Force in Readiness.

56. What steps do you feel should be taken to ensure that current operational requirements and tempo do not adversely impact the overall readiness, recruiting and retention, and morale of the Marine Corps?

Effective recruiting will require that we continue to maintain a high quality and properly resourced recruiting force. I also believe sustaining an operational tempo of at least 1:2 will ensure that our readiness, retention, and morale remain high.

57. What is your assessment of current recruiting standards, particularly DOD-wide criteria for tier-one recruits, and their propensity to accurately predict minimal attrition and future success in military service?

If confirmed, I will carefully review the compensation reforms and the effects on recruiting and retention.

58. What impact, if any, do you believe the Department's proposals aimed at slowing the growth of personnel and health care costs will have on recruiting and retention in the Marine Corps?

I believe the Department's reforms can promote recruiting and retention necessary to maintain the All-Volunteer Force. If confirmed, I will continue to carefully review all compensation reforms for any effects on recruiting and retention.

59. Do you believe that if Congress does not support these proposals, the resultant pressure on training and modernization resources could begin to harm retention?

I believe that all personnel costs – including compensation reforms - must be viewed through the lens of overall readiness, to include training, equipping, and modernizing our Marine Corps. If confirmed, I will carefully review the compensation reforms and the effects on overall readiness to ensure your Marine Corps has the proper balance to maximize its crisis response and warfighter capabilities.

60. What is your assessment of the adequacy of military compensation?

The Marine Corps is meeting our recruiting and retention goals, and the current compensation package helps produce the force we need. If confirmed, I will continue to assess the adequacy of military compensation to ensure we recruit and retain the highest quality Marines.

61. What recommendations would you have for controlling the rising cost of personnel?

Given the fiscal constraints on the Department of Defense, I believe that the compensation proposals put forward by the President in the 2016 budget request are reasonable measures to slow the growth in military compensation in order to strike a balance between personnel costs, training, equipment, and modernization that protects readiness.

62. Do you personally support the Administration's compensation and health care proposals?

Yes, I support these proposals. They slow the rate of compensation growth which is necessary for the Marine Corps to maintain readiness under current budget constraints. This budget achieves the necessary and appropriate balance in compensation, training, equipment and modernization. It sustains the recruitment and retention of high-quality personnel needed to defend our Nation, while still providing quality compensation and health care benefits to our Marines. If confirmed, I will continually assess compensation and health care to ensure that we continue to maintain this balance.

63. As the Marine Corps has the highest percentage of service members who leave after their first term, what is your assessment of the adequacy of compensation and benefits available for non-career service members?

By design, the Marine Corps is a young service and purposefully retains fewer service members at the first reenlistment decision point than the other services. Today, we are meeting all of our recruiting and retention goals and the quality of the force is extraordinary. Based on those facts, I believe compensation and benefits for non-career service members are adequate.

64. Former Commandant, General Amos, and the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Barrett have talked about the nexus between what marines are paid today and the dangers associated with becoming, as they put it, "an entitlement-based, health-care providing based Marine Corps," implying a relationship between the military compensation and benefit system and the ethos of military service.

65. Do you share these concerns?

Our Marines must be paid adequately and their families should be supported through various programs like housing, child care, health care, and commissary and exchanges. However, the Marine Corps' primary recruiting and retention motivator is our culture and warrior ethos; it is what Marines sign up for and what we deliver.

66. If so, what are the implications for the All-Volunteer Force?

If confirmed, I will continually assess compensation to ensure that we continue to maintain the right balance between compensation, training, equipment, and modernization.

Education for Marines

An important feature of the Post-9/11 GI Bill is the ability of career-oriented Marines to transfer their earned benefits to spouses and dependents.

67. What is your assessment of the effect of the Post-9/11 GI Bill on recruiting and retention of Marines?

I believe that the Post-9/11 GI Bill positively contributes to recruiting and retaining high quality Marines. For recruits, education benefits, including the Post 9/11 GI Bill, are cited as the most influential benefit in making the decision to join the Marine Corps. In regard to retention, the ability to transfer Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits directly influences retention by requiring 4 additional years of service. In addition, 53% of Marines indicated that the ability to transfer their benefits was an influence to stay in the Marine Corps.

68. In your view, what has been the effect of the transferability option on retention and career satisfaction of Marines?

According to Marine Corps surveys, for all non-retirement eligible Marines who were required to make an FY15 reenlistment decision, 53% indicated that the ability to transfer their benefits was an influence to stay in the Marine Corps.

69. How important do you believe tuition assistance benefits are to young Marines, and what trends do you see in the Marine Corps' ability to pay for such programs at current levels over the FYDP?

Post-secondary education is an important part of individual Marines personal and professional development. Encouraging qualified Marines to utilize any and all resources to better themselves via education and training is part of the

Marine Corps ethos. This leads to better Marines and in turn better citizens. I understand that the Marine Corps is adequately funded to provide tuition assistance benefits to qualified Marines. In addition, the Post 9/11 GI Bill provides a very generous education benefit.

70. What changes, if any, would you recommend to current eligibility criteria for tuition assistance?

I believe the Marine Corps is properly executing the tuition assistance program. I have no recommendations to change current Marine Corps eligibility criteria at this time. However, as with other programs, we are constantly reviewing eligibility criteria for efficient and effective use of resources.

Assignment Policies for Women in the Military

The Department in January, 2013, rescinded the policy restricting the assignment of women to certain units which have the primary mission of engaging in direct ground combat operations, and gave the military services until January 1, 2016, to open all positions currently closed to women, or to request an exception to policy to keep a position closed beyond that date, an exception that must be approved by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense. The Marine Corps continues to develop gender-free physical and mental standards for all military occupations, presumably with the goal of allowing individuals, regardless of gender, to serve in those positions if they can meet those standards.

71. If confirmed, what role will you play in the development of these standards?

If confirmed, I will ensure that during the review, validation and development of Marine military occupational standards, they are operationally-relevant, occupation-specific, and gender-neutral.

72. If confirmed, will you ensure that the standards are realistic and preserve, or enhance, military readiness and mission capability?

Yes.

73. Do you believe that decisions to open positions should be based on military requirements and that assignment decisions should be made solely on the basis of a service member's ability to meet validated gender-neutral occupational standards? If so, what steps would you take to ensure that such decisions are made on these bases?

Yes. The Marine Corps Force Integration Plan is a deliberate, measured, and responsible approach to research, set conditions and integrate female Marines into ground combat arms MOSs and units to the maximum extent possible. The Marine Corps' unwavering focus remains on combat effectiveness and ensuring

the fullest success of each Marine. Recommendations to the Secretary of the Navy, Secretary of Defense, and the Congress will be made in that context.

74. Do you believe that any marine, male or female, who can meet the performance criteria the Corps is currently testing and validating, should be given the opportunity to serve in those occupations, including Infantry?

The Marine Corps' top priority is combat effectiveness and the accompanying high state of readiness to meet emerging challenges across the range of military operations. The Marine Corps will ensure that all individuals regardless of gender are assigned to serve in an occupational specialty for which they are most fully qualified.

Relationship between Staff Judge Advocate to the Commandant of the Marine Corps and Counsel for the Commandant, United States Marine Corps

75. How are the legal responsibilities of the Marine Corps allocated between the Staff Judge Advocate to the Commandant and the Counsel for the Commandant?

The Staff Judge Advocate to the Commandant of the Marine Corps (SJA to CMC) is the senior uniformed legal advisor to the Commandant and Headquarters, Marine Corps staff and agencies. In particular, the SJA to CMC supervises and manages the legal matters arising in the Marine Corps regarding military justice, operational law, civil and administrative law, legal assistance, and ethics, and any other matters as directed by the SECNAV and the CMC.

The Counsel for the Commandant of the Marine Corps, as a component of the Office of the General Counsel of the Navy, provides the Marine Corps with legal advice in the following areas: acquisition law, including international transactions; business and commercial law; real and personal property law; civilian personnel and labor law; fiscal law; environmental law; intellectual property law; ethics and standards of conduct.

76. Who has responsibility for providing legal advice on military justice matters in the Marine Corps?

The SJA to CMC is responsible for delivering military justice advice to the Commandant of the Marine Corps and Headquarters Marine Corps. In all other commands throughout the Marine Corps, judge advocates are responsible for providing legal advice on military justice matters.

77. What is the role, if any, of the Counsel for the Commandant in the duty assignments of Marine Corps judge advocates?

The Counsel for the Commandant has no formal role in the duty assignments of judge advocates. The statutory responsibility for the assignment of Marine Corps judge advocates remains with the Commandant. By SECNAVINST, the SJA to CMC is responsible for advising DC, M&RA on the assignment of judge advocates.

78. What is your view of the need for the Staff Judge Advocate to the Commandant to provide independent legal advice to the Commandant of the Marine Corps?

The ability of the SJA to CMC to provide independent legal advice to the Commandant is paramount. The SJA to CMC's legal advice is independent because he is not subject to evaluation or supervision in the content of his advice from anyone other than the Commandant. Similarly, 10 U.S.C section 5046 prohibits any officer or employee within the Department of Defense (DOD) from interfering with the SJA to CMC's ability to provide independent legal advice to CMC.

79. What is your view of the responsibility of Marine Corps judge advocates to provide independent legal advice to Marine Corps commanders?

Like the SJA to CMC, Marine Corps judge advocates at all levels must be able to provide – and commanders must receive – independent advice. 10 U.S.C section 5046 also prohibits interference with the ability of Marine judge advocates to provide independent legal advice to their Commanders.

Joint Officer Management

80. What is your assessment of the effectiveness of the Goldwater-Nichols-required Joint Qualification System?

I believe that the Goldwater-Nichols joint officer requirements have improved the breadth of experience and overall quality of our senior officers. In addition, the establishment of the 'experience path' a few years ago to attain Joint Qualification created another avenue for our best performing field grade officers to be fully qualified. It has proved to be a valuable enhancement to Goldwater-Nichols.

81. Do you think additional changes in law or regulation are needed to respond to the unique career-progression needs of Marine officers?

No.

82. In your view, are the requirements associated with becoming a Joint Qualified Officer, including links to promotion to general and flag officer rank, consistent with the operational and professional demands of Marine officers?

Yes. The requirements are consistent with the Marine Corps' ongoing efforts to continue with the alignment, cooperation and coordination between the services and the Combatant Commanders in joint training, education, and execution of military operations.

83. If not, what modifications, if any, to the requirements for joint officer qualifications are necessary to ensure that Marine officers are able to attain meaningful joint and service-specific leadership experience and professional development?

N/A

84. In your view, what is the impact of joint qualification requirements on the ability of the services to select the best qualified officers for promotion and to enable officer assignments that will satisfy service-specific officer professional development requirements?

The requirements for joint qualification are complementary with the successful career path of our most competitive officers.

85. Do you think a tour with a Combatant Command staff should count toward the Joint tour requirement?

Yes. The mission of the Combatant Commands staff is directly related to the achievement of unified actions that supports the national security strategy, national military strategy and strategic planning of combined operations.

86. What factors do you consider most important in the difficulty experienced by field grade Marine Corps officers in satisfying joint requirements for promotion?

Given the current high operational tempo, the biggest difficulty in satisfying joint requirements is career timing of the most competitive officers. Naturally, there is a high demand within the service for the top officers for both command and other key billets. The Marine Corps makes joint assignments a priority as early as the rank of Major and nominates the most competitive officers to joint billets that complement their professional development.

87. Do you think that, in today's operational environment, these requirements for promotion to O-7 should be modified?

No.

88. What steps are being taken to ensure that officers who are competitive for promotion to general officer rank are able to fulfill all joint education and experience requirements?

Field grade officers are assigned to Joint Duty assignments and to JPME II producing schools (War Colleges) based on their performance. Our most competitive officers are provided those assignments.

89. How do you plan to foster a dedicated, educated, and assigned group of strategic thinkers and planners who rise to the rank of flag rank officer?

Through a closely monitored manpower process, we will continue to formally screen and select our best officers beginning early in their careers for resident joint education, screen them for command of operational units, and assign them to key joint billets that complement their professional development.

Military Health Care

90. What is your assessment of the medical care provided to Marines wounded or injured on the battlefield?

When Marines go into harm's way, Navy Medicine personnel are with them to provide outstanding medical care. Our Marines have a special bond with their physicians and corpsmen and this relationship has been well-earned over countless generations by caring for our wounded Marines on the battlefield. During our most recent conflicts, we have seen significant advances in combat casualty care that have led to unequalled survival rates for our injured. Throughout all echelons of care – from the battlefield to the bedside – we have improved our capabilities and rapidly implemented clinical practices that saved lives. These efforts have transformed trauma care both in the military and the civilian sector. We have also made significant progress in treating traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder as well as ensured that all our wounded Marines have access to exceptional military treatment facilities to aid in their recovery and rehabilitation.

91. What is your assessment of the health care available to Marines and their families in their home stations?

Health care is crucial to mission readiness and an important component of quality of life for our Marines and their families. Marines must be medically ready to meet their demanding responsibilities and they also must be confident that their families have access to high quality health care. Within the Marine Corps, we rely on Navy Medicine to promote, protect and restore our health and they perform these responsibilities very well. I am pleased that our Marines and

their families receive exceptional care at our Navy military treatment facilities and will work to ensure this remains a priority.

Family Readiness and Support

Marines and their families in both the active and reserve components have made, and continue to make, tremendous sacrifices in support of operational deployments. Senior military leaders have warned of concerns among military families as a result of the stress of deployments and the separations that go with them.

92. What do you consider to be the most important family readiness issues in the Marine Corps, and, if confirmed, how would you ensure that family readiness needs are addressed and adequately resourced, especially in light of current fiscal constraints?

The most important issues are providing timely and accurate communication to our Marines and their families while properly resourcing the support functions on our bases and stations. If confirmed, I will ensure the Marine Corps provides Marines and families with a comprehensive and effective community-based support system. In this time of fiscal constraint, I will have to prioritize our core programs that support the Marine warfighter and families.

Morale, Welfare, and Recreation

Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) programs are critical to enhancement of military life for members and their families, especially in light of deployments. These programs must be relevant and attractive to all eligible users, including active duty and reserve personnel, retirees, and their eligible family members.

93. What challenges do you foresee in sustaining and enhancing Marine Corps MWR programs, particularly in view of the current fiscal environment and, if confirmed, are there any improvements you would seek to achieve?

Our greatest challenges are the fiscal realities of sequestration. If confirmed, I will ensure that we sustain priority programs that support the health, welfare and morale of our Marines and families. Ensuring access to those programs that support these priorities is paramount. I will also maintain a dialogue with our Marines and families to ensure that our MWR programs adapt to meet their highest priority needs.

Suicide Prevention

The numbers of suicides in each of the services continue to be of great concern to the Committee.

94. If confirmed, what role would you play in shaping suicide prevention programs and policies for the Marine Corps to prevent suicide and increase the resiliency of Marines and their families?

Suicide prevention is a leadership issue. Leadership attention to risk factors has helped reduce deaths; however, we must remain vigilant. If confirmed, my priority is to continue the progress the Marine Corps is making in reducing deaths by suicide. As leaders, it is our duty to reduce barriers associated with seeking help. My strategy is to enhance help-seeking behaviors and provide training to rapidly identify and provide assistance to those at heightened risk. The resiliency and well-being of our Marines and their families will remain a top priority.

Wounded Warrior Regiments

Service members who are wounded or injured in combat operations deserve the highest priority from their service and the Federal Government for support services, healing and recuperation, rehabilitation, evaluation for return to duty, successful transition from active duty if required, and continuing support beyond retirement or discharge. Despite the enactment of legislation and renewed emphasis over the past several years, many challenges remain.

95. What is your assessment of the effectiveness of the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiments in facilitating the treatment and management of wounded, ill, and injured Marines?

The Wounded Warrior Regiment currently meets or exceeds the mandates set forth by Congress regarding the facilitation of medical and non-medical care for wounded, ill and injured Marines. Through the Recovery Coordination Program, we provide essential individualized assistance to Marines and families, ensuring we keep faith with those who have served. The Marine Corps continuously evaluates our wounded warrior and caregiver programs and incorporates lessons learned and best practices to improve policies and support. While the landscape of warrior care has changed, the Marine Corps remains committed to maintaining the services necessary to support Marines and their families.

96. If confirmed, are there additional strategies and resources you would pursue to increase service support for wounded Marines, and to monitor their progress in returning to duty or to civilian life?

We must continue to fund our recovery care coordinators and the support they provide to recovering Marines and their families. At the same time, we will evaluate the effectiveness of this program over time. If confirmed, I will ensure that we are proactively identifying symptoms and addressing psychological health needs. The shift in the demographic of wounded warriors requires that we focus on care for those with behavioral health issues and chronic illnesses. I view this as a continuing commitment from the Marine Corps to its Marines. Overall, I believe the flexibility of the current program allows the services to develop and implement new programs as needs arise, and I support this intuitive process.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

97. What is your assessment of the problem of sexual assaults in the Marine Corps?

Sexual assault has no place in our Corps. It not only has a long-lasting effect on the individual victim but it also erodes unit readiness and command climate. The Marine Corps has placed particular emphasis on eliminating sexual assault and I believe we are making progress. If confirmed, I will continue to build on the current foundation. The bottom line is that even one sexual assault is too many and everyone agrees that more needs to be done.

98. What is your assessment of the Marine Corps sexual assault prevention and response program?

I see positive indicators that our SAPR Program is heading in the right direction. From FY12 to FY14, there was a 30% decrease in the number of Marines experiencing unwanted sexual contact. In that same time period, the number of victims and bystanders willing to file reports increased 94%. However, I also believe that there is still much work to do. We must continue to increase reporting and decrease prevalence. We need to emphasize prevention, instill in our Marines the duty to be active and responsible bystanders, and integrate the SAPR Program with other aspects of behavioral health.

99. What is your view about the role of the chain of command in providing necessary support to victims of sexual assault?

Commanding Officers are responsible for their Marines, including setting positive command climates that both prevent the crime of sexual assault and provide a safe, non-retaliatory environment in which victims feel confident

coming forward to report. We believe that the increase in sexual assault reporting is, in part, due to the faith and trust our Marines have in their chain of command. In addition, commanders ensure that any Marine who files an unrestricted report has timely and comprehensive access to supportive services. The fact that more Marines file Unrestricted Reports—which automatically trigger command notification—shows that Marines find this support invaluable.

100. What is your understanding of the adequacy of Navy and Marine Corps resources and programs to provide victims of sexual assault the medical, psychological, and legal help they need?

I understand that the Marine Corps, with help from the Navy, provides and continues to expand each of these services. Naval medical support for sexual assault victims is more accessible and sensitive now than ever before. Victims also have access to non-medical counseling services; chaplains to provide pastoral care during on and off-business hours; a 24/7 Sexual Assault Helpline at each installation provides access to a credentialed victim advocate around the clock; our Victims' Legal Counsel Organization (VLCO) confidentially assists each victim through the investigation and prosecution process, ensuring that victims understand their rights and remain informed. Since standing up on 1 Nov 2013, VLCO has provided legal services to over 1,000 victims, including military dependents and have represented clients at all stages of the military justice process to ensure victims' rights and interests are protected. Every major Marine Corps installation has a VLCO office, and to date, no eligible victim of sexual assault has been turned away from VLC services. However, I fully understand that the true measure of the effectiveness of these programs is how well they meet the needs of the victim.

101. What is your view of the steps the Marine Corps has taken to prevent additional sexual assaults both at home station and deployed locations?

I am encouraged, though not satisfied, by our efforts to prevent sexual assault throughout the Marine Corps. Our prevention efforts have focused on command climate and bystander intervention.

These efforts include the development and refinement of innovative training tools and programs for use by Commanders to educate their Marines on the impact of sexual assault and how best to prevent it. These initiatives will help us sustain and build upon our efforts to reach the stated purpose of the SAPR Program: to reduce - with a goal to eliminate - sexual assault from the Corps.

Regarding sexual assault in deployed locations, I believe, as an expeditionary force in readiness, our at-home activities prepare our Marines for a deployed environment. Our efforts at home establish the baseline for those deploying. Besides the efforts outlined above, our pre-deployment SAPR training program includes additional bystander intervention and risk reduction strategies. The

training also provides information pertaining to host country customs, mores, and religious practices. In addition, the training identifies first responders who will be available during deployment, to include law enforcement, legal, sexual assault response coordinators, uniform victim advocates, healthcare personnel, and chaplains.

102. What is your view of the adequacy of the training and resources of the Navy and Marine Corps to investigate and prosecute allegations of sexual assault?

I am encouraged by the progress we have made in many areas of victim response, but our goal is to further improve these services so that more victims stay engaged in the process and, as a result, more offenders will be held accountable.

The Marine Corps continues to strengthen the qualification standards for all judge advocates handling special victim cases to include increased experience, training and prior court-martial experience. The Marine Corps places a premium on ensuring each counsel is provided with formal training and trial preparation advice, in addition to the mentorship and on-the-job training offered by supervisory JAs. To this end, the legal community has quadrupled the training budget in the last fiscal year. Leading this training and advice effort are the Trial and Defense Counsel Assistance Programs which provide training and advice by serving as centralized resources and helping to spread best practices throughout the regions. In addition, the Marine Corps employs six Highly Qualified Experts (HQEs), seasoned civilian attorneys with significant experience in complex criminal litigation.

103. What is your view about the role of the chain of command in changing the military culture in which these sexual assaults occur?

I believe the role of the Commander is central to sexual assault prevention within the military. The commanding officer of every unit is the centerpiece of an effective and professional warfighting organization. They are charged with building and leading their Marines to withstand the rigors of combat by establishing the highest level of trust throughout their unit. Commanding officers are responsible for setting and enforcing a command climate that is non-permissive to sexual assault, a climate in which the spirit and intent of the orders and regulations that govern the conduct of our duties will be upheld. Trust in the Commander and fellow Marines is the essential element in everything we do. Developing this trust, dedication, and esprit de corps is the responsibility of the commanding officer. They do this by setting standards, training to standards, enforcing standards, and exemplifying those standards.

104. In your view, what would be the impact of requiring a judge advocate outside the

chain of command to determine whether allegations of sexual assault should be prosecuted?

Removal of Commanders' convening and disposition authority will adversely affect good order, discipline, and combat effectiveness. Commanders are responsible for everything that happens within their command. Based on their responsibility to maintain good order and discipline and to ensure the welfare of every Marine and Sailor in the command, Commanders exercise their military justice authority as a moral imperative.

Commanders meeting their responsibilities, advised by lawyers (SJAs, prosecutors), are in a better position to make a just decision. There is no more demanding position than Commander and none more carefully selected or closely scrutinized.

As a practical matter, removing Commanders from the military justice process in favor of lawyers will result in fewer sexual assault prosecutions. Prosecutors tend to focus on prosecutorial merit. Assuming the threshold for probable cause is reached, Commanders are more likely than prosecutors to send a case forward irrespective of the chances of getting a conviction.

Marines must know that their Commander sent a Marine to court-martial, not an unknown third-party prosecutor, who plays no daily role in developing and maintaining the bond of trust essential to combat effectiveness. I believe that the trust that is required for good order, discipline, and combat effectiveness can only be built and maintained when Marines know that Commanders have the authority to hold accountable Marines who violate that trust.

105. What additional steps would you take, if confirmed, to address the problem of sexual assaults in the Marine Corps?

I believe we have made progress, but we still have work to do. If confirmed, I plan to further the progress of Marine Corps' SAPR efforts and ensure that all Marines are committed to preventing the crime of sexual assault. We will continue to implement bystander intervention programs, risk reduction measures, focus on offenders, and the further integration of SAPR and Behavioral Health issues, such as substance abuse. We will also study sexual assault as it relates to other, often co-occurring behaviors like sexual harassment and hazing.

106. What is your assessment of the effect, if any, of recent legislation concerning sexual assault on the prosecution of sexual assault cases in the military, including cases where prosecution is declined by civilian prosecutors?

Since FY12, Congress has passed almost 100 legislative provisions to improve sexual assault prevention and reporting. These have included provisions to improve and expand reporting and training, as well as a host of provisions impacting the legal process, such as a Victim Legal Counsel and changes to the UCMJ. We have implemented or are in process of implementing many of these provisions. We believe these changes have helped to increase reporting and provide the victim an increased voice in the court-martial process. We think these changes need some run time before we feel their full implementation. We appreciate Congress' concern on this important issue.

Amphibious Fleet Requirements

107. How would you characterize the current state of Navy and Marine Corps joint operations and what is your vision for the future? What gaps or shortfalls exist today? What changes would you advocate to strengthen or expand Navy and Marine Corps joint operations?

Our ability to work together remains solid and unparalleled but is somewhat limited by our shortfall in amphibious warships. We currently have only 30 amphibious warships, which is short of our fiscally constrained requirement of 33. We won't reach 33 until 2018 and will not have the correct mix of amphibious warships until 2024. I would advocate for the authorization of multi-year and block buy procurements of amphibious warships, which would sustain the current shipbuilding plan and eventually achieve and maintain the required amphibious warship inventory. Further, having additional amphibious capacity will enable us to train both our staffs and operating forces in a more routine manner above the Amphibious Readiness Group/Marine Expeditionary Unit level.

108. What alternatives would you consider to augment amphibious ships in providing lift to Marine Corps units? In what scenarios would these alternatives be necessary and appropriate?

There are several alternative platforms that should provide an adequate yet limited base of operations. Some of the alternative platforms include Mobile Landing Platform (MLP), MLP/Afloat Forward Staging Base (AFSB), T-AKE and other platforms contained in the Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) inventory. Alternative platforms can be used in a wide range of assigned Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) seabased operations to meet Combatant Commander requirements. These platforms are not warships and have little to no self-protection, thus would be more applicable and useful in routine mil-to-mil exchanges and exercises, perhaps Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief (HA/DR), and other Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) engagement roles and missions.

109. What is your view of the need for and size of the Navy's amphibious fleet?

The Department of the Navy's investment in amphibious warships represents critical investments that enable Naval forces to execute their assigned forward presence and crisis response missions. The Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) and current Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) have determined that the force structure required to support a 2.0 Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) Assault Echelon is 38 amphibious warfare ships, as communicated to the House and Senate Appropriations and Armed Services committees by SECNAV/CNO/CMC letter dated 7 Jan 2009. Given fiscal constraints, the Department of the Navy (DON) determined a minimum inventory of 33 total amphibious warfare ships, including 11 LHD/LHA(R), 11 LPD 17, and 11 LSD 41/49s; this represents the limit of acceptable risk in meeting the 38-ship requirement for the Assault Echelon in a two MEB forcible entry operation. The Long Range Plan for Construction of Naval Vessels for 2015 does not meet the 11/11/11 amphibious warship inventory until FY24. It should be noted that with the addition of the 12th LPD, the new agreed to fiscally constrained amphibious warship number is 34. This inventory provides only the minimum capacity for steady state Amphibious Ready Group/Marine Expeditionary Unit deployments and single-ship deployments for theater security cooperation activities. Furthermore, this inventory does not provide the capacity to support additional independent amphibious warship demands, such as maritime security operations. A reduction in capacity detracts from the ability of the Navy and Marine Corps to accomplish forward presence and crisis response missions in today's exceptionally dynamic and uncertain operational environment. The disadvantage of not meeting the requirement of 38 ships results in our nation accepting higher risk in its ability to rapidly respond to surge demand, an emerging crisis, or contingency response.

110. What alternatives do you see if the amphibious fleet is allowed to decline in size or capabilities?

There is no alternative to our existing amphibious warship fleet. However, should future constraints require routine augmentation of the amphibious fleet, we will pursue alternative lift platforms in much the same way as we are currently exploring today. However, while these ships will help bridge the gap to the Combatant Commander demand signal for upwards of 54 amphibious ships, they come with significant limitations and are more useful during routine engagement operations during Phase 0 and Phase 1 operations. Reducing the size or capacity of the amphibious fleet will significantly increase the risk and reduce the capability to deter aggression, respond to crises, and meet current OPLAN requirements.

111. What risks are associated with these alternatives?

Alternative lift platforms are capable ships and can augment, with multiple limitations, selected amphibious warship mission sets, but these alternative platforms are not amphibious warships, and as such, do not possess the necessary capabilities for full-scale conflict. They do not meet the requirements necessary to embark and deploy an amphibious assault echelon for forcible entry operations. Specifically, they lack adequate force protection and the utility required to operate above the permissive level.

Naval Surface Fire Support

The DDG-1000 program was initiated to fill the capability gap for naval surface fire support. The original requirement for 24 to 32 DDG-1000 ships, each with two 155mm Advanced Gun Systems, was reduced to 12 ships, then to 10 ships, then to 7 ships, and finally to 3 ships.

112. In your view, does the total Navy program, with this significant reduction in the number of DDG-1000 destroyers, meet the Marine Corps' requirement for naval surface fire support?

Current and projected naval surface fire support is inadequate. With the truncation of the DDG-1000 program, a maximum of six 155mm Advanced Gun Systems will be available for service in the fleet when all three ships are fully operational at the end of the decade. This will not support the doctrinal capacity requirements of a Marine Expeditionary Brigade. Current destroyer and cruiser fleets with existing 5"/54 and 5"/62 (Mk 45) lightweight guns have limited capability beyond thirteen nautical miles which diminishes the effects of naval surface fires in an anti-access, area denial environment. The Marine Corps has established a ninety-six nautical mile range requirement to meet current operational employment concepts. We are supportive of the Navy's hyper-velocity projectile as an interim solution and the electro-magnetic railgun as a possible solution in the long term. The risk assumed by a lack of surface fires will put additional demand on our already taxed tactical aviation assets.

113. What other capabilities would you rely upon to help meet naval surface fire support requirements?

In the absence of adequate naval surface fire support capability and capacity, we will rely on manned aviation platforms and future armed remotely piloted aircraft delivered fires, and ground-based artillery and rockets. Naval Surface Fire Support (NSFS), with necessary range and effects to support expeditionary operations in the littorals, is an essential complementary capability to aviation and ground-based indirect fires, referred to as the triad of fires. The triad of fires provides a balanced approach. With current capability of NSFS being

insufficient, we will have to rely on aviation delivered fires, and when feasible, ground-based indirect fires. However, analysis conducted to date indicates that neither will provide adequate capacity in some operational scenarios and during different phases of operations (e.g. afloat ground systems will be unavailable to fire in support of maneuvering units and aviation units will be heavily tasked in an A2AD environment).

Asia-Pacific Force Dispositions

114. Do you believe the planned joint force mix of tactical aircraft is sufficient to meet current and future threats in the Asia-Pacific theater of operations where the “tyranny of distance” is such a major factor?

I would have to defer to the PACOM Commander’s assessment of the Joint Force tactical aircraft mix requirement. Marine Corps aviation is prepared to do its part in supporting operations in the PACOM Theater.

My biggest concern in this area is the degraded readiness of the aircraft we currently have on hand.

115. Do you believe we have sufficient sealift and airlift capabilities to move Marines around the Asia-Pacific Theater for both training and contingency purposes?

No. There is not enough amphibious warship capability to support an assault echelon of two Marine Expeditionary Brigades required for contingency response. The Navy and the Marine Corps have determined that 38 amphibious warships are needed in the inventory to support this requirement. There are 30 amphibious warships in inventory today.

The Department of the Navy (DON) determined a minimum force of 33 total amphibious warships represents the limit of acceptable risk in meeting the 38-ship requirement. Based on a wartime operational availability rate of 90 percent, 33 ships [11 LHD/LHA(R), 11 LPD 17, and 11 LSD 41/49] are the minimum number in inventory necessary to meet the requirement for 30 operationally available warships while taking into account those ships in heavy maintenance and modernization periods that are unlikely to meet OPLAN timelines. The amphibious force inventory will reach the 11/11/11 requirement in FY24 with the delivery of LHA 8.

Helping to bridge the shortfall of intratheater lift for training is the JHSV. For example, a JHSV will be based in Guam in order to fulfill lift requirements for the training hub in Guam and the Marianas Islands. JHSV helps to fulfill this requirement by providing the lift for Marines traveling to Tinian to utilize the range proposed for Tinian. JHSV is also planned to be based in other areas in

the Asia-Pacific, such as Singapore, to fulfill similar training requirements throughout the AOR.

116. What alternative concept of operations, platforms, and basing opportunities exist to address potential shortfalls in this area?

There are no alternatives that have been developed to mitigate the wartime or contingency response requirement for an amphibious fleet.

The Navy's Military Sealift Command (MSC) maintains numerous auxiliary platforms (T-AKE, MLP, AFSB, LMSR, JHSV, etc.) which have been successfully used in Phase 0/1 operations. MARFORPAC routinely uses T-AKEs for Theater Security Cooperation events in the Asia-Pacific Theater. The Navy is exploring additional Phase 0/1 tasking options for MSC vessels in order to free combatant vessels for higher level tasking.

MSC contracts the high speed transport ship WESTPAC Express to rapidly move Marines throughout the Asia-Pacific Theater. The Joint High Speed Vessel (JHSV) will complement the requirement for intra-theater lift of Marines when it is deployed to the Asia-Pacific Theater.

Anti-Access/Area Denial

Over the past few years, much has been made of the emerging anti-access and area denial capabilities of certain countries and the prospect that these capabilities may in the future limit the maritime freedom of movement and action in certain regions.

117. Do you believe emerging anti-access and area denial capabilities are a concern?

Yes, the United States faces a growing range of challenges in gaining access and operating freely in the maritime, air, and cyber commons. Most prominently, the proliferation of technologies that allows potential adversaries to threaten naval and air forces at greater ranges complicates our access to some regions (anti-access), as well as our ability to maneuver within those regions (area denial), including the littoral and landward areas. These technologies include long-range ballistic and cruise missiles supported by state of-the-art command and control, and integrated targeting networks; guided rockets, artillery, missiles, and mortars; advanced submarines and "smart" mines; advanced integrated air defense systems; fifth-generation fighter aircraft with enhanced sensors and weapons; and electronic warfare, cyber, and space capabilities. Certainly a distinct challenge during wartime, these military technologies are also a concern in peacetime. For example, the free flow of goods and services can be threatened or impeded by state or non-state actors employing A2/AD technologies in key maritime crossroads.

118. If so, what do you believe joint forces need to be doing now and in the next few years to ensure continued access to all strategically important segments of the maritime domain?

We need to pursue a multifaceted approach, as we are, in fact, already doing. For example, Marines in the operating forces are strengthening and expanding our partnerships with friendly nations that share our concerns. These partnership activities often result in new opportunities for basing US forces overseas or increased options for temporary support during emerging contingencies. Partnership activities also help improve interoperability so that we have greater capability and capacity to defeat such threats. Concurrently, the *Air-Sea Battle* concept looked at the problem from a system versus system perspective. The insights from that effort generated understanding that a limited number of exquisite systems can always be overwhelmed by an exponentially larger number of simple, inexpensive systems: a six-shot revolver is better than a bow and arrow, and may even defeat six bows and arrows, but is quickly overwhelmed by 100 bows and arrows. These ASB insights have been subsumed into a more comprehensive effort, *Joint Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons*, which looks at the ways and means to defeat adversary strategies, not just systems. That effort will address issues such as the use of all domains: air, land, sea, space and cyber to create access. This 5 Domain joint force will be capable of creating the conditions to project military power in contested areas with freedom of action. This concept will also explore distributed MAGTF maneuver, expeditionary advanced base operations, streamlining and integrating our intelligence and operations functions, and fully networking the naval team. What we envision is an integrated naval force—a network of sensors, shooters, and information sharers, afloat and ashore. The final goal is not to set conditions everywhere, but to set the conditions we require at the right time and place of our choosing to achieve superiority in a manner with which the enemy cannot cope.

119. If confirmed, you would play an important role in the process of transforming to meet new and emerging threats?

The senior leadership of the Navy and Marine Corps convened this past June to develop the guidance that is driving the *Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment* concept. I was directly involved with that in my present assignment as Commanding General, Marine Corps Forces Command--just as I've been directly involved in major Navy-Marine Corps exercises, such as Bold Alligator--in improving our ability to operate in A2AD contested regions. If confirmed as Commandant, I'll continue to build upon that unified naval effort, not only by working with the Chief of Naval Operations to provide unified guidance and direction, but by ensuring the right leaders are in place at the appropriate

subordinate echelons. Further our efforts as a naval force will be integrated with our joint and coalition partners. On that end I will continue to work on our interoperability and compatibility.

120. Concerning capability and capacity to meet new and emerging threats, what are your goals regarding transformation of the Marine Corps?

The Marine Corps has historically been a very adaptive organization. Conceptually, I think we are already on the right track through the development of *Expeditionary Force 21* and the *Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment* concept. My job as Commandant, should I be confirmed, will be to ensure our organization and processes impart certain time-honored skill sets, knowledge, beliefs, and professional judgment to our Marines, while also creating the conditions that allowing them to understand and adapt effectively as the future unfolds. We will continue to emphasize our expeditionary roots and the ability to deploy, employ, and sustain on short notice as our nation's force in readiness. Finally we need to continually refine how we recruit, train and educate our Marines so that they can fight and win regardless of what the future holds. We know that we will face chaotic and lethal adversaries. We know that we will often operate in the urban littorals where the mental and physical strength of our Marines will be challenged. So we know that we must continue to evolve and improve the individual Marine. Finally, we face many challenges and it is therefore important that we encourage and foster innovation in everything we do. We're bringing in great people who want to serve our Nation as Marines. It's the Commandant's job to create the conditions that allow them to evolve the Marine Corps so that we provide what the Nation requires.

China

121. How has China's aggressive assertion of territorial and maritime claims, particularly in the South China Sea and East China Sea, affected security and stability in the region?

China's actions in the South and East China Seas, as well as its rapid military modernization and growing defense budgets, have led many in the region, including the U.S., to question its long-term intentions. China's vague assertions and enforcement of its unilateral territorial claims, as well as their aggressive land reclamation efforts in the South China Sea have a destabilizing effect in the region and have generated territorial disputes with other regional actors. Many of these disputes involve U.S. Treaty Allies and partners, with whom we have long-standing cooperation and defense commitments. Our Allies and partners in the region are increasingly looking to the U.S. for leadership and support in the face of these challenges, and so our response to China's challenges to the existing international norms and laws should be firm and consistent.

122. What is your assessment of the current state of the U.S.-China military relationship?

The U.S. military-to-military relationship is a critical component of our overall bilateral relationship and an important aspect of our regional strategy. This is particularly important as China's military modernizes its capabilities and expands its presence, drawing our forces into closer contact and increasing both opportunities for concrete cooperation, as well as the risk of accidents or miscalculations. Currently the military relationship is contributing to overall stability in the region by developing patterns of interaction and habits of cooperation through both bi-lateral and multilateral engagements. This stability allows us to increase measured cooperation with China in areas of overlapping interests, while improving our ability to manage other aspects of the security relationship. Further improvement of our military relationship with China can strengthen trust and transparency.

123. What are your views regarding China's interest in and commitment to improving military relations with the United States?

I believe China recognizes the U.S. will have an enduring presence in the Pacific and therefore has a clear interest in sustaining military-to-military contacts. If confirmed as CMC, I will continue to support U.S. policy objectives and strategies toward China in order to develop areas of practical cooperation and risk-mitigation in a way that protects our national interests and supports overall stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

124. What is your view of the purpose and relative importance of sustained military-to-military relations with China?

Military to military relations are an important part of not only our bi-lateral relationship with China, but is also an important facet of our overall strategy to Rebalance to the Asia-Pacific. Sustaining a military-to-military relationship with China supports our U.S. objectives by demonstrating to the region that the U.S. and China can engage in practical cooperation in areas of mutual interest to deliver public goods and maintain regional stability. Sustained military contact with China at the policy and senior leader level also provides opportunities to develop common views on the international security environment and constructively manage any differences. Our overall goal is to promote our national interests by reinforcing international norms and standards, and strengthening regional understanding, transparency, and familiarity amongst all nations in the Asia-Pacific. Our approach to this relationship with China must be conducted in a thoughtful way that promotes the common interest of regional security and stability.

125. What role do you see for the Commandant in this process?

I believe that the Commandant of the Marine Corps plays a pivotal role to personally sustain meaningful working relationships with his counterparts all over the world, particularly in the Asia-Pacific where we have more than 22,000 Marines forward stationed or forward deployed west of the International Dateline. I believe that our strong Marine presence in the region plays a significant role in promoting the regional security and stability that have afforded many Asia-Pacific nations, including China, unprecedented economic growth and prosperity. As CMC, I would continue to strengthen our regional partnerships, alliances, and the regional security architectures that have fostered this positive environment.

Russia

126. What additional steps, if any, are likely to prove most effective at deterring Russian aggression in Eastern Europe?

A continued, strong, whole-of-government approach is essential. Political and economic consequences are critical aspects of the international response to Russian aggression. Militarily, the U.S. must remain prepared and committed to our NATO allies and stand ready to counter military aggression against NATO members. I believe our continued commitment of Article 5-related planning, training, and adjustments to U.S. and NATO force posture, to include the basing of forces and pre-positioning of material, along with our contributions to Operation ATLANTIC RESOLVE, have enhanced readiness and better prepares the entire alliance to deter Russian aggression in Eastern Europe.

127. What can the Marine Corps do to help NATO?

Ultimately, we stand prepared to provide exceptionally capable expeditionary forces to fight alongside our allies. These forces have been tested in combat for more than a decade and maintain constant readiness. These forces also exercise and train regularly with our NATO allies—current examples include Exercises SABER STRIKE in Lithuania this June and TRIDENT JUNCTURE in Portugal, Spain, and Italy, which continues throughout the fall. Such exercises ensure interoperability with NATO maritime nations and strengthen teamwork throughout the alliance.

128. Does the Marine Corps, as part of a combined joint force, have what it needs in Europe?

The Marine Corps does not have a large force permanently postured in Europe, although we have capable and ready forces available to respond quickly to

emergent crises. Due to a shortfall in U.S. amphibious shipping in the European theater, the Marine Corps relies on land-based Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF), based in Spain to serve as the ‘most ready and capable’ Marine crisis response force inside the EUCOM and AFRICOM Areas of Responsibility (AORs). However, it should be noted, that while SPMAGTF-CR-AF is a credible and capable response force, the Marine Corps always prefers to respond as a U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Team, such as the robust capability sets found in the Marine Expeditionary Unit and Amphibious Readiness Group. To further mitigate our risk, we pre-position equipment, both afloat in our Maritime Pre-positioning Squadrons, and in storage caves within Norway. The most potent and likely Marine Corps force contributions to large-scale operations in Europe would be expeditionary forces, which leverage our strategic mobility and operational flexibility. These may include MAGTFs deployed on amphibious shipping or transported to Europe via strategic airlift and linked up with prepositioned equipment in the theater.

Army and Marine Corps Cooperation

129. What are your views regarding the joint development and acquisition of Army and Marine Corps equipment?

In my experience, the Marine Corps and the Army collaborate whenever our mission profiles converge. From a business perspective, collaboration leverages significant Army fiscal, manpower, and test resources in the refinement of operational capabilities requirements and the research, development, and acquisition of technical solutions to meet those requirements. Long term benefits include lower average unit costs for both services.

130. Do you believe the Joint Staff should have a role in synchronizing Army and Marine Corps requirements and service programs?

The Army and Marine Corps Board (AMCB) works at every level to make sure both services collaborate on best practices. I believe the AMCB provides sufficient oversight to synchronize requirements and programs.

131. What programs would you consider to be candidates for joint program development for the Army and Marine Corps?

I am confident in knowing the Marine Corps actively seeks opportunities where it makes sense to conduct joint program development. A partial list of collaborative efforts includes, the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle; Joint Battle Command-Platform, Blue Force Tracker and Nett Warrior; robotics systems; and more than twenty different infantry system programs encompassing direct and indirect fire weapons, anti-tank systems, night vision and thermal sighting equipment, individual protection such as body armor and helmets, and reconnaissance gear.

Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command

Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command (MARSOC), is a subordinate component command to the U. S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) established in 2005.

133. What is your assessment of the progress made in standing up and growing MARSOC, and what do you consider to be the principal issues that you would have to address to improve its operations?

MARSOC has made tremendous progress over the last nine years and has become not only an important component to USSOCOM, but has also enabled better interoperability between the Marine Corps and USSOCOM. MARSOC has supported combat deployments to Afghanistan where Marines have both conducted Village Stability Operations and partnered with Afghan National Army Commando Battalions. Marine Raider Battalions have recently aligned to USAFRICOM, USCENTCOM and USPACOM to ensure Marine SOF provides regionally astute and culturally proficient teams and companies to their respective Theater Special Operations Commands.

MARSOC's professionalization of the force has become commensurate with USSOCOM career management and development as the Marine Corps has supported the implementation of career paths for enlisted Critical Skill Operators, and recently, for Marine Special Operations Officers. These career paths allow Marines to serve in MARSOC, or SOF related billets, in the Joint Force and MAGTF for the duration of their career. Although that in itself is significant, improvements are still needed in how and to what level we integrate SOF and special operations capabilities in a complementary manner. I believe the SOF-MAGTF linkage is critical to ensure the Combatant Commanders and Joint Force is best supported, not only during crisis-response situations, but also as part of enduring special operations supporting their Theater Campaign Plans.

Recapitalization

The Marine Corps intends to concurrently recapitalize several of its front line systems. The MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft and the Joint Strike Fighter are both in production now.

134. Do you believe that these production plans are realistic in light of the demands on resources imposed by maintaining current readiness?

Yes, absolutely, they are one and the same. Every dollar spent on modernization has a direct and tangible effect on current readiness. Likewise, every dollar

decremented from our procurement of future systems increases both the cost and complexity of maintaining our legacy systems beyond their projected life.

The real key to reducing risk in capacity and recovering readiness is in recapitalization. We are roughly halfway through our transition of every aircraft in our inventory and must constantly balance current readiness and modernization to maintain our operational advantage and increase it as we buy a newer force.

135. Do you believe that these modernization programs will survive unless Congress amends the Budget Control Act to eliminate or reduce the effects of sequestration for fiscal year 2016 and beyond?

If we return to the sequestration-level cuts in Fiscal Year 2016, we will face serious risks to the modernization plans we currently have and may have to reassess the overall modernization strategy. This could result in consequences which could lead to reduced readiness rates in highly demanded capabilities.

136. Is it your understanding that MV-22 readiness rates in Iraq, Afghanistan, and in the U.S. have achieved desired levels?

The MV-22 has met and exceeded every readiness metric during years of wartime flying and CONUS training while clearly establishing itself as one of the safest aircraft ever flown. The SPMAGTFs have achieved a 75% readiness, while the MEUs are at 69%. Fleet-wide readiness has increased from 53% to 62% between 2010 to 2015. But, I believe our readiness rates with this fantastic aircraft (and all our USMC aircraft for that matter) need to be better than that. As a force in readiness I can't have 25-31% of my aviation assets "down." In fact right now, across the USMC, 19-20% of my aviation assets that are supposed to be on the flight line (not in scheduled depot maintenance) aren't able to fly. That is unsatisfactory for the nation's force in readiness. I intend to work with you to turn that around - quickly.

137. In your view, will the MV-22 be sustainable over time at an acceptable cost?

Yes. The vast capabilities of the aircraft outweigh the costs associated with a tiltrotor when compared to conventional rotary winged aircraft. The MV-22's ability to travel farther with more payload than conventional helicopters helps reduce the logistical demands of supporting operations with many more conventional helicopters. Cost per flight hour has decreased by 21% between 2010 and 2015. (\$11,651 to \$9,163 per flight hour). We continue to work with all stakeholders to identify ways to drive out cost from MV-22 sustainment.

Modernization of Capabilities

The Marine Corps' current concepts for modernization of its amphibious capabilities includes ships, ship to near-shore or shore connectors – such as the LCAC -- and armored amphibious combat vehicles. Modernization across these systems is complex, technically challenging, and potentially unaffordable given the budget environment today and for the foreseeable future.

138. What is your assessment of the current capability of amphibious maneuver and assault systems in the Navy and Marine Corps?

We currently possess the correct amphibious maneuver and assault systems to support Combatant Commander engagement and demand across the Range Of Military Operations (ROMO). Expeditionary Force-21 (EF-21) describes the capability and capacity necessary to execute MAGTF seabased operations from concept of employment, technology and specific Tactics Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) necessary for success. We are also a force in transition as new equipment is fielded and optimized for seabased application. We will also continue to improve naval integration and interoperability between Navy and Marine forces as we develop future complementary and supporting capacities and capabilities.

As ACV characteristics and capabilities are developed, they will have to be integrated within our future comprehensive surface connector strategy. We are actively considering the capabilities and limitations of the Navy's current fleet of surface connectors and their future development of replacements for those vehicles when developing requirements for ACV procurement to ensure interoperability. The Navy and Marine Corps are fully integrated on requirements development for the ACV. Finally, we ultimately remain committed to a high water speed vehicle as part of a complementary family of surface and air connectors. We'll continue to work with the Navy on requirements within the context of the Surface Connector Council.

139. If confirmed, how would you propose to prioritize development and acquisition among needed capabilities for sea basing, connectors, and armored amphibious assault and tactical mobility ashore to achieve your vision for a full spectrum force?

In order to achieve a full spectrum force, a balanced approach that procures a family of systems is necessary to deliver the required capabilities. Amphibious warships and the supporting sustainment ships are the foundation for amphibious operations and establishment of a seabase. Interoperability of the Seabase with the elements of the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) is key when considering maneuver from the seabase to the objective (Operational Maneuver From the Sea (OMFTS)/Ship To Objective Maneuver (STOM)) and is accomplished by surface and vertical connector assets (ACV/LCAC/V-22/HSV/LCU, etc). Current and continued amphibious program development and application will provide the

needed capability afloat and ashore for full spectrum operations. Through leadership and careful consideration of the needs of this force, we can prioritize procurement in such a manner that we maintain our current competencies while pursuing transformational modernization as systems become older. This will allow us to avoid equipment obsolescence while building a family of systems ready to confront the challenges of the decades to come.

140. In your view, what is necessary to ensure that modernization of the amphibious force – ships, connectors, and vehicles—is achievable and affordable in the near and long term?

Fully fund, sustain, and deliver the current USMC and Navy Programs Of Record (POR) for procurement and sustainment of MAGTF warfighting functions and equipment...and sustain the necessary support for Navy programs that enable Navy/Marine seabased force projection and response. We must ensure delivery of new/improved capabilities to the fighting force, and equally important, maintain current and legacy equipment to operational and tactical design readiness levels. We should also accelerate delivery or return to service/improvement of priority programs and equipment that directly contribute to higher unit readiness and operational deployability. For example, accelerate delivery of LHA-8 and the ACV program, and procurement of LX(R)...and when feasible due to funding or priority constraints/restraints, extend legacy systems/platforms until full operational capability (FOC) of the replacement is achieved. These actions completed through thoughtful and deliberate programmatic will ensure a modern and highly capable seabased MAGTF force for today and tomorrow.

141. In your view, will projected reduction in Marine Corps end strength, if implemented, reduce the Navy's and Marine Corps' requirement for amphibious ships?

No. There is no direct correlation between Marine Corps end strength and amphibious warfare ship requirements. The amphibious warfare ship requirement is based on forward presence and rotational Amphibious Ready Groups (ARG)/Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU) as well as deployment and employment the Assault Echelons (AEs) of two Marine Expeditionary Brigades (MEBs). Regardless of end strength, the Marine Corps will always possess the ability to generate forward deployed MEUs and rotational forces to support day-to-day combatant commander forward presence and shaping requirements, as well the ability to generate the AEs of two MEBs to support forcible entry operations contained in major war plans.

142. Given your vision of future high-intensity combined arms combat inland, fighting a peer or near peer opponents, are current modernization plans and budgets adequate?

While the Marine Corps is postured to conduct operations across the range of military operations, our highest priority modernization efforts are those associated

with our core competencies: amphibious forcible entry and crisis response. These core competencies require continued development of our capabilities for surface and air ship-to-shore movement, command and control from a seabase, operational reach, and Marine Expeditionary Units, Marine Expeditionary Brigades, and Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Forces. Our high priority modernization programs have been protected at the expense of both lower priority modernization and infrastructure maintenance or development. Moreover, fiscal constraints and rapidly changing technology and our current acquisition processes prevent necessary and timely investment in critical capabilities such as: intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, cyber, electronic warfare, and information warfare. In the end, we must maintain the warfighting capacity to ensure that our combined arms Marine Expeditionary Forces are trained and equipped to meet an uncertain future.

Furthermore, a return to BCA-level spending/full sequestration would further exacerbate institutional readiness imbalances. More tradeoffs would be made in acquisitions of needed equipment, essential training, living and work spaces, family support centers, and end strength to protect the Marine Corps' performance of its statutory obligations. Sequestration impacts on key modernization programs will have catastrophic effects on achieving desired capabilities to defeat emerging threats and will place an unacceptable burden on legacy programs such as the AAV (40 + y/o) and the HMMWV (out of productions since 2012).

Amphibious Combat Vehicle

The Navy/Marine Corps amphibious assault capability today includes a large number of self-deploying amphibious assault vehicles (AAV-7) to carry infantry ashore, and a smaller number of small vessels called connectors that can ferry other vehicles, such as tanks and artillery, and supplies from ships to shore.

The Marine Corps has changed its plans for development of a next-generation armored combat vehicle. Instead of investing in development of a new self-deploying amphibious assault tracked combat vehicle, the Marine Corps intends to reduce technical and fiscal risk by acquiring a wheeled combat vehicle. Currently four foreign designs are being evaluated. A down select to two is scheduled to occur within months. The two finalists are to be evaluated in splash tests designed to assess effectiveness in amphibious movement from assault ship to shore.

143. Is the USMC confident that these foreign-designed wheeled armored personnel carriers as observed to date will be able to swim in combat conditions, and in varying sea states?

Yes, we are confident that at least two contractors will be capable of delivering prototypes with the capacity to achieve water mobility performance on par with or greater than our existing assault amphibian along with the capabilities needed for

the landward portion of the ACV mission profile. The Marine Corps has conducted extensive open-ocean and surf zone testing of various prototype 8x8 armored personnel carriers that represent current available technology. This testing contributed to the development of both our ACV requirements and our over-arching modernization strategy.

It should be noted that only two of the five proposed designs for ACV 1.1 are based on foreign designs -- one of which was specifically required to enable the conduct of amphibious operations for that nation's naval infantry.

144. If the wheeled vehicles cannot swim, what is the operational risk that the U.S. Navy may be unable to carry a sufficient number of connectors to transport all of the wheeled personnel carriers ashore within the required time period?

In order to rapidly build up combat power ashore we need self-deploying amphibious combat vehicles. Our Ground Combat and Tactical Vehicle Strategy (GCTVS) is predicated upon maintaining this capability. Nonetheless, we still rely heavily on the Navy to enable our surface movement from ship to shore using the inventory of Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC) and Landing Craft Utility (LCU) connectors. If the ACV cannot swim, the number of sorties carried out by surface connectors will increase, which will in turn lengthen the time it takes to place decisive capabilities on the objective and place the force and mission at risk.

Importantly, I believe the basis of this question will prove to be counterfactual. I am confident that the ACV will possess the capacity to achieve water mobility performance on par with or greater than our existing assault amphibian. That said, our phased modernization strategy mitigates risk to the Marine Corps' ability to sustain surface forcible entry through the development and subsequent employment of complementary amphibious armored personnel carriers. The current AAV is undergoing a survivability upgrade and a focused sustainment improvement regimen. Simultaneously, the wheeled portion or other two thirds of our required armored lift will be fielded and incrementally improved to ensure the full range of required capabilities are available via ACV. Finally, the strategy allows for the replacement of the upgraded AAV in the mid-2030's. This replacement will be informed by a mid-2020s decision point regarding the achievability and application of high water speed capability and a comprehensive assessment of ship-to-shore options.

145. Do you support the Marine Corps' decision to develop and field a wheeled armored vehicle to replace the AAV-7, the current amphibious assault vehicle?

Yes, the current phased modernization strategy provides a responsible means to realize significant near term improvements in capability while sustaining surface assault capacity without high acquisition risk and cost. The combination of

modernized AAV and incrementally improved and fielded Amphibious Combat Vehicles (ACV) is a well thought out portfolio approach that balances the competing demands of performance, cost and, schedule in a period of marked fiscal constraints while providing the Marine Corps with multiple options to adapt as the future unfolds. The improved capabilities inherent in our current ACV competitors will provide our Marines with superior mobility on the modern battlefield.

146. In your view, where does armored amphibious assault fit in the set of capabilities required to field a credible amphibious operations capability?

Armored amphibious surface assault is absolutely essential to our ability to field a credible amphibious capability that poses menacing dilemmas simultaneously and in depth across all domains; air, maritime, land, cyber, and space. To this end, surface assault elements will complement, and be complemented by, vertical envelopment capabilities (CH-53K, MV-22). These maneuver elements will work in concert with capabilities that provide Naval and Aviation fires (manned - F35 and unmanned - UAS / UAX), and other defensive and offensive (Electronic Warfare, Cyber, Information Operations) capabilities. Of course, this dynamic collective capability, which will operate from the sea base – often distributed – will be synchronized with command and control systems and logistics sustainment. With this, we must always view amphibious operations within a Joint construct. The salient point is that each of these capabilities relies upon one another to generate the synergy, tempo, kinetic, and cognitive effect necessary to impose our will on our adversaries.

The increased likelihood of operations in the littorals requires a renewed focus on the Marine Corps' responsibility to be organized, trained and equipped, "for service with the fleet in the seizure and defense of advanced naval bases." The Naval services have long sought to develop complementary means of conducting vertical and surface littoral maneuver from increased distances, and via multiple penetration points, using the sea as maneuver space to offset the range and precision of modern weapons.

F-35B Requirements

The Marine Corps has stated that its F-35B requirement is 420 aircraft. The total number of F-35s planned for the Department of the Navy is currently set at 680.

147. Do you believe that the current plan for 680 aircraft can fully accommodate the needs of both the Navy and the Marine Corps?

The Marine Corps has looked at this number carefully a number of times based on our global commitments, plans, COCOM requirements, and the national defense strategy. In 2013 McKinsey and Company was hired by AT&L to do an F-35 Operations and Sustainment Cost Reduction Strategy study. The study applied requirements of the National Defense Strategy to include deployment and warfighting contingencies. The results of that study were that the Marine Corps was buying the right number of aircraft.

In near term, however, we are not buying enough airplanes. Our legacy airframes are aging and have been supporting combat operations for 15 straight years. Continuing to repair and modernize those aircraft will only get us so far and we are beyond the point now where we need to recapitalize the fleet. We have driven efficiency into our procurement plan and as a result, our total aircraft inventory today is 10% larger than what our inventory will be at the completion of the F-35 transition.

148. How do you assess the progress of the first squadron to be equipped with the F-35B as they complete fielding? Are they on track to achieve initial operational capabilities on time?

I believe we are on track to achieve initial operational capability. The Deputy Commandant for Aviation sent a team to assess the IOC readiness of that squadron last week. I've been informed that the inspection went well. The current Commandant is analyzing the data from the event and is expected to make a statement about it soon.

CH-53K

The first flight for the CH-53K has been postponed once again, the latest delay of many for the \$25 billion program.

149. What is your assessment of the current status of the CH-53K program? Is it on track to achieve initial operational capabilities on time?

The CH-53K will transition to first flight this year and production is on a schedule that meets the timeline for delivering aircraft as currently planned and budgeted. The recent CH-53K technical challenges have been overcome and developmental

test continues. Progress continues in all phases of the program and we have no major emerging concerns. Developmental Test revealed minor developmental discoveries. These discoveries are normal for any new program of this type. We believe that finding these issues prior to first flight will ultimately improve testing efficiency.

150. What is the effect of the CH-53K delays on the CH-53E fleet? On overall USMC readiness?

The CH-53E transition to the CH-53K is already slow due to the shallow ramp rate in production and the transition scheduled to be complete by 2028. Consequently, we will have to continue to operate the CH-53E for a longer period of time than originally planned. We currently have a shortage of CH-53Es, and that problem is exacerbated by the need to operate the legacy fleet longer than anticipated. We have a major four year readiness recovery program in the making to ensure we gain maximum service life and capability from the 53E fleet. However, we can't sustain the 53E indefinitely and any future budgetary reductions to the CH-53K program will aggravate this situation. The Marine Corps is strongly committed to keeping the program on track and keeping the Program of Record buy in order to avoid the inventory shortfalls we are experiencing now.

Joint Acquisition Programs

151. What are your views regarding joint acquisition programs, such as the Joint Tactical Radio System and the Joint Strike Fighter?

I support joint solutions to common capability gaps. Working with other Services is, and always has been, a major element of the Marine Corps overall Research and Development (R&D) and Procurement strategy. Our limited budgets demand that we adhere rigorously to the well-established Department of Defense (DoD) hierarchy of materiel alternatives. If we cannot find a solution to our materiel needs in the commercial marketplace, we always look next to take advantage of investments that other Services, DoD Components, or our foreign partners are making. This reduces our need to spend R&D dollars on unilateral efforts, and it gives all participants involved with joint programs the opportunity to reduce unit procurement costs, and ultimately, life-cycle operation and maintenance costs. The end result is realized in the form of commonality and affordability across the Services making it much easier to share sustainment resources such as training, maintenance equipment, and supplies.

152. Do you see utility in encouraging the services to conduct more joint development, especially in the area of helicopters and unmanned systems?

Yes. Encouraging joint development begins with collaboration of requirements during the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System process and the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC). This is a key element of fostering joint development among the Services. The Marine Corps is working with the Army on unmanned systems and robotics.

153. If so, what enforcement mechanisms would you recommend implementing more joint program acquisition?

Within the Department of Defense, the enforcement mechanisms are well established. The JROC plays an important role in harmonizing the Services warfighting requirements and ensuring that joint program opportunities are fully examined.

Religious Guidelines

American military personnel routinely deploy to locations around the world where they must engage and work effectively with allies and with host-country nationals whose faiths and beliefs may be different than their own. For many other cultures, religious faith is not a purely personal and private matter; it is the foundation of their culture and society. Learning to respect the different faiths and beliefs of others, and to understand how accommodating different views can contribute to a diverse force is, some would argue, an essential skill to operational effectiveness.

154. In your view, do policies concerning religious accommodation in the military appropriately accommodate the free exercise of religion and other beliefs, including individual expressions of belief, without impinging on those who have different beliefs, including no religious belief?

Yes, the religious accommodation policies are sufficient. They strike a balance between individual expression of belief and the needs of the Marine Corps to maintain good order and discipline, unit cohesion, military readiness, and combat effectiveness.

155. Under current law and policy, are individual expressions of belief accommodated so long as they do not impact unit cohesion and good order and discipline?

Yes, however we must also consider any impact on military readiness and combat effectiveness.

156. In your view, does a military climate that welcomes and respects open and candid discussions about personal religious faith and beliefs in a home-port environment contribute in a positive way to preparing U.S. forces to be effective in overseas assignments?

The Marine Corps respects individuals' personal religious faith and we believe that the current policy accommodates our Marines and balances individual beliefs with the needs of the Marine Corps.

157. Would a policy that discourages open discussions about personal faith and beliefs be more or less effective at preparing service members to work and operate in a pluralistic environment?

The Marine Corps respects individuals' personal religious faith and we believe that the current policy accommodates our Marines and balances individual beliefs with the needs of the Marine Corps.

Congressional Oversight

In order to exercise its legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this Committee and other appropriate committees of the Congress are able to receive testimony, briefings, and other communications of information.

158. Do you agree, if confirmed for this high position, to appear before this Committee and other appropriate committees of the Congress?

Yes.

159. Do you agree, when asked, to give your personal views, even if those views differ from the Administration in power?

Yes.

160. Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear before this Committee, or designated members of this Committee, and provide information, subject to appropriate and necessary security protection, with respect to your responsibilities as Commandant of the Marine Corps?

Yes.

161. Do you agree to ensure that testimony, briefings, and other communications of information are provided to this Committee and its staff and other appropriate Committees?

Yes.

162. Do you agree to provide documents, including copies of electronic forms of communication, in a timely manner when requested by a duly constituted Committee, or to consult with the Committee regarding the basis for any good faith delay or denial in providing such documents?

Yes.

~ END ~