

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE
POSTURE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY IN
REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR
FISCAL YEAR 2024 AND THE
FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

Tuesday, April 18, 2023

Washington, D.C.

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1 HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE POSTURE OF THE
2 DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY IN REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE
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4 YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

5
6 Tuesday, April 18, 2023

7
8 U.S. Senate

9 Committee on Armed Services

10 Washington, D.C.

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12 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:29 a.m. in
13 Room SD-106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Jack Reed,
14 chairman of the committee, presiding.

15 Committee Members Present: Senators Reed [presiding],
16 Shaheen, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters,
17 Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds,
18 Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Tuberville, Budd, and
19 Schmitt.

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1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JACK REED, U.S. SENATOR FROM
2 RHODE ISLAND

3 Chairman Reed: Good morning. The committee meets
4 today to receive testimony on the President's budget
5 requests to the Department of the Navy for fiscal year 2024.

6 I would like to welcome the Secretary of the Navy
7 Carlos Del Toro, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Michael
8 Gilday, and Commandant of the Marine Corps General David
9 Berger.

10 We are grateful for your service, for the service of
11 the men and women under your command, and for the support of
12 all Navy and Marine Corps families. Thank you.

13 Admiral Gilday, General Berger, this will be your last
14 posture hearing before the committee in your current role.
15 I would like to thank you for your remarkable leadership of
16 the Navy and the Marine Corps as well as your many decades
17 of service to the nation.

18 You have guided your services through significant
19 challenges with resolve and vision and we are deeply
20 grateful.

21 The Navy and Marines are faced with a dangerous and
22 evolving global security environment. Certainly, threats
23 from Russia, Iran, North Korea, and violent extremist groups
24 remain persistent and the Navy has an important role to play
25 in addressing them.

1 But the clear pacing challenge for our naval forces is
2 China. In the Indo-Pacific and in seas and ports around the
3 world the United States Navy and the Marine Corps will
4 continue to be the first line of deterrence and defense
5 against the PRC's expanding global ambitions.

6 Recognizing this challenge, the Biden administration
7 has requested approximately \$256 billion in funding for the
8 Department of the Navy for fiscal year 2024. This
9 represents an increase of \$12.8 billion more than the 2023
10 enacted budget, the largest increase among the services.

11 Within this budget the Navy has requested nine new
12 ships, the procurement of several new submarines,
13 destroyers, frigates, and logistics vessels well within
14 reason. At the same time, the Navy is proposing to retire a
15 number of ships before the end of their service lives
16 including several littoral combat ships and dock landing
17 ships.

18 I understand the Navy made the difficult choice to
19 retire some of these ships now to free up more resources in
20 the future. But it seems that this plan would take us in
21 the opposite direction of the Navy's goal for a 355-ship
22 fleet, particularly regarding the amphibious force
23 structure.

24 The committee will want an update on these issues as
25 well as the Navy's forthcoming 30-year shipbuilding plan.

1 Even as the Navy requests newer, more advanced ships I am
2 concerned by the continued struggles to maintain our current
3 fleet. Deferred ship maintenance, reduced steaming and
4 flying hours, and canceled training and deployments have
5 created serious readiness problems within the Navy.

6 These problems are also being experienced by private
7 shipyards and Navy shipyards. The 2022 National Defense
8 Authorization Act directed the Navy to study how to improve
9 the capacity in our shipyard industrial base and the
10 department has since begun the Shipyard Infrastructure
11 Optimization Program, or SIOP.

12 This program represents more than \$25 billion in
13 planned investments over the next 25 years to modernize and
14 improve our shipyards.

15 Admiral Gilday, I would ask for an update on SIOP and
16 the outlook for Navy maintenance efforts.

17 The Marine Corps, while maintaining its ability to
18 operate worldwide, is continuing to restructure around two
19 concepts, littoral operations in a contested environment and
20 expeditionary advanced base operations.

21 The key elements of these concepts is a more flexible
22 amphibious force that can support a broader naval fight once
23 ashore. Rather than simply acting as a landing force the
24 Marine Corps intends to help control the sea and air in
25 support of the Navy and as part of the joint force.

1 To achieve this the Marine Corps is prioritizing a
2 number of modernization efforts including deep-sensing long-
3 range fires to include anti-surface capabilities, enhanced
4 air and missile defense, and improved ground and amphibious
5 combat vehicles.

6 These platforms will equip the Marines with improved
7 force protection and enhanced lethality with a particular
8 emphasis on providing highly mobile capabilities and
9 addressing contested logistics.

10 General Berger, I appreciated your thoughtful approach
11 throughout this restructuring. Your posture towards
12 adjusting Marine Corps requirements based on the results of
13 experimentation and wargaming has yielded valuable outcomes
14 such as updating the number of cannon batteries and the size
15 of fighter attack squadrons.

16 The committee looks forward to continued engagement on
17 these modernization efforts as they proceed.

18 Finally, I would note that the United States' greatest
19 competitive advantage over China is our global network of
20 allies and partners.

21 The recent agreement between the United States,
22 Australia, and the United Kingdom to collaborate on nuclear
23 submarine production through the AUKUS partnership is a
24 meaningful step forward in ensuring a free and open Indo-
25 Pacific.

1 Successful implementation of this plan will require
2 responsible oversight and a stable industrial base. I would
3 ask our witnesses for their views on what we have the
4 capacity to produce now and in the future and how we can
5 provide the budget and resources to match.

6 Again, I want to thank the witnesses for appearing
7 today. I look forward to your testimonies, and now let me
8 recognize the ranking member, Senator Wicker.

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER F. WICKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM
2 MISSISSIPPI

3 Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 I welcome our witnesses and thank them for their years
5 of distinguished service. I want to associate myself with
6 the generous words of appreciation that the distinguished
7 chairman has made with regard to Admiral Gilday and General
8 Berger.

9 I would add to that my appreciation for the talented
10 team of Marines and sailors who are seated behind you and
11 have been such a great help to all of us in our efforts to
12 get this right.

13 I do -- I also want to share and associate myself with
14 the remarks made by the distinguished chairman and his
15 concern that the budget proposal would take us in the wrong
16 direction and I think on a bipartisan basis we will be able
17 to rectify that.

18 Members of this committee know all too well that the
19 Chinese Communist Party represents a major threat to the
20 nation. Today, we are in a more complex and sobering threat
21 environment than we have been in since World War II.

22 In that war our economy was larger than all of our
23 adversaries combined with an unmatched industrial base. We
24 no longer enjoy that advantage, not by a long shot. The
25 evidence is clear China has launched 75 new warships since

1 2018 compared to our 35. Seventy-five to our 35.

2 China has over 200 hardened aircraft shelters, more
3 than eight times what we have available in the Western
4 Pacific, and there are other examples of this imbalance.

5 I am troubled by China's recent creation of defense
6 mobilization offices, air raid shelters, and wartime
7 emergency hospitals. China is rapidly expanding its
8 military forces and preparedness. We cannot be complacent
9 in our response.

10 And, yet, late yesterday the Navy submitted its
11 statutorily required 30-year shipbuilding plan, which seems
12 to embrace complacency. Even in the most aggressive
13 alternative plan the Navy would not reach the statutory 355-
14 ship requirement until fiscal year 2042.

15 Compared to last year's plan, it trades 35 -- trades 35
16 amphibious warfare ships for support vessels, harming the
17 ability of our Marines to project force. The Navy's fiscal
18 year '24 budget request is anemic. Under the President's
19 proposal the size of the fleet would shrink further.

20 Let me be clear. This budget request has failed yet
21 again to build a U.S. Navy fleet that is capable of meeting
22 even basic tasks to say nothing of growing strong enough to
23 deter near-term threats.

24 Thankfully, there is bipartisan agreement that we must
25 substantially increase the shipbuilding budget. I am

1 concerned with production constraints at our shipyards.
2 Despite congressional support the Navy has proved unable to
3 achieve delivery of two attack subs per year, three
4 destroyers per year, and two frigates per year.

5 This trend puts us further and further behind the goal
6 to build the Navy we need. Expanding our shipbuilding
7 capacity will require generational investments combined with
8 new approaches to growing the workforce.

9 Growing our shipbuilding capacity will also require
10 stable demand signals to industry. The Navy introduced
11 uncertainty in the shipbuilding industry by excluding the
12 LPD amphibious ship from the fiscal year '24 budget.
13 Congress has reversed decisions like this in the past and I
14 certainly hope and I actually am confident that we will do
15 so again this year for LPD 33.

16 I am also concerned about ship maintenance, which is
17 essential to avoiding a smaller fleet available in the near
18 term. Lack of investment and maintenance together with
19 rising requirements has left the fleet in brittle condition
20 as a result of decades of deferred maintenance.

21 The Navy wants to decommission 11 ships including eight
22 before the end of their expected service life. This
23 strategy of divest to invest does not work. In fact, that
24 failed doctrine is a contributing reason we are in this
25 predicament.

1 The assumptions included in this budget have the size
2 of the fleet shrinking even more in the next five years. I
3 see a whole lot of divest and very little invest in this
4 budget.

5 I fully expect that Congress will work together in a
6 bipartisan and patriotic way to put a stop to this
7 disgraceful lack of commitment to our naval forces.

8 And, finally, I am concerned that the Navy is not
9 sufficiently leveraging promising new technologies. This is
10 in contrast to the Marine Corps, which has embraced
11 innovative concepts and equipment relevant to the high-end
12 fight.

13 The Navy should adopt resilient communication advances,
14 invest in autonomous technology, make use of additive
15 manufacturing such as 3D printing, and move to alternative
16 materials such as composites.

17 Navy acquisition must do a better job of moving
18 cutting-edge programs into production and do so urgently. A
19 Western Pacific conflict would lean heavily on our naval and
20 air forces.

21 Congress needs to exercise its constitutional
22 obligation to provide these resources, the equipment, and
23 ships necessary to provide for the common defense and I am
24 certain we will.

25 So thank you all for your service and thank you very

1 much, Mr. Chairman.

2 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Wicker.

3 Mr. Secretary, please?

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1 STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE CARLOS DEL TORO, SECRETARY
2 OF THE NAVY

3 Mr. Del Toro: Good morning, Chairman Reed, Ranking
4 Member Wicker, distinguished members of the committee. It
5 is an honor to appear before you today alongside General
6 Berger and Admiral Gilday to discuss the posture of our
7 Department of the Navy.

8 Today, our nation, as you both have highlighted, does
9 face challenges in every region and domain that we operate
10 in. From the seabed to the stars, we recognize principally
11 the People's Republic of China is our pacing threat,
12 executing a strategy aimed at up ending international order.

13 To preserve our way of life, the National Defense
14 Strategy calls upon the joint force to deter aggression
15 while being prepared to prevail in conflict. A strong Navy
16 and Marine Corps are the foundation upon which the successes
17 of the joint force exists.

18 The President's 2024 budget does send a strong signal
19 to the American people of the value that President Biden and
20 Secretary Austin place in maintaining a robust Navy and
21 Marine Corps to confront the threats that we face to the
22 tune of an increase of \$11 billion.

23 This year's budget request supports our three enduring
24 priorities: to strengthen our maritime dominance, to build a
25 culture of warfighting excellence, and enhancing our

1 strategic partnerships around the globe.

2 With your support over the past year we have made major
3 strides to modernize our fleet and our force. 2022 saw the
4 deployment of the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford,
5 providing the Navy with lessons learned that will benefit
6 future Ford-class carriers.

7 Construction of high-end surface combatants continue,
8 including the first Constellation-class frigate, USS
9 Constellation, and the first of our Arleigh Burke Flight III
10 destroyers, the USS Jack Lucas.

11 We continue progress on our first Columbia-class
12 ballistic missile submarine, the USS District of Columbia,
13 while preconstruction activities on the second Columbia
14 SSBN, USS Wisconsin, have also begun.

15 On the innovation front, Task Force 59, just as one
16 example, in Bahrain continues to test a wide range of
17 unmanned surface vessels and we are looking forward to
18 expanding this effort to Fourth Fleet this coming year.

19 When we consider the composition of our fleet we seek
20 to strike a balance between readiness, modernization, and
21 capacity with an immediate emphasis on readiness. This year
22 our divestment request includes three amphibious ships and
23 at least two cruisers in poor material condition that offer
24 very limited warfighting capability.

25 Further investment in these platforms just simply does

1 not make sense. It is a waste of the taxpayers' money. Our
2 decisions to divest or extend a ship life are based on a
3 hull by hull evaluation.

4 For example, we recently announced the modernization of
5 the destroyer USS Arleigh Burke DDG-51 to keep it sailing
6 through 2031, five years beyond its estimated service life.

7 We hope to be able to continue that trend with other ships
8 when possible in the Arleigh Burke-class and even with our
9 cruisers, the Ticonderoga-class cruisers.

10 We owe it to the American people to be responsible
11 stewards of taxpayer dollars. Investing in platforms with
12 limited capability conflicts with that responsibility.

13 Our naval forces are more than just platforms and
14 systems, however. It is our sailors, our Marines, that are
15 truly our greatest strength. This year's budget request
16 contains multiple investments to support them and their
17 families with services, benefits, housing, and education
18 that they deserve.

19 In addition to our commitments to our people we are
20 reinforcing our international relationships including those
21 with our Ukrainian partners as they defend their sovereignty
22 in response to Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion.

23 In the Indo-Pacific we continue to play a leading role
24 in the AUKUS security partnership. Our Navy will be
25 critical to this initiative's success as we support

1 Australia's acquisition of conventionally-armed nuclear-
2 powered fast attack submarines.

3 We continue to hone our skills with allies and partners
4 in the Arctic, ensuring we are prepared to operate in this
5 challenging and unforgiving environment. Along with our
6 partnerships abroad we are committed to also strengthening
7 our relationships here at home. We value your support and
8 we recommit our leadership toward defueling and remediating
9 the Red Hill bulk fuel storage facility spills.

10 We are committed to doing what it takes to address the
11 concerns of service members, their families, the people of
12 Hawaii, and all other communities throughout the United
13 States.

14 As I have said before, we build trust one day at a
15 time, one action at a time.

16 As I close, I would like to emphasize that to meet
17 these commitments and obligations the Department of the Navy
18 does require a strong cadre of senior leaders. Delaying the
19 approval of our flag and general officer nominations before
20 the Senate is especially harmful to our readiness. I urge
21 all of you to reconsider this situation and allow our
22 nominations to please move forward.

23 Finally, I am grateful for the trust that you have
24 placed in me to lead this department. I look forward to
25 discussing how best to support our sailors, Marines, and

1 their families and defense of our nation working very
2 collaboratively with each and every one of you.

3 Thank you.

4 [The prepared statement of Mr. Del Toro follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

2 Admiral Gilday, please?

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1 STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL MICHAEL M. GILDAY, USN, CHIEF OF
2 NAVAL OPERATIONS

3 Admiral Gilday: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker,
4 distinguished members of the committee --

5 Chairman Reed: Could you bring that closer to your
6 face, sir?

7 Admiral Gilday: For the chairman and ranking member, I
8 appreciate your thanks for our service this morning, and my
9 wife has joined me this morning. I would like to thank her
10 as well for her support. And I appreciate the opportunity
11 to appear with both the Secretary of the Navy Del Toro and
12 General Berger this morning.

13 For more than three quarters of a century the United
14 States Navy has been an anchor of world stability, deterring
15 war, upholding international law, and ensuring access to the
16 seas. Today, our Navy's role has never been more expansive
17 or more consequential.

18 This past year the Navy and Marine Corps team executed
19 more than 22,000 steaming miles and nearly 1 million flying
20 hours. We participated in, roughly, 100 exercises with
21 allies and partners around the globe including the Arctic.

22 At this moment we have about a hundred ships at sea, a
23 third of the force, reassuring America's allies and partners
24 that we stand the watch alongside them and remind the world
25 that we seek to preserve peace but we are prepared for any

1 fight.

2 We are America's away team, constantly present, in
3 contact with allies, partners, and potential adversaries
4 every single day. Operating forward, your naval forces
5 defend the rules-based international order. Our Navy flies,
6 it operates, and it steams wherever international law allows
7 so that others can, too.

8 The United States has always been a maritime nation.
9 To preserve our security and our prosperity America needs a
10 combat credible naval force to protect our interests in
11 peace and to prevail in war, not just today but for the long
12 run.

13 Our fiscal year 2024 budget request remains consistent
14 with the Navy's enduring priorities. As the Secretary
15 stated, we are prioritizing readiness first with an emphasis
16 on the sailors who empower everything that we do, ensuring
17 that we are always combat ready.

18 Next, we are modernizing our current fleet, 70 percent
19 of which we will have in the water a decade from now, and
20 third, we are continuing to build our capacity, ensuring we
21 have relevant lethal platforms to achieve warfighting
22 advantage with a hybrid fleet of manned and unmanned
23 platforms on, above, and below the seas.

24 Our budget request reflects the Navy's commitment to
25 deliver, to deploy, and to maintain that fleet. It fully

1 funds the Columbia-class submarine, ensuring the on time
2 delivery of the most survivable leg of the nation's
3 strategic deterrent triad.

4 It keeps our fleet ready to fight tonight, dedicating
5 the resources necessary to train and educate resilient
6 sailors that can out think, that can out decide, and that
7 can outfight any potential adversary.

8 It funds private and public sector ship maintenance to
9 100 percent, increasing the capacity and retaining highly
10 skilled labor to get our ships back to sea faster with full
11 magazines and spare parts in our storeroom to be prepared
12 for any contingency.

13 It invests in modernizing our fleet, procuring weapons
14 with range and speed along with integrated systems to
15 improve fleet survivability and a resilient cyber secure
16 network infrastructure at an invest and capable capacity
17 building towards a larger distributed hybrid fleet, fielding
18 a ready fleet today while modernizing for the future.

19 Our competitors are investing heavily in warfighting
20 capabilities of their own and the oceans we are operating in
21 are growing more lethal and more contested every single day.

22 Failing to modernize and meet those threats would erode
23 America's maritime superiority at a time when command of the
24 seas will determine the balance of power for the rest of
25 this century.

1 This means we can no longer afford domain ships
2 designed for a bygone era, especially at the expense of
3 readiness and modernization or at the expense of buying new
4 ships most relevant to today's fight.

5 America cannot afford to field a hollow force. We have
6 been there before and we have seen the tragic results. It
7 is a mistake that we must never repeat. Ships, submarines,
8 and aircraft are no doubt expensive instruments of national
9 power as are the costs of maintaining them. But history
10 shows that without a powerful navy the price tag could be
11 much higher.

12 Thank you again for inviting me to testify today. I
13 look forward to answering your questions.

14 [The prepared statement of Admiral Gilday follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Admiral Gilday.
2 General Berger, please?

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1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL DAVID H. BERGER, USMC, COMMANDANT
2 OF THE MARINE CORPS

3 General Berger: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker,
4 and distinguished members of the committee, I also thank you
5 for your comments, and my wife, Donna, is here also as is
6 the sergeant major of the Marine Corps and his wife, and it
7 has been the privilege of a lifetime and this is the best
8 team you could ever hope to match up with.

9 Three years ago I appeared before you and described how
10 change, in my opinion -- rapid change was required to meet
11 our statutory requirements and the mandates of the National
12 Defense Strategy for the future, and with the bipartisan
13 help of this committee and the civilian leadership in the
14 Pentagon I am here to tell you that Force Design for the
15 Marine Corps is not a future aim point. It is a reality and
16 it is here today.

17 A couple of examples. In the Pacific and INDOPACOM
18 Task Force 76.3, they were built to create advanced
19 information sensing maritime awareness for Admiral Aquilino,
20 which he desperately needs in the Pacific.

21 They took what they learned during experimentation and
22 they applied it in exercises. They turned kill webs -- what
23 they call kill webs into reality and they did it in the
24 Philippines and they did it in Japan right in China's
25 backyard.

1 In EUCOM last fall Task Force 61.2, using some new
2 technology and a different way of organizing, created both
3 air and maritime domain awareness for the European commander
4 and Sixth Fleet and they focus their efforts on the Russian
5 air and naval activities, and Marines, in fact, are in
6 Estonia right now doing the same and they will be there for
7 the next four months.

8 In CENTCOM General Kurilla has our Marine Corps MQ-9s.
9 He needs ISR. He needs persistent ISR and that is what we
10 are giving him in the key maritime terrain. And this month,
11 in fact, while we are sitting here the new Marine littoral
12 regiment out of Hawaii is in the Philippines, Third MLR.
13 They are using new sensing capabilities and lethal
14 capabilities in the Philippines and they are demonstrating
15 that right alongside of our Philippine counterparts and
16 other allies and partners in exercise Balikatan and that is
17 how it should be.

18 A couple of months ago Japan announced that they would
19 host the second -- the next Marine littoral regiment
20 forward. It would stay in Japan in the First Island chain
21 and that is exactly where I think you want Marine Corps
22 presence.

23 In short, your Marines are forward. I think they are
24 where it matters most and that is exactly how it has always
25 been. Three years ago I described how the Marine Corps

1 would not just modernize quickly but we would self-fund that
2 effort. We would get leaner, lighter, more naval, and three
3 years later your Marine Corps -- your Marines have done just
4 that and the results are in the field now.

5 And we are not waiting for 2027 or 2025. We are not
6 waiting for 2030. Your Marines are ready to handle any
7 crisis anywhere on the globe now, today.

8 Our major divestments, which we had to do, they are
9 done. We are at our fighting weight. Now we have to
10 sustain our modernization efforts while we focus on the
11 quality of life issues most important to Marines and sailors
12 and their families.

13 People -- as both the Secretary and the CNO have
14 mentioned, people are the real source of our competitive
15 advantage as a nation, as the Marine Corps, and I ask for
16 your help now to invest in their quality of life.

17 We have to focus on where Marines live, where they
18 work, where they eat. Marines and their families expect
19 that from us. They have earned it and they deserve it and
20 now we have to deliver.

21 I think restoring, modernizing our infrastructure,
22 which many of you all have spoken about, is directly tied to
23 recruiting, directly tied to retention. That is how we
24 support families. That is how we generate readiness.

25 So on behalf of all Marines I ask for your support now

1 as we bring our infrastructure up to par with the quality of
2 Marines and sailors who operate from those warfighting
3 platforms.

4 And I also ask for your help, your support for the
5 amphibious fleet. That is how we project power. The CNO
6 and I agree on three key principles when it comes to
7 amphibious fleet.

8 First, the absolute minimum number of amphibious
9 warships the nation needs is 31. That is the operational
10 requirement minimum.

11 Second, both of us agree block buys do two things.
12 They save the taxpayer money and they give the industry what
13 the CFO calls headlights, which they need.

14 And, third, divesting without replacing, I think, is a
15 dangerous approach. That creates unacceptable risk.
16 Amphibious ships are critical to crisis response. They are
17 critical to deterrence. That is how we evacuated citizens
18 out of Lebanon. That is how the U.S. made our initial entry
19 into Afghanistan in 2001, all from the sea.

20 Today, we are asking them to do all that plus
21 deterrence plus integrated deterrence and campaigning, and
22 my concern here is the first time this nation cannot respond
23 to a crisis and someone else does is the last time they
24 trust us.

25 So in my final year of commandant I will just finish up

1 by saying thank you. Thank you to the individual members of
2 this committee. Thank you for your coaching and your
3 mentoring and your guidance.

4 With that, I look forward to your questions. Thank
5 you.

6 [The prepared statement of General Berger follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General Berger.

2 Mr. Secretary, submarines are critical, in fact, I
3 would argue the most critical aspect of our Navy, and
4 looking at the contract right now they are beginning to work
5 on Block V.

6 But going back to Block IV we are seeing already
7 delays, which will translate into the next block -- the
8 multiyear acquisition of these submarines. Block IV has
9 been running about 12 to 18 months behind, costs have been
10 increasing, and we are trying to bring the Columbia in on
11 course and on schedule. But when you see these
12 reverberating cascading effects you wonder if that is
13 possible, too.

14 What are you doing and what is the Navy doing to get
15 these course and schedule -- schedule issues on track?

16 Mr. Del Toro: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is
17 numerous steps that we are taking, first and foremost,
18 obviously, providing proper oversight over the construction
19 contracts themselves.

20 We believe by several estimates that they are at about
21 1.2 to 1.4 submarines a year when they need to be at 2.0
22 submarines a year. I do not think no one ignores the fact
23 that we have been living in COVID and COVID has actually had
24 a significant impact on our supply chains and our providers
25 and so this takes all hands on deck basically to get to a

1 better place and I hope and I am actually optimistic that we
2 can get to a better place in the next five years.

3 But it is going to demand a lot of incremental progress
4 and a lot of continued investment in the submarine
5 industrial base. So last year, for example, there was
6 approximately \$700 million that was invested alone in
7 projects like the regional training centers or systems that
8 are so critical to getting to a better place.

9 Those regional training systems have been implemented
10 in the Northeast. They have also been implemented in
11 Virginia as well, too, and out in San Diego working with the
12 community colleges, working with numerous suppliers and
13 vendors throughout the area so that then we can make the
14 CAPEX like investments in those companies to help them get
15 to a better place with their own capital investments as
16 well, too.

17 Fundamentally, we also have a challenge, obviously,
18 with regards to workforce training and recruitment and so I
19 believe, as I have visited all the shipyards and met with
20 all the senior leaders of the shipyards, that they are
21 committed now to actually increasing benefits at the
22 shipyards themselves, making the shipyards more amenable to
23 workers coming and working there, looking for housing
24 solutions in the local communities as well in places where
25 housing is a real problem.

1 So I am hopeful that over the course of the next few
2 years we are actually going to see some significant
3 increased improvements and getting us to the right place
4 closer to two boats per year on the Virginia-class.

5 Chairman Reed: I hope we can because it is essential
6 to the Navy. It is one of our greatest assets, particularly
7 in the Pacific if there is any conflict there.

8 Admiral Gilday, I recently received a briefing from
9 Secretary Raven about the suicides on the George Washington.
10 The first phase was focused on the individual sailors who
11 were involved.

12 This new phase is more about collective causal
13 conditions, environmental conditions. But with respect to
14 the first phase, I think not only myself but some of my
15 colleagues were interested about accountability for
16 commanders.

17 Was there a thorough investigation of commanders'
18 responsibilities and was it formally concluded that there
19 was no command or leadership gaps or, in fact, is that still
20 pending?

21 Admiral Gilday: Sir, in the first investigation we did
22 not take action against the commander of the George
23 Washington. The Secretary and I have both been to that
24 ship. We have walked those deck plates. We have met with
25 those sailors before and after that -- before and after that

1 investigation was completed.

2 The investigation found that those suicides, tragic as
3 they are, were independent and there were no common causal
4 factors across those three.

5 With respect to improvements, although the second
6 investigation has not yet been signed out there are many
7 improvements that we have made across the force. They
8 include investments in things that we learned from the
9 George Washington.

10 As an example, parking was a problem at the shipyard so
11 we are investing in two parking lots, two multipurpose
12 fitness facilities. We brought minimarts, if you will,
13 closer to the ships. We improved wifi. We moved sailors
14 off the ship. We invested in new berthing barges. Yes,
15 sir.

16 Chairman Reed: I appreciate that. But, very
17 succinctly, was there an investigation of the command --
18 chain of command? Was it completed with a conclusion by the
19 Secretary that there was no leadership failings?

20 Admiral Gilday: Yes. That was a rigorous
21 investigation, sir. There were things that that went wrong.
22 But by tying those -- tying those specific failures to the
23 specific death by suicide did not -- were not clear.

24 Chairman Reed: Let me make one other comment, no
25 questions. But as we went through the reports on the George

1 Washington we noticed that one factor was sleep deprivation.
2 That was also a factor in the investigation regarding the
3 McCain and Fitzgerald collision.

4 I would presume that you are now relooking at policies
5 and procedures so that that is not a factor and I will --

6 Admiral Gilday: Sir, for ships that are underway we
7 absolutely have and we have sleeping policies in effect now
8 based on what we learned from the collisions in '17.

9 The particular issue that you spoke to with respect to
10 GW is the fact that one sailor in particular was having
11 trouble sleeping on the ship. As I mentioned a moment ago,
12 we have tried to move everybody in the duty sections off the
13 ship and the new berthing barges and other facilities to get
14 after that problem.

15 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much.

16 Senator Wicker, please?

17 Senator Wicker: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

18 General Berger, let us talk about LPDs. I think you
19 said that there is a minimum -- absolute minimum requirement
20 of 31 amphibs. Also, you have asked for \$1.7 billion as
21 your number-one unfunded requirement to fully fund the LPD
22 33. Why have you done that and why is this so important?
23 What if we do not do it?

24 General Berger: Sir, the study that the Secretary of
25 the Navy directed us to do last year determined the

1 operational requirement. Pretty rigorous study. Thirty-one
2 is the minimum and that made some assumptions on readiness
3 but 31 is the minimum of 10 big decks and 21 medium and
4 smalls.

5 So 31 is both the operational requirement and now the
6 statutory law minimum. That is where the minimum came from.
7 In the shipbuilding plan and the budget submitted there is
8 no plan to get to that number and that is why I put it as
9 the top of the unfunded list. I understand it -- I know it
10 to be the operational requirement and the law and I saw no
11 plan to get there.

12 Senator Wicker: What if we -- where will that
13 disadvantage us the most if we do not do that?

14 General Berger: It may be a paraphrase but in the
15 chairman's opening statement he said that the Navy and the
16 Marine Corps are the nation's first line of deterrence,
17 first line of defense. I agree with that.

18 If we do not have enough amphibious ships or other
19 naval vessels, then you put at risk both deterrence and
20 defense and the ability to respond to a crisis. So the
21 short answer is my concern is if something happens around
22 the world we will not have the right capability nearby where
23 the combatant commander needs it.

24 Senator Wicker: In particular, how would that help us
25 in the Pacific?

1 General Berger: If something happened in Taiwan or any
2 of the regions of the Pacific where there was an aggressive
3 action and we did not have a naval expeditionary force
4 nearby, then time -- if you are a combatant commander, if
5 you are an operational commander, as you know, sir, time
6 matters.

7 I think the same you could say in Central Command, same
8 in European Command. There are times when you can fly in
9 and land a force but not always. In fact, most of the cases
10 you need a seaborne force and you need Marines that can
11 project power ashore when you need to.

12 Senator Wicker: Let us also talk about production
13 line. Now, we are building LPDs now but if this current
14 budget is not changed what will happen to that production
15 line? What will be the consequences of it?

16 General Berger: That line would stop, sir.

17 Senator Wicker: And how -- in the future when we
18 decide we finally want another amphib how will that
19 disadvantage us? You got to go find the workers again, do
20 you not?

21 General Berger: That is correct.

22 Senator Wicker: Okay.

23 General Berger: You got to retrain them, hire them.
24 You got to start from scratch.

25 Senator Wicker: Also, with regard to cost savings I

1 understand the LPD has already gone through cost saving
2 programs and someone has suggested a dramatic reduction in
3 flight decks and you view that as unacceptable. Would you
4 explain that to us?

5 General Berger: In 2014 the Navy and the Marine Corps,
6 directed by the Secretary of the Navy, took under a --
7 looked at a study or undertook a study for about 18 months
8 looking at the LPD 17 and what could be an affordable but
9 capable replacement for the LSD and that became the Flight
10 II -- the LPD Flight II.

11 So reduction of what was an LPD 17 version into a
12 Flight II status, every bit of efficiency squeezed out of
13 that. I think the input from Huntington Ingalls was really
14 important. So now if there is another effort to reduce that
15 further I know that we went to the minimums in 2014.
16 Nothing less will do.

17 Senator Wicker: Okay. Good. Let us leave it there
18 and, Secretary Del Toro, let us talk briefly about frigates.
19 Now, we are building those in Wisconsin now?

20 Mr. Del Toro: That is correct, sir.

21 Senator Wicker: And the decision has been made to
22 build the frigates there and at another shipyard. Is that
23 correct?

24 Mr. Del Toro: No, sir, not as of right now. The
25 decision --

1 Senator Wicker: That has not been made?

2 Mr. Del Toro: No, sir. That decision has not been
3 made.

4 Senator Wicker: Okay. Well, where are we on that?

5 Mr. Del Toro: We are actually waiting for the
6 completion of the technical design package, which is
7 expected by the end of this year.

8 Once that technical design package is fully mature and
9 submitted for review we will review it and at that point we
10 will make a decision on whether we have the ability to
11 actually take that technical data package and make sure that
12 it is mature enough to actually compete -- perhaps, compete
13 with another shipyard so that we could have two shipyards
14 building the Constellation-class frigate.

15 Senator Wicker: Well, we are going to need four a
16 year. Is that right?

17 Mr. Del Toro: I am sorry, sir?

18 Senator Wicker: We are going to need four frigates a
19 year and that that concept is a way to get that. Is that
20 correct?

21 Mr. Del Toro: No, sir. Right now the President's
22 budget recommends a saw tooth pattern of two one two one,
23 moving forward. So it is two frigates a year that we will
24 initially need.

25 Senator Wicker: Admiral Gilday, how important would it

1 be to move to four?

2 Admiral Gilday: I think very important, based on the
3 comments of both you and the chairman at the opening of the
4 committee. If we could get a second shipyard and two a year
5 from each shipyard -- two destroyers, two to three
6 destroyers a year, we would be in a much better place. We
7 are catching up and you cannot buy back time, sir, with the
8 seven shipyards that we have relative to the 30 that we had
9 years ago.

10 Senator Wicker: It is going to be hard to get to four
11 a year without designating two shipyards. Do you agree?

12 Admiral Gilday: I agree. I also agree with the
13 Secretary's comments. I think two shipyards is in the plan.
14 We want to make sure that we are measuring twice and
15 cutting once before that decision is made.

16 Senator Wicker: Thank you, gentlemen.

17 Admiral Gilday: Yes, sir.

18 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Wicker.

19 Senator Hirono, please?

20 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you
21 very much for your service and especially for Mr. Secretary
22 and General Berger. These are -- this will be your last, I
23 guess, year of service so I thank you.

24 I note, Mr. Secretary, that recently the DOD opened up
25 its Red Hill Clinic to people who were not in the service

1 and that is very much appreciated by a community that has
2 been rocked by the disaster at Red Hill and continue to
3 raise many questions about what the military is doing and
4 how they are doing it.

5 There were a number of recommended changes to the --
6 based on what happened at Red Hill and characterizing what
7 happened at Red Hill as having had a culture of procedural
8 noncompliance, a lack of ownership, and poor training.

9 These were among the descriptions of what led to the
10 disaster at Red Hill and there were a number of
11 recommendations made, Mr. Secretary. Among the changes that
12 were recommended can you describe a specific major change
13 that you have implemented or that is being implemented?

14 Mr. Del Toro: Yes, ma'am, and currently out of the 253
15 repairs that were identified in order to defuel Red Hill
16 approximately just over half have now been completed.

17 But the one major change that I would say that I have
18 personally implemented is to ensure that anyone who actually
19 enters Red Hill is actually being supervised properly. So
20 out of the many subcontractors that do work at Red Hill at
21 any given day they have government oversight.

22 There is a plan in place that they have to demonstrate
23 for exactly what they are going to do, how it was verified,
24 and oversight over the individual actions that they are
25 going to take with regards to any maintenance that actually

1 gets conducted in Red Hill.

2 Senator Hirono: So it is not just at Red Hill. There
3 are other installations where this kind of review needs to
4 take place. It is stunning to note that the lack of
5 ownership, poor training, lack of oversight that
6 characterize what happened at Red Hill may be going on in
7 other facilities and that needs to be changed. That kind of
8 culture of lack of oversight is really very stunning and
9 totally unacceptable.

10 Mr. Del Toro: Senator, if I can just add that that
11 degree of oversight actually has been enforced now at all
12 other fuel facilities as well, too.

13 Immediately after the incident at Red Hill we made sure
14 that we looked at every other fuel farm that we own and
15 operate to try to ensure that we up the standards of how
16 those fuel farms are actually operated.

17 Senator Hirono: That is reassuring.

18 Mr. Del Toro: So those measures are in place.

19 Senator Hirono: That is reassuring, Mr. Secretary,
20 because as you know the community is still very much
21 questioning the -- basically the military's capacity to do
22 the right thing and complete the work that needs to be done
23 at Red Hill.

24 General Berger, many field grade officers who are
25 actually on the ground and closest to the problem have come

1 on and publicly said the changes made by Force Design 2030
2 have made their units more capable, and you mentioned the
3 Hawaii-based Third Marine littoral regiment's successes
4 against a more standard Air Guard Task Force in recent
5 exercises.

6 These young men are the future leaders of the Marine
7 Corps and are currently tasked with ensuring the Marines are
8 prepared. So their support for the changes made by Force
9 Design 2030 is instructive. I just wanted to make that
10 statement, General, because I do support the changes that
11 you have made.

12 One thing that does concern me, General Berger, is you
13 noted that infrastructure is very important, the
14 modernization and maintenance of infrastructure that has to
15 do with the quality of life of our people. And, yet, the
16 Marine Corps only funded 54 percent of the facilities'
17 sustainment and restoration funds that it needs.

18 So why is this, General? Because for other funding
19 needs it is a much higher percentage of the items that are
20 being funded and yet for the Marine Corps it is only 54
21 percent. Why is that?

22 General Berger: Yeah. Approach of 80 percent funding
23 for FSRM, which has been the model that we have used for as
24 long as I have been a Marine, has not always allowed us the
25 flexibility to put money where we should have put it because

1 we are tied to a fixed percentage across FSRM. The model
2 that we are using now supported by OSD allows us the
3 flexibility to move money within, to not waste money where
4 it is not going to do any good.

5 Senator Hirono: So there is a question as to what you
6 consider will not do any good because there are a lot of
7 infrastructure needs, I think, throughout the DOD and, as
8 you know, to me, Red Hill and some of the other events that
9 have occurred with regard to the Army and the other services
10 says to me that we need to pay a lot more attention to our
11 infrastructure needs.

12 The kind of deferred maintenance that is exemplified, I
13 would say, throughout DOD is an area that I personally --
14 well, I will be focused on as chair of the Readiness
15 Subcommittee.

16 I just want to note that to you that I will be paying
17 attention to the needs of all of our services with regard to
18 repair and maintenance of infrastructure. I want to know
19 that what is going through our lines, our pipes, our
20 electrical lines are -- that those infrastructure needs are
21 being met.

22 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Hirono.

24 Senator Fischer, please?

25 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good

1 morning.

2 Mr. Secretary, earlier this morning I attended a
3 classified briefing on the modernization of our triad
4 platforms, and I would say since the Columbia program is on
5 a tight timeline to deliver the first submarine to the Navy
6 in 2027 can you provide us an update in this public setting
7 on whether the Navy will be able to meet this timeline given
8 workforce and supply chain challenges?

9 Mr. Del Toro: Thank you, Senator. Thank you for that
10 question and for your commitment to the nuclear triad as
11 well.

12 As you know, currently approximately 50 percent of our
13 ship construction funds are devoted to submarines of which
14 Columbia is the highest acquisition priority. When I came
15 in as Secretary approximately 19 months ago or so I also
16 foresaw that there always could exist, perhaps, a gap
17 between the decommissioning of the Ohio-class and the
18 oncoming of the Columbia-class.

19 So one of the measures that I did take last year was to
20 start analysis associated with how long it would take and
21 how much resources would be needed to actually look at each
22 one of our Ohio sub hulls and see if we could extend some of
23 those hulls to close the potential gap between Colombia and
24 Ohio and that process is now underway and we should have
25 better estimates, hopefully, by the end of this year that we

1 can invest in the President's budget -- '25 budget.

2 In addition to that, all the oversight functions that I
3 mentioned earlier to the chairman with regards to keeping
4 Colombia on track and, again, I thank the Congress for their
5 investments in the industrial base.

6 Senator Fischer: Can you -- can you give us a
7 timeframe that we are currently seeing for the Colombia? Is
8 it on -- is it on track? Is it maintaining?

9 Mr. Del Toro: Yes.

10 Senator Fischer: Is it dropping back?

11 Mr. Del Toro: So Colombia is on track in accordance
12 with her contract requirements. There was an expedited
13 schedule that was created by Electric Boat approximately six
14 months advanced and it is about approximately 10 percent
15 behind the six-month advance schedule that we would like to
16 adhere to as well, too.

17 But rest assured that we are working very closely with
18 the industrial base to keep it on its contract schedule.

19 Senator Fischer: Admiral, do you have anything to add
20 to that?

21 Admiral Gilday: I was just up in Connecticut last week
22 at the shipyard. The Secretary is absolutely right. We are
23 about 10 percent behind in the advanced schedule. We are
24 watching that very closely.

25 So that advanced schedule, 78 months versus the 84

1 months contracted, is intended to give us margin for first
2 of a class ship. We are going to have to do weapon systems
3 testing and we are going to have to do testing of a first of
4 a kind integrated propulsion system, and so we are trying to
5 factor that in, watching it very closely.

6 I would say that the shipbuilders are making really
7 great strides including -- in terms of hiring 4,000
8 additional workers last year, another 6,000 planned for this
9 year.

10 So we remain confident and keep a close eye on it,
11 ma'am.

12 Senator Fischer: In working with the industry on this
13 what -- can you give us some specifics that you are looking
14 at to help them continue on that expedited schedule?

15 Admiral Gilday: So, as you know, the Congress has been
16 very generous in terms of infrastructure investments that we
17 have made in those two shipyards down in Newport News and
18 also up at Electric Boat to the tune of billions over the
19 FYDP.

20 Separately, I think that the money that we are applying
21 for advanced procurement materiel, particularly given the
22 supply chain challenges we have seen post COVID, are also
23 going a long way to get that materiel well in advance so
24 that we have no work stoppages.

25 Senator Fischer: Okay. Thank you.

1 What do you assess the role of the unmanned platforms?
2 What are they going to play in future Navy operations? You
3 mentioned those in your opening statement. How -- and how
4 do you think the architecture of the fleet should be
5 structured so that you can achieve that balance between
6 manned and unmanned?

7 Admiral Gilday: So whether it is under, on, or above
8 the sea we are looking at manned/unmanned teaming. So this
9 will be a phased approach. Initially, you would have
10 unmanned teamed with manned aircraft, as an example, where
11 the manned aircraft would be the quarterback and the
12 unmanned would be the wingman.

13 We are doing the same thing under the sea. We are
14 doing the same thing on the sea. Under the sea, we have our
15 first extra large UAV prototype in the water now for testing
16 off the coast of California with more to follow. This
17 brings a clandestine mine-laying capability to the combatant
18 commanders.

19 On the surface we have been doing a lot of work with
20 drones in the Middle East. We will have a hundred this year
21 operating along with six other countries. We are only
22 paying 20 percent of that bill. The other countries are
23 chipping in and paying most of it.

24 That allows us to have more persistent coverage in an
25 area where -- in the Middle East that is still a maritime

1 domain. But we do not have the numbers of ships that we
2 have had in the past.

3 In the air we have our refueling -- our drone and MQ-25
4 that is operating off our carriers now and testing. We will
5 go IOC in a couple of years and so that frees up -- that is
6 our first instantiation of an airborne UAV that allows us to
7 refuel aircraft in the air, give them another 500 miles of
8 range.

9 And so we are making all of these progressive
10 advancements and trying to do it very deliberately but at
11 speed.

12 Senator Fischer: The lessons you are learning in the
13 Middle East are those transferable to the Pacific?

14 Admiral Gilday: Absolutely. The Secretary just
15 announced that we are going to scale our unmanned operations
16 from the Middle East to Southern Command. So it is taking a
17 closer look at illicit drugs and illicit persons that are
18 coming up the northern approaches by the maritime. Also,
19 our intent is to put an unblinking eye on illicit Chinese
20 fishing on both coasts of South America.

21 Senator Fischer: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

22 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Fischer.

23 Senator Kaine, please?

24 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and to Admiral
25 Gilday and General Berger, my congratulations and gratitude

1 to both of you for wonderful service.

2 General Berger, I just want to pick up one point and
3 make sure I get the punch line version of one aspect of your
4 testimony. The nation needs 31 amphibs. The statutory
5 requirement is 31 amphibs. The budget we have before us has
6 no path to get to 31 amphibs. Am I reading you right?

7 General Berger: Yes, sir.

8 Senator Kaine: All right. Thank you.

9 Secretary Del Toro, I want to thank you for your
10 attention to an issue that has been very challenging for us
11 in Virginia and that is military suicides, particularly
12 connected with the George Washington and also the Mid
13 Atlantic Regional Maintenance Center.

14 And you and I went together down to MARMC and I could
15 tell in your interaction with the command and with the rank
16 and file, both the sailors and the civilians in that unit of
17 2,500 people, that this is something you take very, very
18 seriously and you are focused on trying to figure out a way
19 to improve this set of tragedies.

20 If I could ask you a set of questions about that.
21 Could you first tell me what is the status of Brandon Act
22 implementation?

23 Mr. Del Toro: Yes, sir. The fine details of how best
24 to implement the Brandon Act are being reviewed by the Under
25 Secretary of Defense for Personnel Readiness. I hope that

1 over the course of the next several months we will actually
2 have a path forward on how best to execute it.

3 It is extremely important to bring every tool in the
4 toolkit in order to solve this or try to help solve this
5 very, very tragic situation with regard to not just suicides
6 in the Navy but suicides in the nation, and there is no
7 greater responsibility the Secretary has than the safety of
8 their personnel both in the Navy and Marine Corps and the
9 civilian personnel. As you suggested, we take this
10 responsibility very seriously.

11 Senator Kaine: I would love to stay in touch with you
12 about this because what I would not like to happen would be
13 for there to be a report about implementation after the NDAA
14 is done that we do not find satisfactory.

15 So I would like to stay in dialogue with you about the
16 implementation so that if we feel like we want to offer some
17 additional muscle to implementation we have a chance to do
18 that before the committee finishes its work on this. So I
19 will continue with you on that.

20 I also had the chance to talk to Admiral Franchetti and
21 Secretary Raven about the phase two analysis of the George
22 Washington suicides and I know that it is not yet done.

23 I was heartened by some of the initial discussion about
24 the depth of recommendations that are going to be made. But
25 I am interested in one particular issue and I am not sure

1 that it is covered in the phase two, based upon my
2 questions.

3 Last year's House report to the NDAA directed a
4 briefing on personnel assignments to carriers undergoing
5 refueling. Do we need to maintain the entire ship's fleet
6 with a ship during an extended refueling? In the George
7 Washington case it is six years. Senator Scott has raised
8 some similar questions in hearings before.

9 As I asked Secretary Raven and Admiral Franchetti about
10 does phase two get into challenging assumptions about
11 whether we have to keep the entire ship personnel component
12 intact during the entire refuel, which can be a very
13 extended one as the GW, I got an answer that made me think
14 that was not part of the analysis. So and yet that was a
15 suggestion in the NDAA language from the House side last
16 year that we analyze ship personnel assignments during
17 extended refuels.

18 Tell me if you are doing anything to sort of challenge
19 your own assumptions about what personnel component is
20 needed during a refuel, or particularly for first tour
21 sailors are there other assignments that they could take on
22 that would more closely match the MOSes they have trained
23 for.

24 Mr. Del Toro: Absolutely so, Senator, and in fact, the
25 summary report may not have highlighted that as a fact. But

1 we are taking a close look at this because it is extremely
2 important. And while the entire crew may not be needed
3 throughout the course of the entire RCOH, especially when
4 the ship first comes into port and to its following stages,
5 towards the end of the RCOH you do have to build that crew
6 back up.

7 In fact, one of the things that we discovered on the
8 George Washington, for example, is that there was a lack of
9 mid level leadership in the chief petty officer corps that
10 did not -- they were not providing the necessary oversight
11 for junior personnel, for example.

12 So although it is complicated I do not think the entire
13 crew is needed throughout the entire period. But there are
14 stages where we actually need that mid level management
15 overseeing our most junior sailors who could be challenged
16 with living in a shipyard environment.

17 Senator Kaine: Just one final thing as I conclude.
18 When we visited the Mid Atlantic Regional Maintenance Center
19 following the suicide of four sailors there within two
20 months it was, I think, fairly clear that a contributing
21 factor was a manning policy that allowed for a 60 percent
22 increase in the assignment of personnel who were either on
23 limited duty or pregnancy postpartum with no additional
24 assignment of medical resources to help them deal with, for
25 example, a med board process or other needs they might have.

1 What are you doing to try to deal with that issue to
2 provide more in-unit resources in billets like this where
3 there is a high percentage of people who are assigned on
4 either a limited duty or a pregnancy postpartum status?

5 Mr. Del Toro: Yes, sir. So I will let -- I will let
6 the CNO address the specific actions that are being taken.
7 But we actually have channeled back on that policy. We have
8 way too many LIMDUs going to other places where they cannot
9 be cared for in the manner that they deserve to be cared
10 for.

11 So we are actually looking at withholding the ones that
12 we can back on ship where they have better care and more
13 resources available to them. But, perhaps, the CNO can go
14 into a little bit more detail on the specific action.

15 Senator Kaine: I am over time. But if you could do it
16 briefly.

17 Admiral Gilday: Yes, sir. I will make three quick
18 points.

19 The first thing that we are doing is making a faster
20 determination of what path they ought to be on -- are they
21 just on light duty for a period of two weeks because they
22 have a sprained ankle or do we need to move them off the
23 ship on a more permanent basis, getting them the help that
24 they need at an accelerated rate so that we prevent them
25 from going into a limited duty status. The point is to get

1 sailors -- keep sailors at work.

2 And the third, for those on limited duty to get them
3 those medical evaluations at a much faster pace. We are
4 also reducing the ratio of those in limited duty at command
5 so that we do not have another MARMC so that people are
6 properly supervised, sir.

7 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kaine.

8 Senator Cotton, please?

9 Senator Cotton: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 Admiral Gilday and General Berger, thank you for your
11 latest and presumptively your last appearance at the
12 committee as chief and commandant. We congratulate you for
13 a lifetime of service and appreciate everything you have
14 done for this country.

15 Mr. Secretary, I want to be the latest senator to ask
16 about this issue of the 31 amphibs. The budget this year
17 does not include any fiscal year '24 money for the
18 seventeenth San Antonio-class ship.

19 That sets you on a path to fall below the legislatively
20 mandated 31-ship amphib floor, as Senator Kaine pointed out,
21 and, General Berger, you testified that you think that is in
22 the needs of the Marine Corps.

23 So I just want to ask what is up with this discrepancy
24 between that legislative mandate in General Berger's stated
25 need for the Marine Corps and the budget request? Can you

1 explain it to us?

2 Mr. Del Toro: Thank you, Senator. First, let me
3 unequivocally state that I do not dismiss anything that the
4 commandant of the Marine Corps said with the need for our
5 nation to have the heavy lift that is necessary to provide
6 our expeditionary forces in the Pacific, in particular, the
7 ships that they need to be able to carry equipment and
8 personnel around the Pacific.

9 The concern that developed over the course of the last
10 year or so has been the increasing costs of the platforms
11 themselves. There were two studies that were done to
12 address this issue.

13 One is a cost study that was initiated by the Office of
14 Security Defense to look at the -- and compare the costs,
15 essentially, between the different designs of the LPD and
16 see if we could actually bring down those costs, and the
17 second is the BFSAR which is mandated by the '23 NDAA as
18 well and to take a look at the overall requirements for the
19 amphibious ships both large and medium in order to make the
20 right decisions necessary in the '25 budget to invest in the
21 required platforms.

22 And I think that there is also general recognition that
23 moving towards a multi-ship multiyear procurement is an
24 effective way to bring the cost of those ships down in the
25 future.

1 Senator Cotton: So at bottom it is a cost issue?

2 Mr. Del Toro: Yes, sir. The cost per ship issue.

3 Senator Cotton: Yes.

4 General Berger, any further thoughts on this matter?

5 General Berger: You, the Senate -- the Congress gave
6 the service chiefs the authority, the responsibility to
7 determine the operational requirement, which I did, which is
8 31.

9 But the Secretary, obviously, has a lot of things he
10 has to fund as does the Secretary of Defense. So I can -- I
11 am not in their position to weigh it against all the other
12 things that they must fund. I can just tell you that the
13 operational requirement, the minimum, is 31 and that assumes
14 a level of maintenance that provides the availability to the
15 combatant commanders.

16 Senator Cotton: Okay. Thank you both. Obviously,
17 this matter has a high degree of interest on the committee
18 and I suspect we will be addressing it in the months ahead.

19 Mr. Secretary, I also want to speak about the state of
20 our industrial base, especially what it means for
21 submarines, the Navy's inability to build ships and the
22 fleet on time and on budget for many years, well before you
23 came along, to be fair --

24 Mr. Del Toro: Trying to make it better, Senator.

25 Senator Cotton: Yeah.

1 [Laughter.]

2 Senator Cotton: We all are, but it has been a source
3 of growing concern. There are press reports that it is now
4 going to take five years for the Virginia-class submarine
5 production to reach its target of two boats per year.

6 Admiral Gilday earlier this year spoke to industry and
7 he told them that they needed to prove it. That is a direct
8 quote. I think that is an apt quote to industry regarding
9 the ability to ramp up production. Our submarines,
10 obviously, provide us an unmatched strategic advantage,
11 especially in the Western Pacific against Communist China.

12 So could you give us some thoughts about what we can do
13 in this committee and in Congress to help assist with the
14 ramp up of the industrial base especially as it relates to
15 submarines?

16 Mr. Del Toro: Yes, sir. Again, it is an all hands on
17 deck approach, everything from trying to improve the
18 manpower issue and trying to get the shipyards to be able to
19 recruit more effectively.

20 I mean, we face across the entire country a national
21 shortage when it comes to blue collar workers. I think
22 increasing legal immigration to this country and work visa
23 programs actually may very well help to better and support
24 that blue collar workforce that is needed in places like the
25 shipyards, for example.

1 But, again, the investments that you have made in '23
2 and '24 are in the right direction in terms of the
3 investments in the industrial base itself.

4 One thing that I have been trying to do, Senator, is
5 trying to expand the marketplace with regards to smaller
6 shipyards, getting them involved in the Department of
7 Defense construction and having them actually support the
8 big primes.

9 So I have been having conversation with the primes, for
10 example, to try to include more smaller shipyards to feed
11 the primes and a perfect example of that actually is being
12 executed now at Austal where even before I got here the CNO
13 encouraged the development of steel hulls at Austal.

14 They are now building steel hulls and they are actually
15 contributing to Electric Boat up in Connecticut and
16 providing the necessary modules necessary, and I think HII
17 is doing the same thing as is Ingalls down in Pensacola as
18 well, too.

19 I think continued investment in CAPEX makes a lot of
20 sense where the government invests in these capital
21 improvement programs at the shipyards so that the shipyards
22 can also make an equal investment and help get us to the
23 right place.

24 It is all hands on deck across the entire spectrum of
25 improvements that have to be made.

1 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

2 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Cotton.

3 Senator Rosen, please?

4 Senator Rosen: Thank you, Chairman Reed, Ranking
5 Member Wicker, for holding this very important hearing and I
6 want to thank all of you for being here today and thank you
7 for your service and for your support for things in Nevada,
8 of course, across the country as well.

9 And I want to talk a little bit about Nevada and the
10 Fallon Range Training Complex modernization. So, Secretary
11 Del Toro, as you know, we are so proud in Nevada to host
12 Naval Air Station Fallon, home to "Top Gun" and the nation's
13 premier carrier air wing and the SEAL training centers, and
14 I want to offer you and your staff again my personal
15 gratitude for working with me and the Nevada delegation on a
16 consensus proposal to modernize the Fallon Range Training
17 Complex, which was included in the fiscal year '23 NDAA.

18 And I appreciate that Under Secretary Raven and other
19 senior leaders will be traveling to Fallon just later this
20 week to meet with the tribal nations because this agreement
21 included key mitigations for local and tribal governments
22 that require future appropriations.

23 Specifically, the Navy is responsible for compensating
24 for the timely reconstruction and, of course, relocation of
25 impacted roads and infrastructure, the displaced grazing

1 permittees, our cultural resource surveys and environmental
2 assessments, and funding and completion of these
3 requirements.

4 It is not just important for my constituents. It is
5 also necessary to ensure that expanding the training complex
6 it can become operational for the future of the Navy. And
7 given that Fallon modernization was the top Navy's
8 legislative priority the Nevada delegation was expecting
9 that in the fiscal year 2024 budget the request would
10 include funding for those various commitments. However,
11 fiscal year 2024 budget was silent, silent on Fallon
12 modernization.

13 Secretary Del Toro, can you speak to the Navy's
14 implementation plan for modernization of the Fallon Range
15 Training Complex, given the urgency to modernize? I am
16 curious why this implementation is not included in the
17 Navy's fiscal year '24 budget request.

18 Mr. Del Toro: Senator, let me first, again, thank you
19 for your leadership on this issue and I was so proud to have
20 been -- played a small role by your side, basically, to
21 bring this across the finish line. But it is about
22 execution now.

23 I am unaware that we actually do not have the necessary
24 funds to execute on the plans that were already baked into
25 the agreement in fiscal year '24. As far as I know, and I

1 have reviewed the actual next steps that are required to
2 execute the plan, I know that there is going to be monies
3 that get put into the President's budget '25 to continue
4 those efforts.

5 But as far as I am aware there are no delays in
6 actually us being able to meet the requirements necessary
7 that were laid out in that plan in accordance with
8 agreements that were made between the tribes and us and the
9 community and us as well, too.

10 So it is my understanding that all the funds that we
11 currently have are enough to fulfill the existing
12 requirements that we currently have. More will come,
13 obviously. But let me get back to you with more specifics
14 --

15 Senator Rosen: Perfect. I will have my --

16 Mr. Del Toro: -- because I do not want to misspeak on
17 that.

18 Senator Rosen: I will have my team circle back and we
19 can --

20 Mr. Del Toro: Yes, ma'am.

21 Senator Rosen: -- find out about that. And I also
22 want to ask you this, that I understand the Navy has yet to
23 finalize an agreement with the local tribes regarding access
24 to important sites, and so can you give me an update on the
25 Navy's engagement with the tribes and the timeline for

1 finalizing access?

2 Mr. Del Toro: Ma'am, allow me to get back to you with
3 specifics because I do not want to misspeak in any way. My
4 understanding was that everything is on track and actually
5 Secretary Berger and Secretary Raven are traveling out there
6 to actually celebrate, in many ways, the progress that we
7 have made in the path forward and review what lays ahead,
8 basically, on the POA&M.

9 Senator Rosen: I am going to stay a little bit on
10 Naval Air Station Fallon because the personnel station there
11 they do conduct critical training missions. The fleet is
12 deployable and operationally ready every day.

13 These operations incredibly demanding and so reducing
14 external stressors is important not only to the sailors but
15 also to the mission. I know 172 new housing units are on
16 track to be built at Naval Air Station Fallon. It is going
17 to help ease a little bit of that housing strain.

18 But more needs to be done, and Fallon is still
19 considered a remote duty installation and I want to ensure
20 that other things for quality of life are also addressed.
21 So I know -- I can take this off the record if you would be
22 brief -- can you speak to the quality of life at Fallon,
23 mental health resources that might be available for our
24 sailors and folks that train there and work there and what
25 are you doing to support those on remote duty in the NDAA?

1 Mr. Del Toro: We recognize that Fallon is a remote
2 site and we recognize the challenges that go along with
3 that, in general.

4 The CNO, the commandant, and I are hyper focused on
5 actually the remote sites across the entire country more so
6 than the major concentration areas as well, too, because
7 they undergo a lot more stressors than other locations.

8 I have actually specifically spoken to the Under
9 Secretary of Defense for Personnel Readiness on the hospital
10 issues associated with Fallon, Nevada, for example, because
11 it is so important to get the right mental health providers
12 necessary to fill those billets in Nevada and we are
13 struggling to fill those billets in Nevada, obviously, as
14 well as in Japan and Rota, Spain as well, too.

15 But allow me to get back with a long list of actions
16 that we are specifically taking with regards to Nevada on
17 the quality of life issues on the bases.

18 Senator Rosen: Perfect. Thank you very much. I will
19 be submitting some more questions for the record. Thank
20 you.

21 Mr. Del Toro: Yes, ma'am.

22 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Rosen.

23 Senator Rounds, please?

24 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, first
25 of all, to all three of you thank you very much for your

1 service to our country.

2 Admiral Gilday, 38 years is long time. Cannot do it
3 without family. I appreciate you and your family. Very,
4 very special.

5 General Berger, thank you very much for your 42 years
6 of service and, once again, without what you do the services
7 here in the United States simply are not what they are
8 today. So thank you to both of you.

9 Admiral Gilday and General Berger, there have been
10 efforts to share or take parts of the spectrum away from DOD
11 activities and to use them for 5G, recognizing that 5G is an
12 important aspect in this country and it is something that we
13 need to be able to utilize.

14 But in doing so there is a particular part of the
15 spectrum which is, I believe, very critical to a number of
16 our defensive systems. Specifically, the 3.1 to 3.45
17 gigahertz band, or the S band, of the electromagnetic
18 spectrum is used specifically by a number of your platforms.

19 Admiral Gilday, General Berger, could you share with us
20 in this unclassified meeting the types of systems that would
21 be impacted if this transfer of spectrum capability or
22 limitation of spectrum capability were actually enacted
23 before this September study is completed? Can you share
24 with us how serious this could be to your ability to do your
25 mission?

1 Admiral Gilday: Senator, I would like to talk about
2 three specific threat areas that I think come to mind when
3 it comes to the very powerful capabilities that we have in
4 that part of the spectrum.

5 The first is air defense. So we just saw what happened
6 when a balloon flew over the United States. We cannot have
7 that happen with a more serious threat. And so that band
8 affects the radars -- the ship-borne radars that
9 specifically would provide that type of early warning.

10 The second point I would make is about countering
11 unmanned and so these are drones that are increasing in
12 capability and size and lethality. I do not mean to be
13 dramatic but we have to look around the bend to the future,
14 the possibility of having to defend ourselves against
15 threats like that and we cannot be blind to them. Taking
16 away the capability in that band would do so.

17 The last area that I would speak to is missile defense
18 and so we need warning there as well. These radars in that
19 band bring that to bear. We know that we are in the age of
20 hypersonics. It is not a place where we think that we want
21 to accept risk.

22 If we -- if we do lose access to that band, if it is
23 either vacated or shared and we cannot do that job on a
24 continual basis, then I think we have to look at what
25 modifications that we would need to make to probably 188

1 ships in terms of their systems to provide the American
2 people with a degree of confidence that those three areas
3 that I mentioned are properly defended.

4 Senator Rounds: Thank you.

5 General Berger?

6 General Berger: I think what seems lost in that
7 conversation, Senator, is we -- those systems, those radar,
8 electronic warfare systems were designed to optimize that
9 spectrum for a weapon system.

10 We had access to that when the requirements were
11 developed. That is why we went with that weapon system. So
12 if we -- if that access is lost then the very reason you
13 pick that part of the band of the spectrum for a radar, for
14 electronic warfare, for a training system, all that is lost
15 to us.

16 We have to be able to train realistically. So, for us,
17 I think the same as CNO, the radar systems primarily but
18 also other sensing systems and electronic warfare. That is
19 why we chose that portion of the band.

20 Mr. Del Toro: Senator, if I can just add, the cost of
21 actually relocating these systems would be enormous, I mean,
22 upwards of \$250 billion, probably. So I am really fearful
23 of the secondary consequences that some of these decisions
24 could actually lead us to.

25 Senator Rounds: Thank you, sir. Would it be fair to

1 say that the state of Hawaii is protected by those systems
2 today, Admiral Gilday?

3 Admiral Gilday: Yes, sir, to some degree.

4 Senator Rounds: How about the capital of our country,
5 Washington, D.C.?

6 Admiral Gilday: Yes, sir.

7 Senator Rounds: How about the West Coast of the United
8 States today?

9 Admiral Gilday: Absolutely. Yes, sir.

10 Senator Rounds: All of those are utilizing weapon
11 systems or radars that are specific to this particular part
12 of the spectrum that they are talking about trying to either
13 share or sell, correct?

14 Admiral Gilday: Yes, sir, and importantly also it
15 would affect our ability to train to a high degree of
16 proficiency to use those weapon systems.

17 Senator Rounds: Thank you. My time is expiring. I
18 would -- I would not want to disappoint the committee. I
19 will ask a question for the record with regard to the USS
20 Boise and your plans for not only the USS Boise to actually
21 get it through dry dock but those other Los Angeles-class
22 attack subs that are behind it in line that right now we do
23 not have the shipbuilding capacity to be able to get those
24 back in operation in less time than what it took to build
25 them in the first place.

1 Admiral Gilday: Yes, sir.

2 Senator Rounds: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Rounds.

4 Senator King, please?

5 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 First, I would like to associate myself with Senator
7 Rounds' questions on spectrum and the answers that you have
8 provided. This is a critical issue. There is no reason to
9 move forward with a spectrum auction before this study is
10 completed. I think there is a significant national security
11 risk.

12 Secondly, before beginning my questions I want to
13 compliment General Berger. A friend of mine once said
14 everybody is for progress, nobody is for change. You have
15 managed both progress and change in a remarkable way, I
16 think, during your three years as commandant and I want to
17 compliment you on that because it is not easy to move a
18 large institution.

19 You have done it with a very forward thinking way of
20 looking at the future demands on the Marine Corps and you
21 have done that very effectively.

22 Mr. Secretary, we have talked about this before. I am
23 concerned about the transition from the DDG Flight III to
24 the DDX, which is currently in design. Number one, are you
25 supportive of the joint work that is being done by Bath Iron

1 Works and Huntington Ingalls to be sure that the design is
2 buildable and will be most effective for the Navy and for
3 the taxpayers?

4 Mr. Del Toro: Yes, Senator. Not only am I supportive
5 but it is actually critical to success for the DDG(X) and it
6 is part of the reason why we actually have moved the
7 schedule two years to allow for a far more mature design and
8 allow the shipyards to actually work closely with us to
9 determine exactly not just the propulsion plant and what it
10 should look like but to actually build out a land-based
11 engineering site that we could actually test the propulsion
12 plant at, as well as the many other technologies -- advanced
13 technologies -- like Helios and others that it will actually
14 provide in the future.

15 Senator King: You used the right word, maturity of
16 design, because as I have sat through 10 years of hearings
17 on weapon systems maturity of design is one of the key
18 factors to not -- to prevent a debacle in terms of
19 acquisition, both in terms of time and cost.

20 And also we need to be thinking now about the
21 transition from the Flight IIIs to the new ship, that there
22 not be a lag. You have seen me draw the graph of the trough
23 in employment if we do not have a smooth transition. I hope
24 that is in your plan.

25 Mr. Del Toro: I could not agree with you more,

1 Senator. I think continuing to build DDG Flight III -- DDG-
2 51 Flight IIIs is critical to ensuring that we do not have a
3 gap like we are trying to prevent between the Ohio and the
4 Columbia-class.

5 Senator King: The issue of suicide has come up several
6 times. There is an aspect of it that has not been discussed
7 today and that is the relationship between the transition
8 from active duty to veteran status and suicide.

9 Unfortunately, there is a correlation. Many suicides
10 of veterans take place in the first one or two or three
11 years after the transition.

12 I hope that we can work together and perhaps discuss
13 offline how we can improve that transition -- the handoff,
14 if you will -- so that a sailor does not walk out the door
15 one day in the warm embrace of the Navy and then suddenly
16 into the cold world without the handoff to the veteran
17 status. So will you commit to working with me on that?

18 Mr. Del Toro: Absolutely, Senator, and continuity of
19 care is essential to that transition.

20 Senator King: Admiral Gilday, I think I asked you a
21 similar question when you were first up for confirmation
22 about hypersonics and we will take this in a classified
23 setting.

24 But a general question is are you satisfied with where
25 we area in terms of naval defense to a hypersonic attack?

1 It seems to me that is one of the most serious strategic
2 challenges that we face today, particularly in the Indo-
3 Pacific?

4 Admiral Gilday: Sir, no, I am not. We are working to
5 close some known gaps that we have with respect to layered
6 defense. Some of the biggest obstacles are technology,
7 including mature technology, that would be -- that we would
8 be able to apply to the -- to that problem set.

9 I think another aspect of it is being able to confuse
10 and disrupt the adversary's ability to accurately target and
11 use those weapons effectively. So in classified -- in a
12 classified setting, sir, I think we can talk about that in a
13 little bit more detail.

14 Senator King: Well, I am glad you started with the
15 question -- the answer was no because that implies we have
16 work to do.

17 Admiral Gilday: We do.

18 Senator King: And I will look forward to working with
19 you and your successor. I hope you will pass that sense of
20 urgency on to your successor.

21 Admiral Gilday: Yes, sir. I shall.

22 Senator King: And I will have another couple of
23 questions for the record on some manpower issues.

24 Mr. Secretary, I commend you for the work you have done
25 in terms of helping our shipyards with their workforce

1 challenges. It sounds mundane but things like parking and
2 childcare availability is important to having the workers
3 that we need to build the next generation of ships, whether
4 they be submarines or destroyers or frigates or amphibs.

5 So please keep that work in mind. Workforce, in my
6 view, is maybe one of the most significant challenges that
7 we have today.

8 Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

9 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator King.

10 Senator Ernst, please?

11 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you,
12 gentlemen, very much for being here today, and, Admiral and
13 General, thank you so much for your service and dedication
14 to our great United States of America and to your families
15 and your teammates as well. Truly appreciate them for their
16 support.

17 China's military has raised the risk of great power war
18 and our combat credibility, especially as we look at the
19 Indo-Pacific, is increasingly in question and that is why
20 Congress has really called on the department to build our
21 lethal capabilities to deter China.

22 So, General Berger, I would like to start with you.
23 The late chairman, John McCain, had declared that, quote,
24 "The Marine Corps must modernize itself for the deterrence
25 of great power competitors," end quote. We all know there

1 has been a lot of debate surrounding modernization efforts
2 within the Marine Corps. How did this committee's intent
3 inform your vision for the future force?

4 General Berger: Probably, first, I would start with
5 when Senator McCain said that and four years ago the Marine
6 Corps very ready to handle the problem sets of today, right
7 now.

8 In fact, if we had the capacity we would have -- we
9 would have a Marine Expeditionary Unit -- an amphibious
10 ready group off the coast of Africa right now so that if
11 Sudan got worse that General Langley would have a number of
12 options.

13 So I think readiness in terms of handling the problem
14 sets of today was not the issue. But the National Defense
15 Strategy, the indicators in the intelligence community, the
16 developments in technology were a clear indicator to General
17 Neller before me that we had to change. Holding on to what
18 we had that was successful in the past was not going to help
19 us in the future.

20 So, to your point, I think the indicators from this
21 committee, the support from individual members and
22 collectively, that has allowed us in three and a half years
23 to get to where we are. We are very ready today but we
24 cannot slow down.

25 We have to move quickly to stay in front. We have a --

1 we have a pacing threat. We have a pacing challenge.

2 Senator Ernst: Yes, we do. And, General, you shared
3 your predecessor's assessment that the Marines were not
4 organized, trained, equipped, or postured to meet the
5 demands of the rapidly evolving future operating environment
6 and you just referenced that.

7 How do your investments meet operating requirements in
8 the Indo-Pacific specifically?

9 General Berger: Some of it is the weapon systems
10 themselves, the capabilities, everything from the MV-22,
11 which this committee and others saved from death 25 years
12 ago and thank God we have it right now -- the 53K, the anti-
13 ship missile capability that were developed and all this
14 were years in the making.

15 I think in the Pacific the challenges that General or
16 that Admiral Aquilino and his commanders face are range and
17 it is a home game for the PLAN. So we have a couple of
18 challenges out there.

19 We have to be present. We have to be the stand-in
20 force there from the beginning because fighting your way in
21 from the outside not a good plan. We have to work on the
22 logistics so that that forward stand-in force is
23 sustainable, is ready, and you have to be there with allies
24 and partners because they have to believe that the United
25 States is not running away from them, is going to be there

1 even when things get tough, and that is where the Marine
2 Corps Navy -- I mean, this is where we make our money, right
3 alongside the allies and partners forward where it matters.
4 If we back off, if we pull out of there, we are sending a
5 message strategically, which is not the message we are going
6 to send.

7 Senator Ernst: You have outlined a number of gaps that
8 exist logistically, support and working with other nations.
9 Are there other gaps that you can address specifically
10 within the Marine Corps?

11 General Berger: The biggest one is what most of the
12 members brought up, which is the capacity to get us there,
13 to have that presence forward all the time.

14 If we do not have the vessels, if we are not forward
15 and we are in the United States and we are fighting our way
16 to get in, bad place to be. I think if you still believe,
17 in other words, that three ships -- amphibious ships loaded
18 up with 2,300 Marines -- if they have a deterrent value and
19 I think they do then you want them right in the adversary's
20 grill, right in their face where they can see them all the
21 time.

22 Senator Cotton asked basically can we afford
23 conventional deterrence. Absolutely, yes, because the
24 alternative is a lot worse.

25 Senator Ernst: Are you managing that near-term risk as

1 you divest from some of the legacy programs that you have?

2 General Berger: Absolutely, yes. Absolutely, yes,
3 ma'am.

4 Senator Ernst: Okay. Thank you very much, gentlemen.
5 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

6 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Ernst.

7 Senator Kelly, please?

8 Senator Kelly: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
9 Thank you for being here.

10 My first question is to General Berger. First of all,
11 thank you for all the incredible work that is happening in
12 southern Arizona at the Marine Corps Air Station in Yuma.
13 It is home to the, as you know, the largest F-35 command in
14 the Marine Corps.

15 It is also the home of the weapons and tactics
16 instructor corps so it is helping train F-35 pilots in the
17 Marine Corps across the country, essentially.

18 So but also across our entire state we have got other
19 flying missions. We have got Luke Air Force Base, Davis-
20 Monthan. We are training F-16 pilots and operational
21 squadrons and A-10s, Air Force F-35s. We have got the
22 Compass Call Mission at DM with C-130s, soon to be getting a
23 new airframe.

24 Helicopters, UAVs, we got all this -- a lot of stuff
25 and it is the greatest place in the country to train. And I

1 am not being parochial here on it being Arizona. I mean, it
2 really has good weather to train these missions.

3 What we are struggling with right now a little bit is
4 airspace. We have got a lot of airspace. We got the Barry
5 Goldwater Range. We have got MOAs, Outlaw Jack, all other
6 MOAs. We got a restricted area over Fort Huachuca.

7 But so, General, I am interested from your perspective,
8 the perspective of the Marine Corps, how would expanded
9 airspace in the Southwest improve DOD's ability to support
10 fifth-generation fighter aircraft training?

11 General Berger: Senator, sitting behind me is my wife
12 and she is probably smiling because we took our family to
13 Yuma, Arizona. We lived there for three years, raised our
14 kids there. So everything that you describe we lived when
15 we had kids that were younger. It was a great place to
16 raise a family.

17 It is also a fantastic place to train. You mentioned
18 the weapons and tactics instructor course. I was in -- that
19 is what my assignment was. And I am an infantry guy so,
20 first of all, getting invited to teach it in aviation school
21 I thought they had made a mistake.

22 But off I went to Yuma and learned more about combined
23 arms, Marine Air Ground Task Force, how we fight, than any
24 other assignment I have ever been in. Airspace is critical.
25 Without that you cannot put all the pieces together, and it

1 was a box that we operated in in the 1990s when I was an
2 instructor there but we did not have the range of the weapon
3 systems we have now.

4 We did not have the speed and range of the aircraft we
5 have now. If we cannot stretch the legs of the F-35 of the
6 MRLS rocket system, if we cannot use the airspace to the
7 maximum degree of the weapon system then the first time the
8 Marines are going to employ it is in combat and that is not
9 what we want.

10 So absolutely critical, both altitude and depth of the
11 Barry Goldwater ranges and the rest, as you mentioned. If
12 we do not have that then we are putting our air crews, our
13 ground Marines, in a risk because the first time they are
14 going to really put all the pieces together is when the
15 fighting starts.

16 Senator Kelly: Yeah. As you mentioned, as the stick
17 gets bigger the airplane is going faster, the AMRAAM is
18 going further. We need more space. We can stitch together
19 some of this space, by the way, I mean, and that is
20 something we have talked about in Arizona is we have an
21 opportunity here with the FAA reauthorization bill. Talk to
22 the FAA, come up with a plan that works for commercial
23 aviation, works for the airline industry, but also helps us
24 train better.

25 Now, I think Senator Sullivan, if he goes next, he is

1 probably going to jump in here and talk about the airspace
2 in Alaska. But this is really important and the weather is
3 ideal for this training.

4 General Berger: Just one quick plug for the FAA. They
5 have been fantastic partners for 35 years, handing off
6 airspace between LAX and Twentynine Palms and Yuma. Great
7 partners.

8 Senator Kelly: Thank you. Thank you, General.

9 Secretary Del Toro, just real quick. I know Senator
10 Kaine talked about the Brandon Act. I really appreciate all
11 the hard work you have done on this.

12 We need to get it implemented. We discussed a little
13 bit about this from a more personal side this morning. Can
14 you just give me a really quick -- and I do not have a lot
15 of time but a status update and how is the Navy working with
16 DOD to make this a reality and what specific actions have
17 you taken to support implementation?

18 Mr. Del Toro: Thank you, Senator.

19 Well, for starters, I have personally met with the
20 Caserta family to understand the challenges that they have
21 undergone and what they would like to see moving forward in
22 terms of the Department of Navy and the Department of
23 Defense being able to move with -- to work with families
24 like the Caserta family as they struggle with this tragic
25 incident.

1 I believe it has to be with -- we have to get to a
2 better place with regards to executing the right of
3 individuals to be able to seek out help from the private
4 sector privately but at the same time with the checks and
5 balances necessary so that the military also understands the
6 struggles that this individual may be facing because if we
7 do not understand the struggles that they are facing then
8 that presents even greater threats as well, too, to
9 operations and also to the individuals themselves.

10 And so we have to find that right balance between those
11 two needs in order to get to a better place and those are
12 the discussions that I have had with the Department of
13 Defense.

14 Admiral Gilday: Sir, I know we are over. Can I make
15 just one quick comment?

16 Senator Kelly: Yeah. Yes.

17 Admiral Gilday: The department issued a mental health
18 playbook and so for sailors and Marines one of the things it
19 does is it helps them -- it raises their awareness of what
20 options are available and there are already self-referral
21 and confidential options that are available.

22 We still have work to do as the Secretary is working on
23 to make this more holistic across the force. But we have
24 made investments and we are trying to head in the right
25 direction in order to make that available.

1 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Admiral. Thank you, Mr.
2 Secretary, and thank you, General.

3 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kelly.

4 Senator Sullivan, please?

5 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 I would like to thank the witnesses, in particular
7 Admiral Gilday, General Berger. Thank you for your
8 incredible service and your families over decades. It is
9 very appreciated. I have enjoyed working with both of you.

10 I am going to dig into this 31 amphib ship issue a lot
11 more harshly because I just do not think what is happening
12 right now is remotely appropriate.

13 Mr. Chairman, I would like to submit for the record a
14 Defense One news article "Navy on the path to violate 31
15 amphib ship requirement in 2024" for the record.

16 Chairman Reed: Without objection.

17 [The information follows:]

18 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Sullivan: And the 30-year plan makes it clear
2 that the Navy has no intention of meeting this statutory
3 requirement. Last year the Congress of the United States
4 was an amendment that I worked on personally with the
5 commandant. Got this in the law. It is the law. Let me
6 read the law.

7 "The naval combat forces of the Navy shall include not
8 less than 11 operational aircraft carriers and not less than
9 31 operational amphibious warfare ships of which not less
10 than 10 shall be amphibious assault ships."

11 That is the law. We passed that. I want to compliment
12 the commandant. It is not easy to be sitting next to your
13 boss saying we need this, we need this, we need this. Your
14 boss, obviously, does not agree, General.

15 But here is the thing. There has been these
16 discussions of balancing, costs, another CAPE study that is
17 going to come out in June '23 for the fiscal year '25 budget
18 on amphib requirements. That is irrelevant.

19 The Congress of the United States did the balancing,
20 Mr. Secretary, working with the Marine Corps. It was
21 unanimous, by the way, in this committee. You are violating
22 the law.

23 Would you come before this committee and say, sorry, we
24 are not going to do 11 carriers? No way. You would get
25 your you know what handed to you. You cannot do it, sir. I

1 find it simply unacceptable that we are all just letting you
2 say maybe that was a suggestion by the Congress. It was not
3 a suggestion. It was a mandate.

4 Mr. Secretary, I would like to just ask you right off
5 the bat why are you violating the law and why does your
6 shipbuilding plan have no remote interest for the next 30
7 years, as far as I can tell, of hitting the statutory
8 mandate that we told you to hit? I have no idea what your
9 answer is going to be. But you need to follow the law, sir.
10 What is the answer?

11 Mr. Del Toro: Senator, as a member of the executive it
12 is my responsibility to follow the law.

13 Senator Sullivan: Yeah.

14 Mr. Del Toro: It is also my responsibility to ensure
15 that we just do not waste taxpayer money on vessels, for
16 example, that will never see the light of day --

17 Senator Sullivan: Okay. Let me ask you on that one.
18 This Congress has given you multi-ship procurement
19 authorities, passed three NDAAAs. This is the third year in
20 a row that amphibs are not being procured with this cost-
21 saving authority.

22 So it is a little rich when you tell me about taxpayer
23 savings when you are not using the ability to save money
24 that we gave you on amphibs. You use it for every other
25 ship but not amphibs.

1 So I am not really buying the taxpayer argument because
2 you are not using that authority. What is your answer to
3 the issue that you are not following the law? And what I am
4 going to ask for a request on, because I am running out of
5 time, I am requesting you come back to this committee soon
6 and tell us how you are going to follow the law.

7 That is your only option, Mr. Secretary. Another CAPE
8 study -- we did the study. We told you what to do and you
9 need to do it. The commandant agrees with us. This
10 committee agrees with us.

11 So what is your answer to this question? You are
12 violating the law right now and your shipbuilding plan looks
13 to say, hey, we are going to violate the law for the next 30
14 years. That is totally unacceptable.

15 In my view, you have not been hit hard enough by
16 members of this committee. You are ignoring us. Worse, you
17 are ignoring the law. What is your answer to that? And I
18 do want your commitment to come back here with a statement
19 on how you are going to fix this.

20 Mr. Del Toro: Senator, you have my commitment that I
21 will come back to you with a statement on how we can fix
22 this. I think --

23 Senator Sullivan: And follow the law.

24 Mr. Del Toro: Yes, sir. It is my intent to follow the
25 law and I hope that, hopefully, by the President's budget

1 '25 submission we will be able to be back in place with a
2 multiyear procurement that actually looks at --

3 Senator Sullivan: Not looks at. That is not your
4 option. We looked at it.

5 Mr. Del Toro: Like I said, sir, as we develop the
6 President's budget '25 I will look at that as an option that
7 we can pursue to get us back on track with multi-ship
8 procurements for LPDs.

9 Senator Sullivan: It is not an option for you, Mr.
10 Secretary. The committee, the Congress, the President have
11 spoken.

12 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a big issue and right
13 now with the Secretary of the Navy ignoring the Congress of
14 the United States is unacceptable.

15 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

16 Senator Shaheen, please?

17 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank
18 you all for being here this morning. I am sorry I missed
19 much of the questioning. We have multiple hearings at the
20 same time.

21 I would like to also echo the chairman and ranking
22 member's comments about you, Admiral Gilday and General
23 Berger, and the service that we all very much appreciate.

24 Secretary Del Toro, I was really pleased to see that
25 the Navy included several new funding options for childcare

1 centers. I think each one of you talked about the quality
2 of life and the importance of ensuring that we can maintain
3 those people who join our military and childcare is one of
4 those areas where it is absolutely critical.

5 In New Hampshire we were able to have a joint effort
6 between the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and the New Hampshire
7 National Guard to put a joint childcare center on but one of
8 the big challenge just has been recruiting teachers.

9 So can you speak, Secretary Del Toro, to what more the
10 Navy is looking at in terms of recruitment for teachers
11 within our childcare facilities? Or Admiral Gilday, either
12 one.

13 Mr. Del Toro: Yes, ma'am. I will just be brief and
14 then pass it to the admiral.

15 So one of the initiatives that we are looking actually
16 is to be able to provide those childcare providers the
17 ability to save costs on the children if they have children
18 themselves.

19 So we allow up to 50 percent reduction, for example, in
20 childcare costs so that they can actually have their own
21 children at the childcare center as well, too, in addition
22 to trying to increase the pay for those childcare providers
23 as well.

24 Admiral Gilday: Exactly. So on the pay piece we are
25 paying above minimum -- above the -- I am sorry, above the

1 average national wage for childcare center workers, about \$5
2 above the median.

3 Secondly, we have reached out to a couple of schools in
4 Texas and Utah, particularly during peak months where they
5 are having students come in and help us in those childcare
6 centers as well and they are being adequately compensated
7 for that help.

8 Senator Shaheen: Well, I applaud any efforts that you
9 can undertake that will improve our ability to provide
10 childcare for the men and women in the military.

11 One of the things I learned as governor when we were
12 trying to address childcare in New Hampshire was that the
13 military was the role model for the private sector on this
14 issue and we need to see that continue.

15 Secretary Del Toro, I think you mentioned AUKUS in your
16 opening comments and I wonder if -- it is my understanding
17 one of the challenges that we have had are the -- is the
18 challenging framework that exists for sharing information
19 and technology about our capabilities.

20 Can you speak to whether we are able to do that through
21 AUKUS right now, what changes we need to make in order to
22 provide that sharing that is really going to make that
23 compact work as it should?

24 Mr. Del Toro: So, Senator, when it actually --
25 Senator, when it actually comes to sharing of the nuclear-

1 powered technology for the submarine itself there have -- it
2 has not been a challenge necessarily. It is actually in the
3 other areas in terms of AI and machine learning and other
4 technologies where we actually have to get to a better place
5 with regards to being able to share that technology with our
6 international partners.

7 And, CNO, would you comment a little bit more on that,
8 too?

9 Admiral Gilday: On the second pillar?

10 Mr. Del Toro: Yeah.

11 Admiral Gilday: So one of the things that AUKUS has
12 done is it has really opened up the blinders in terms of our
13 collaboration with both the U.K. and Australia and their
14 industry in areas like quantum computing, AI capabilities.

15 We are already doing a lot of that with both of those
16 countries in the submarine force but this will accelerate it
17 in terms of investment by private individuals as well, by
18 equity firms that are seeing the progress that we are making
19 in those specific areas.

20 Senator Shaheen: Well, I would encourage us to
21 continue that. Obviously, if we cannot make something like
22 AUKUS work with our closest partners we are going to have
23 challenges across the board.

24 General Berger, I think several times when you have
25 been before this committee I have asked you about the

1 ability of the Marine Corps to recruit women -- recruit and
2 retain women, and I understand that in fiscal year '22 the
3 Marine Corps was able to recruit a slightly higher
4 percentage of women than in the past.

5 But can you talk about what the biggest obstacles are
6 to that recruitment and also to retention of women once they
7 get into the Marine Corps?

8 General Berger: The first obstacle, I think, was not
9 having any role models and most of the fields in the Marine
10 Corps were they got promoted to colonel and general. In
11 other words, they could not go into combat arms until 2015
12 so they did not see anybody at the top that was representing
13 them except in administrative sort of staff fields.

14 But the Marine Corps is a warfighting organization. I
15 think now they are seeing role models in aviation and
16 infantry that were not there six, seven years ago.

17 That is a huge plus. Right now we have an infantry
18 officer school just like the Army does. We have three
19 female lieutenants in the course right now. Five years ago
20 there were none.

21 We have female enlisted Marines that are in the
22 infantry course in both coasts -- in the East Coast and West
23 Coast. We have them in infantry battalions now that are
24 motormen. These were not even thinkable things five, six,
25 seven years ago.

1 So, first of all, I think it has produced -- make sure
2 that we advance the ones who can serve as role models. I
3 think the initiatives that Congress has given us in the last
4 few years have helped a lot, being able to opt out of
5 promotion.

6 If it is not the right time in my family career can I
7 just step out of promotion and then come back in without a
8 penalty? Yes, you can.

9 Can I ask to step out of command, not be considered for
10 command? Sure. Can I take an intermission from my career?
11 I want to do something for a couple of years and come back
12 in without any penalties.

13 All these are provisions that Congress has given us,
14 which are now, I think, becoming more and more useful. You
15 made it -- we changed a policy last year. We are dual
16 military people, which are more prevalent now, I think, than
17 they were a decade ago.

18 For us to assign them to different duty stations it
19 takes your general officer to approve that now. So we are
20 making it better for females to stay and raise a family and
21 have it all instead of making a choice, and I think over the
22 next 10 or 15 years if recruiting continues like it is right
23 now, I mean, in a decade we have -- we have 85 percent more
24 female aviators now than we did 10 years ago -- 85 percent.

25 Last month, Colonel Nicole Mann, she came back from the

1 International Space Station. She is a jet pilot, test
2 pilot, astronaut, mission commander. These are -- these are
3 the kind of role models that we need.

4 Senator Shaheen: Thank you very much.

5 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

6 Senator Tuberville, please?

7 Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Gentlemen, thanks for being here today and your sacrifice
9 and your families' sacrifice. We know how tough that is.

10 You know, guys, I am proud of our Navy and I want to
11 talk a little bit about team building and recruiting.

12 Americans are proud of their Navy. Outside of ports like
13 North Fork in San Diego many Americans do not see the work
14 that your sailors do. They do not see it.

15 The Navy's work is often unseen, is far from our
16 shores. Even the Navy's history like the Midway and Manila
17 Bay it is hard to see. So to recruit new sailors you must
18 tell the Navy's story to both internal and external
19 audiences. It has got to be told.

20 Today we have more ships named for politicians and
21 activists than we do for great Navy battles and heroes of
22 our past. We have a USS Carl Vinson but no USS Enterprise.

23 We have the USS John P. Murtha but where is the
24 Yorktown? New sailors should be on USS ships like the Wasp,
25 the Midway, the Vengeance, or the Intrepid.

1 Mr. Secretary, you were the commander of the DDG-84 who
2 was named after who, sir?

3 Mr. Del Toro: John Duncan Bulkeley, Senator.

4 Senator Tuberville: Yes, sir, and he was a Medal of
5 Honor winner, and I know you were proud to serve on that
6 ship. When he was asked about charging two German ships
7 when he had only one working gun, Admiral Bulkeley said,
8 quote, "What else could I do? You engage, you fight, you
9 win." That is the reputation of our great Navy.

10 Mr. Secretary, in your capacity to name ships I hope in
11 the future that we get back to naming ships after heroes,
12 people that has actually done something. Now, we have had
13 politicians that has been in the military before and I
14 understand that. But our history is told through our
15 battleships and the things that we put names on.

16 Our sailors need to hear and see all these stories
17 instead of divide us. Sometimes they do divide us. This
18 week many of us watched the video that has gone viral online
19 of a young Navy lieutenant JG. I have a lot of problems
20 with this video. This nonbinary officer said the highlight
21 of her deployment on the USS Gerald Ford was reading a poem
22 to the entire ship.

23 Admiral Gilday, have you seen this video?

24 Admiral Gilday: I have.

25 Senator Tuberville: I hope we train our officers to

1 prioritize their sailors, not themselves. Did it surprise
2 you that a junior officer says the highlight of her
3 deployment, her first and the ship's first, was about
4 herself and her own achievement?

5 Admiral Gilday: I will tell you why I am particularly
6 proud of this sailor. So her grandfather served during
7 World War II and he was gay and he was ostracized in the
8 very institution that she not only joined and is proud to be
9 a part of but she volunteered to deploy on Ford and she will
10 likely deploy again next month when Ford goes back to sea.

11 Sir, we ask people from all over the country, from all
12 walks of life, from all different backgrounds to join us and
13 then it is the job of a commanding officer to build a
14 cohesive warfighting team that is going to follow the law
15 and the law requires that we be able to conduct prompt
16 sustained operations at sea.

17 And so we have to -- our -- that level of trust that a
18 commanding officer develops across that unit has to be
19 grounded on dignity and respect, and so if that officer can
20 lawfully join the United States Navy, is willing to serve
21 and willing to take the same oath that you and I took to put
22 their life on the line then I am proud to serve aside them.

23 Senator Tuberville: Admiral, I agree with that. I do
24 not care who you are as long as you join our military to
25 fight for the freedom of our country and protect our

1 country.

2 The problem that I am having is the obsession with
3 race, gender, sex. It is focused on self. It is not
4 focused on team, and if we do not start building a team we
5 have no chance to win individually in this country. We have
6 no chance.

7 Everybody else is building, and to do a poem with all
8 the 8,000 other people on this ship and to focus on herself
9 -- and do not get me wrong. Her uncle or whoever that
10 fought -- hey, my dad died in the military. Okay. I am all
11 for that.

12 But I am all for building a machine. We do not -- our
13 recruiting is suffering. We do not need to have another Bud
14 Lite moment. I mean, we do not need to have a Bud Lite
15 moment in the Navy.

16 I mean, we have to build a killing and fighting machine
17 and it just concerns me that we do all these things and we
18 focus on one thing, one person. We are all Americans. That
19 is what we are and I hope as admirals and generals and
20 people, secretaries, that we start pushing Americans first,
21 not a gender, not a race, not nationality.

22 We all got to come together. If we do not we have zero
23 chance because this is not the country we used to have.
24 This is not the military we used to have and we have got to
25 get out of that rut of saying we are individuals.

1 We are not individuals. We are the best country on the
2 face of the earth and the best military, the United States
3 of America.

4 Thank you. Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you, Mr.
5 Chairman.

6 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Tuberville.

7 Senator Blumenthal, please?

8 Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you
9 all for being here and for your service to our nation.

10 Admiral Gilday and Commandant Berger, thank you
11 particularly and your families for your extraordinary
12 service over many years.

13 I want to just take a moment to tell my colleagues
14 about a bill that I introduced along with Senator Sullivan
15 to commemorate the United States Marine Corps' 250 years in
16 a commemorative coin to mark this important milestone.

17 I am really grateful to my colleague, Senator Sullivan,
18 to join with me in this tangible reminder of the Marine
19 Corps' contributions to our nations and I hope all my
20 colleagues on the committee will join us in this
21 legislation.

22 It may seem symbolic but symbols often tell an
23 important story, particularly, Commandant, in a time when
24 the Force Design 2030 has created issues within the Corps.
25 This kind of point of solidarity, I think, can be important.

1 Admiral Gilday, I want to come back to the questions
2 raised by the chairman about accountability in the USS
3 George Washington. I was in the briefing that we received
4 and I have no question that you and the briefers and our top
5 command in the Navy are deeply concerned about those three
6 suicides.

7 But what I heard in that briefing was that phase one
8 did not address accountability. Phase two did not have it
9 as a specific topic but that accountability might emerge
10 somehow from phase two.

11 I would like your assurance that accountability, that
12 is, holding responsible anyone in command who knew or should
13 have known about the desperate straits of those three
14 sailors will be at least named and held accountable in some
15 way.

16 Admiral Gilday: Yes, sir. I know that you understand
17 -- everybody does -- how complicated death by suicide can be
18 and the number of factors that can be involved, and I am no
19 way trying to be evasive on this issue. I take personal
20 ownership for some of the failures that we saw in Norfolk
21 and other places that we are currently correcting.

22 That said, in any specific investigation and we have --
23 the Navy has relieved 15 commanding officers over the past
24 12 months for various reasons. We have to connect those
25 actions directly to the findings, to the facts, of those

1 investigations.

2 I commit to you, sir, that we will look very closely to
3 that and come back to you.

4 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you.

5 Admiral Gilday: Yes, sir.

6 Senator Blumenthal: And we are at the one-year
7 anniversary of the death of one of those sailors, Master of
8 Arms Seaman recruit Xavier Mitchell-Sandor, and I want to
9 suggest that one way to alleviate -- and I know you are
10 taking steps on the USS Stennis to alleviate some of those
11 issues that were involved in those suicides, maybe to
12 procure housing on the open market when ships are in
13 maintenance for many years using the BAH, a bigger topic for
14 further consideration.

15 Secretary Del Toro, I think you -- we all have seen the
16 recent leaks of classified documents that are so deeply
17 alarming, appalling, and that show Americans how many
18 members of our military have such wide access to top secret
19 documents.

20 I wonder if you are considering measures that might
21 restrict access, particularly on the part of junior members
22 of the military in the Navy, for example, to classified
23 documents.

24 I have been a longtime advocate of declassifying
25 documents that do not need to be kept secret. But at the

1 same time maybe we ought to be looking at who has access to
2 those documents that truly have to be kept secret to protect
3 vital information and sources and methods.

4 Mr. Del Toro: Well, thank you, Senator. We very much
5 are and the Department of the Navy and throughout the
6 Department of Defense. The Secretary of Defense just this
7 morning actually has requested a 45-day review of security
8 clearances and accesses across the department and so we will
9 be looking at this issue very, very carefully.

10 And as you know, on the one hand you have the desire to
11 be able to share more intelligence information with our
12 allies and partners and that presents risks, obviously, and
13 on the other hand there is a need to actually protect the
14 secrets that we do have and so it is a bit of a dual-edged
15 sword.

16 But we have to do better across the department to
17 ensure that we keep it to only those that really need the
18 intelligence in order to be able to fulfill their
19 responsibilities and their duties, both substantively and
20 administratively as well.

21 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you. Thank you all.
22 Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

23 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator
24 Blumenthal.

25 Senator Budd, please?

1 Senator Budd: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and again,
2 thank you all for being here. Thank you, each of you, for
3 your service.

4 General Berger, a common criticism of Force Design 2030
5 is that the Marine Corps has depleted its combat power, for
6 example, by divesting of its main battle tanks and a
7 significant portion of its aviation assets.

8 To the extent that you can talk about it in this
9 setting can you talk about the underlying analysis and your
10 logic to these divestment decisions?

11 General Berger: Yes, Senator. First, the underlying
12 analysis was derived from a series of wargames five, six
13 years ago, seven years ago, where each individual wargame
14 was testing the force against the pacing challenge -- pacing
15 threat.

16 In every case it was not a good outcome. So the
17 conclusion there was if you do not change the outcome is not
18 going to change. So that drove us towards devising, first
19 of all, if that is the -- if that is the case, keeping our
20 original equipment and our formations, everything, the same,
21 is not going to keep up with the pacing challenge then what
22 do we need to do differently and we started with how we are
23 going to operate. Not equipment, but how we are going to
24 fight.

25 So the first step was, as the chairman said, a more

1 distributed way of operating in an expeditionary naval
2 manner that fits right into the joint concept for the future
3 concepts drive everything in the Marine Corps. So, first,
4 get the concept right.

5 Second, if that is an underlying concept that the Navy
6 and Marine Corps joint force is going to operate upon then
7 test it in a series of wargames and then go out into the
8 field and experiment with it, and that is exactly what has
9 happened for the past four years.

10 Senator Budd: Thank you for that. So those that are
11 criticizing Force Design 2030 the simple answer, and I will
12 let you fill in the blank for that, is it divestment? Is it
13 a change? How would you approach the critics of Force
14 Design 2030?

15 General Berger: This July -- this summer when the
16 president sends me home that will be the last day that I get
17 a morning intel report. It will be the last access I have
18 to every bit of technological development that the CNO and I
19 and the other services chiefs have.

20 We will not have access to all of the information we
21 need to develop the force anymore. So my answer to the
22 critics is beginning on the next day I will be the biggest
23 supporter of whoever the next commandant is because I will
24 know he has information I do not and I will trust that the
25 Marines who are doing the experimentation out in the fleet,

1 as long as we have a mechanism for feeding that back in to
2 the headquarters of the Marine Corps and we make the changes
3 we will be fine.

4 So I trust that this current commandant, past ones,
5 future ones, have access to the best information available.

6 We have the best process for developing the Marine Corps
7 that fits into a naval construct, complements the joint
8 force. All that I am very confident in.

9 Senator Budd: Thank you, General.

10 Admiral Gilday, much has been made about the growth of
11 the Chinese navy and the need to grow the number of the U.S.
12 ships in the fleet to meet that growing threat. I would
13 like to hear from you not about the quantity of ships in
14 their fleet or in our fleet but about the relative
15 qualitative advantage of Navy power.

16 So what kind of technological advancements are we
17 seeing from the Chinese and how should we be viewing this
18 issue?

19 Admiral Gilday: So, sir, we are watching the Chinese
20 very closely, and to the commandant's point, what we are
21 going to fight with is being informed by how we are going to
22 fight and that is what we are out there doing with our
23 strike groups, with our amphibious ready groups, in our
24 fleet exercises, in our war games, to try and refine that
25 based on how we are watching China.

1 There is no question our biggest asymmetric advantage
2 is people. The investments we are making in live virtual
3 constructive training, as an example, allow us to train as a
4 fleet Marine force and as a Navy at a scope and scale that
5 we could never do by getting individual ships underway,
6 firstly.

7 Secondly is we are completely revolutionizing the way
8 we are training individual sailors through a framework
9 called ready relevant learning where it is beyond brick and
10 mortar classrooms or school houses. We are getting
11 information to young sailors at the right time and the right
12 quantity.

13 With respect to -- you mentioned capacity, and if I
14 could for a second, sir, for the last two decades the nation
15 has been focused on ground wars. That has been the priority
16 and understandably so.

17 The investments that we are making now and, largely,
18 due to the support of this committee we have 56 ships in
19 construction across seven shipyards with another 77 on
20 contract. That rudder turns the ship of the United States
21 Navy very slowly but we are really trying to get after that
22 capacity issue as well.

23 In the modernization investments that we are making we
24 have increased -- if you take a look at our operations and
25 modernization accounts we are up 5 percent from where we

1 were last year, a total of \$11 billion, and much of that is
2 going into readiness.

3 I mentioned in my opening statement we are funding
4 maintenance at 100 percent. We are investing in new
5 submarines, expanding the amount of missile tubes. We are
6 improving torpedoes that they fire. With surface ships we
7 are giving them longer range weapons, both Tomahawks and
8 defensive weapons.

9 We are investing in the electronic warfare
10 capabilities. We are investing in the weapons, doing
11 multiyear buys of weapons that our aviators fire from their
12 F-35s and their Super Hornets. So we are trying to wherever
13 we can buy down risk and close on vulnerabilities so that we
14 can pace China instead of trying to follow them.

15 Senator Budd: Very good. Thank you all.

16 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Budd.

17 For the information of my colleagues, the vote has
18 started and, of course, at the conclusion of this open
19 hearing we will go into a closed hearing in SVC 217.

20 With that, Senator Duckworth, you are recognized.

21 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want
22 to say thank you -- a deep and profound thank you to both
23 Admiral Gilday and General Berger, to you and your families
24 for your extraordinary lifetime of service to our country.

25 I do want to associate myself with Senator Sullivan's

1 concerns that the current Navy budget proposal significantly
2 undercuts Marine Corps amphibious capabilities. In fact, I
3 think it undermines Marine Corps doctrine.

4 At a time when we need to be looking at the Indo-
5 Pacific region and a shift towards a forward deployed
6 island-based force to cut back on LPDs in particular, I
7 think, is a misjudgment. That said, I do want to talk about
8 logistics in the Indo-Pacific.

9 General Berger, I have appreciated your leadership
10 among the service chiefs and recognizing the challenges
11 posed by sustaining forward deployed troops in a contested
12 logistics environment, particularly in the Indo-Pacific
13 region, which is characterized by island formations and huge
14 swaths of open sea, and I have been ringing alarm bells
15 about this problem, especially in a contested logistic
16 environment, for years, not just because of my own
17 experiences or because U.S. Transportation Command is in
18 Illinois but also because I truly believe that for the sake
19 of our service members and for the credibility of our
20 deterrent we have to get this right.

21 General Berger, what -- in what ways does this year's
22 Marine Corps budget request support contested logistics and
23 how does this benefit the Marine Corps and how does it
24 benefit the joint force?

25 General Berger: We have had some long discussions on

1 contested logistics. I am going to miss them.

2 First of all, the structure -- the lay down of where we
3 have prepositioned supplies and parts and munitions and
4 equipment across the Pacific, across the world, we have to
5 relook now, quickly.

6 It was built for a different timeframe under a
7 different set of circumstances. So where we have afloat and
8 ashore prepositioning has to be revisited, has to be
9 changed, and there is funding to do that. But that is going
10 to take a fundamental -- it is going to take a different
11 look and some tough decisions in the next few years.

12 A second is, I think, the platforms that we use to move
13 that equipment, those supplies around. Here, the good news
14 is everything from the 53K to the medium landing ship to
15 every other conveyance that is unmanned that the CNO is
16 working on and we are working on that is going to move that
17 around we are going to need it all. It is going to be
18 planes, trains, and automobiles.

19 We also have to educate, train our logisticians in a
20 different way, which you have talked to me about before. It
21 is not business as usual for them because it is not an
22 administrative move of materials. Even the way that we
23 contract has to change because this peacetime exercise
24 approach is not going to work in a conflict in a contested
25 environment.

1 Lastly, I would say the resilience part. If it comes
2 to a conflict we are both going to -- there is going to be
3 some degradation across the board. How fast can we come
4 back? And that gets into applying the same methodology for
5 kill webs into, as you pointed out before to me, logistics
6 webs -- how do we create logistics webs that look like kill
7 webs?

8 Senator Duckworth: And I think LPDs are going to be an
9 important part of that and this budget does not support the
10 number of LPDs that I think that we need.

11 A critical vulnerability for any military is the
12 logistics tail associated with delivering operational energy
13 to its field or forces. Both our readiness and our allies'
14 and partners' readiness will be bolstered by reducing our
15 reliance on fossil fuels and employing more diverse and
16 renewable operational energy sources, as well as seeking
17 more creative and cooperative ways of supplying operational
18 energy to U.S. troops and to our overseas partners.

19 Secretary Del Toro, General Berger, how much could we
20 gain from cooperating with our allies and partners in Europe
21 and in the Indo-Pacific to improve our logistics
22 availability and distribution? What efforts in your budget
23 request work towards operational energy security and
24 resilience?

25 Mr. Del Toro: Thank you, Senator. It is an incredibly

1 important topic.

2 We have significantly improved, I would say, our
3 alliances across the Indo-Pacific for this very nature. We
4 are kicking off with Balikpapan, for example, '23 with 17,500
5 Marines right now working side by side with our allies and
6 partners.

7 The ability to actually move our forces forward and
8 provide the logistical bases that they need -- as you know,
9 the Secretary of Defense just came from the Philippines and
10 negotiated four additional bases as logistics bases in the
11 Philippines as well in the north as close to Taiwan as one
12 can possibly get.

13 Providing operational energy investments to those bases
14 is always critical. We have -- and the Marine Corps is
15 another example in Albany, Georgia, for example, where we
16 have become zero dependent on outside sources for energy,
17 for example. The same thing applies to Miramar in
18 California, for example, where we actually have provided
19 energy out to the local communities.

20 So these are all investments that are necessary. They
21 are also necessary at sea as well, too. For many years
22 biofuels have been very, very expensive and it has been hard
23 to get the price point of biofuels down to the point where
24 it actually makes sense to be able to invest in that.

25 So we have in the President's budget commitment to

1 continue in the R&D effort that is necessary to try to
2 discover that biofuel that will provide the biggest return
3 on investment to our forces.

4 Senator Duckworth: General Berger?

5 General Berger: For us it is not as much of a money
6 issue as it is an operational tactical imperative. We
7 cannot fly in batteries, fuel the way we used to. It is not
8 going to be possible. It is not going to be practical.

9 We have got to find other ways to power our equipment,
10 vehicles, everything. And there is money in the budget to
11 do that but it is going to take time and your support.

12 Senator Duckworth: According to DOD's own reports 50
13 percent of all casualties during the war in Iraq occurred
14 during convoy operations and 80 percent of all convoys were
15 conducted to move fuel. We need to do better.

16 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Duckworth.

18 Let me recognize Senator Cramer and also give the gavel
19 to Senator Warren while I go vote and return quickly.

20 Senator Cramer, please?

21 Senator Cramer: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
22 Thank you, General and Admiral, for your decades of service
23 and congratulations on another good solid year ahead.

24 Mr. Secretary, I am going to get right to the point
25 with you. I worked with the Navy for a little better than a

1 year and a half to this point on behalf of a Navy SEAL and
2 an officer who wanted to get out of the -- his service a few
3 months early so that he could pursue his next level of
4 service -- his next area of service in political office.

5 It is pretty much over -- the case -- but I wanted to
6 highlight it in this forum because it is really a horrible
7 vignette of how the Navy, I think, far too often treats its
8 people. I brought it up with you once quite a while back,
9 with Admiral Gilday as well, and I will make it as brief as
10 I can.

11 Lieutenant Adam Schwarze asked in July of 2021 for
12 permission to run for office while serving his final few
13 months in the Navy. The paperwork got lost and it took me
14 getting involved for the paperwork to find its way back into
15 the process, and then the CNO endorsed his request and then
16 it was denied by you.

17 Meanwhile, Lieutenant Schwarze also tried to get out
18 using an old but still authorized early retirement
19 authority. Again, process stopped unexplainably. But I
20 weighed in and the process then continued with the commander
21 of naval personnel endorsing the package, only again to be
22 denied at your level.

23 Then, from my vantage point, Mr. Secretary, began what
24 I think was a witch hunt. He was called back from his
25 skilled bridge assignment in Minnesota to his last

1 assignment in Hawaii where he could then be punished.

2 The Naval Special Warfare Group lawyers proceeded to
3 rip apart his history, his dedication, and question his
4 integrity with statements that literally, quote, "call into
5 question his sincerity and trustworthiness." I am happy to
6 provide all of this for you in case your team has lost it.

7 In fact, you went after his -- this decorated hero with
8 a veracity that made my staff including a commander in the
9 military reach out to him to check his well being and
10 reached out to the Navy to make sure that they were looking
11 out for his well being.

12 You pulled his trident and then prevented him from
13 retiring on time. You did an investigation that included
14 false statements about me and my connection with Lieutenant
15 Schwarze, statements that seemed quite political for what is
16 supposed to be an apolitical organization.

17 The whole time that my office was trying to get
18 information from the Navy it faced roadblocks, barriers. It
19 was like pulling teeth. Then after all of that a board of
20 inquiry was held and on all counts the board voted three to
21 zero that the preponderance of the evidence did not support
22 any basis of misconduct. Three-zero, seven times.

23 In summary, you screwed the sailor's paperwork up
24 constantly, repeatedly. You made a political decision on
25 his future. You tarred and feathered him out of revenge.

1 A board of inquiry unanimously absolved him of all
2 charges. You held him past his retirement date until the
3 law actually required you to let him out and you left a
4 patriot feeling like the Navy does not care about him or
5 worse at the end of his service, and you kept his trident.

6 I just -- after hearing all this stuff about how
7 important the people are, Mr. Secretary, I am perplexed and
8 I hope it is not too late to -- for some corrective measure
9 to replace this person's integrity and dignity.

10 With that, I will just let you respond.

11 Mr. Del Toro: Thank you, Senator. I would be happy to
12 continue to work with you on this situation.

13 However, first, I would like to make a statement that I
14 personally did not make any statements against you or
15 Lieutenant Adam Schwarze myself. But I will add that we
16 have a responsibility in the Department of Defense that all
17 service members actually act in accordance with the Hatch
18 Act and Lieutenant Adam Schwarze knew exactly what the rules
19 and requirements of the Hatch Act were.

20 We cannot allow uniformed service personnel, even if
21 they are one day from retirement, to participate in
22 political activities, especially election-related
23 activities.

24 That is a standard that must be met. It has been
25 adhered to since the beginning of the founding of our nation

1 and we have to actually meet that standard.

2 Senator Cramer: So is there a standard where Navy
3 lawyers can -- are allowed to just absolutely trash a guy's
4 reputation, create misstatements -- factually untrue
5 statements about his career and his claims so that they can
6 somehow prove their point? Is that -- is that a standard?

7 Mr. Del Toro: Senator, I would be happy to look into
8 the case further to see if those statements are accurate. I
9 do not know the details of the --

10 Senator Cramer: I do. I do. I know them.

11 Mr. Del Toro: -- statements that were made by lawyers
12 and I would be happy to work with you on that.

13 Senator Cramer: I know them including the statements
14 about me that are in the -- your lawyer's records. So --

15 Mr. Del Toro: I would be happy to collaborate with you
16 and your office, Senator.

17 Senator Cramer: I look forward to that. I would
18 rather not have to do it so publicly but after a year and a
19 half of being stonewalled I am glad you are here today.
20 Thank you.

21 Senator Warren: [Presiding.] Thank you. So I
22 recognize myself now.

23 Last year the White House released a report telling
24 agencies to prioritize union shops with pro-worker employers
25 when awarding government contracts. This includes the

1 Department of Defense. Workers are central to the United
2 States' national security and the strength of our Defense
3 Industrial Base.

4 I am concerned that the Navy is not following through
5 on the President's commitment to unions and workers. For
6 example, I have heard reports that the Navy is consistently
7 passing over union shipyards for contracts and giving them
8 to nonunion shipyards instead and some of these nonunion
9 shipyards are already at capacity, working on multiple
10 contracts at the same time, while the docks at the union
11 shipyards are sitting empty.

12 So it sounds like even though there is plenty of work
13 to go around the Navy is actively choosing to ignore union
14 shipyards where workers generally have better wages and
15 better protections in favor of nonunion ship yards that are
16 already overburdened with contracts.

17 Secretary Del Toro, do you agree that the Navy contract
18 should prioritize union workers when their shipyard is ready
19 and able to do the job?

20 Mr. Del Toro: I do, Senator, in accordance with all
21 the other regulations that drive the issuance of contracts
22 under the FAR.

23 Senator Warren: Good. Thank you. I agree with you on
24 this.

25 This has serious consequences. Missing out on

1 contracts can mean closing the doors for these shipyards and
2 laying off hundreds of workers, especially for smaller
3 shipyards, and it means the next time that the Navy needs a
4 ship repaired it will have to go to a nonunion shipyard that
5 is likely already over extended, resulting in delays and
6 threatening our ability to protect our coastline and to
7 support our allies.

8 The implications of this are huge as ongoing conflicts
9 like the war in Ukraine and the threat of future conflicts
10 fuel demand for weapons and other equipments. Delays in
11 completing crucial projects could leave us vulnerable when
12 we most need security.

13 Secretary Del Toro, do you agree that the closure of
14 union shipyards is a threat to the Defense Industrial Base?

15 Mr. Del Toro: Senator, the closure of any shipyard in
16 the United States can present a threat to the United States
17 in terms of our ability to build our ships and maintain our
18 national security and I would be most interested in actually
19 getting the details of those reports that you mentioned so I
20 could validate whether they are true or there is other
21 issues at play that I am just not familiar with.

22 Senator Warren: That is good but we also -- the good
23 news is that the Navy still has time to change this
24 approach. You said earlier this year that now is the time
25 to invest in the defense workforce and I could not agree

1 more with you on that.

2 Part of the solution should be to take advantage of the
3 resources that we already have but we are not using or not
4 using enough like union shipyards and, more broadly, there
5 is a lot that the department can do, for example, making
6 sure that contractors are properly notifying employees of
7 their right to organize, improving contractors' compliance
8 with anti-union consultant disclosure forms, and ensuring
9 that federal funds are not spent by contractors on union
10 busting.

11 Secretary Del Toro, can you tell me what steps you plan
12 to take to ensure that the Navy is reinforcing the Defense
13 Industrial Base while preserving union jobs?

14 Mr. Del Toro: Senator, I am committed to preserving
15 union jobs, as I said earlier, and we actually have several
16 shipyards that are already under union labor agreements as
17 well, too, and my commitment to you is that I will work with
18 my acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research,
19 Development, and Acquisition that I hope we will actually
20 have a permanent Assistant Secretary already in A Force so I
21 can actually invest more time in looking into these issues
22 and many other issues as well.

23 Senator Warren: I appreciate it and I look forward to
24 working with you on this. President Biden has made an
25 historic commitment to empower workers by prioritizing union

1 labor in federal contracting and, as you know, DOD is not
2 exempt from that pledge and should not want to be exempt
3 from that pledge.

4 Protecting union jobs in the defense sector is a
5 question of national security and I look forward to working
6 with you to make sure that the Navy can fulfill its duty to
7 the American people. Thank you.

8 Mr. Del Toro: Thank you, Senator.

9 Senator Warren: Thank you, and I now recognize Senator
10 Scott.

11 Senator Scott: Thank you, Chairwoman Warren.

12 [Off mic.]

13 If we could talk about Taiwan a little bit. So it sure
14 appears that China is building a military to somehow
15 intimidate or defeat Taiwan and if the -- if that happens
16 the U.S. Navy and most likely the Marines are going to be
17 front and center in doing whatever we can to support Taiwan.

18 In the meantime, the most important thing we could do
19 is make sure does not happen. So can each of you talk about
20 what you are doing to get Taiwan prepared to make sure this
21 does not happen?

22 One thing you keep hearing up here is the fact that I
23 think it is something like \$19 billion worth of U.S.
24 military equipment has not been -- has been ordered and not
25 been delivered and so what are we doing to make sure Taiwan

1 is doing their part?

2 What are we doing to make sure our military industrial
3 base provides the resources and what can you do to make sure
4 that happens? Because it does not make any sense to me that
5 the equipment is not there and Taiwan is not actually doing
6 more than what they are doing right now. So if each of you
7 could answer that.

8 Mr. Del Toro: Senator, if I could start.

9 Our National Defense Strategy is hyper focused on China
10 as the pacing threat, obviously, with regards to their
11 interest in potentially using military force against Taiwan,
12 which we have to avoid at every possible moment.

13 Part of the challenge that we face in providing the
14 equipment, obviously, is the challenges that we have had in
15 the supply chain over the last three or four years and so
16 that is an issue that the Office of the Secretary of Defense
17 is trying to address with special authorities.

18 Senator Scott: Can I just stop you right there? Can I
19 just stop you right there for a second?

20 Mr. Del Toro: I am sorry?

21 Senator Scott: That sounds really good. I have not
22 heard one thing that is going to accelerate to \$19 billion
23 or whatever the number is. I have -- we have had these
24 hearings and it keeps coming up. I have not heard one thing
25 that actually has been done to accelerate it.

1 Mr. Del Toro: I will -- happy to provide you a list of
2 things that have been done in the industrial base to
3 actually accelerate the deliveries of those equipments and
4 authorities.

5 Senator Scott: So is there -- is it happening? Is
6 there anything that is happening?

7 Mr. Del Toro: There is discussions at the OSD level,
8 both at the DSD level and the Under Secretary of Defense for
9 Acquisition and Sustainment across the entire department,
10 working with suppliers of munitions providers and other
11 equipment across the board to see how fast they could
12 accelerate their production lines.

13 But it is going to take some time to do so because
14 capital investments need to be made both materially and also
15 in the workforce in order to increase the production rates
16 that are necessary to get them to Taiwan in addition to our
17 other international allies and partners as well, too, who
18 have been asking for additional munitions as well, too.

19 So industry has to do its part. I think that they see
20 the commitment that the President and the Secretary of
21 Defense is making in terms of ensuring a reliable solid
22 pipeline in the future and now is the time for industry to
23 make those capital investments.

24 Senator Scott: I would love to -- I would love to see
25 what -- I would love to see concrete actions that are

1 actually going to change the timeline because I was just in
2 Cyprus the week before last. They got the same issue. They
3 are not getting all -- everything they want. They do not
4 have any expectation of the dollar numbers but even a
5 country like that cannot get what they want.

6 So what -- so what is -- what is the Navy doing, what
7 are the Marines doing actually to get Taiwan positioning on
8 top of the equipment and ready to make -- hopefully, deter
9 China from doing something?

10 Admiral Gilday: Sir, I think it is best if we talk
11 about that in a classified session in terms of the things
12 that we are looking at in terms of our responsibility to
13 field a ready force every single day.

14 So our priorities have been readiness of the current
15 force, modernization of the force, 70 percent of which we
16 are going to have 10 years from now, and that is important
17 from two aspects. One is you got to be ready to fight
18 tonight to put doubt in Xi's mind that today is not the day.

19 In a series of speeches last month in one of them he
20 challenged his generals to be ready for war now and so we
21 take those kinds of assertions very seriously. So readiness
22 has to be our top priority. Getting ships out of
23 maintenance on time, which we are improving at but yet --
24 not yet satisfied with has to improve.

25 As the commandant said earlier in this hearing, pushing

1 everything we can forward that is where we need to be. The
2 Navy and the Marine Corps needs to be forward, and it is not
3 just likely that it will be the Navy and Marine Corps. It
4 is definitely that will be the Navy and the Marine Corps as
5 the away team and the first on the scene.

6 Again, we are making balanced investments in the force
7 that we have today, the best we can put in the field in
8 terms of weapons.

9 We have just done in this budget proposal four big
10 multiyear procurements based in the authorities that the
11 Congress has provided us for weapons with range and speed.
12 Two of those are between the Navy and the Marine Corps. The
13 other two are with the United States Air Force.

14 And so, sir, already approaching your limit. But
15 Commandant --

16 Senator Scott: Do you want to add anything?

17 General Berger: We have been training with the
18 Taiwanese marines for more than a decade. I think lately,
19 the last two years, I would say, focus on command and
20 control, air defense, defense from the beach in mining and
21 building out their national guard and reserve -- in other
22 words, making it a whole total force, which is what they are
23 going to need.

24 Senator Scott: [Presiding.] Thank you.

25 Let me recognize Senator Schmitt.

1 Senator Schmitt: Thank you, Senator Scott, and unlike
2 Senator Scott's home state of Florida Missouri is landlocked
3 -- my home state. But when I started on this committee I
4 wanted to be on the Sea Power Subcommittee.

5 So we have an Army base. We have an Air Force base.
6 Missouri, obviously, does not have a naval base.
7 Mississippi is not deep enough.

8 But because I believe that -- and the reason for that
9 is because I think that our biggest challenge from a
10 national security perspective that we are facing --
11 Missourians, Americans -- is China and so that is a focus of
12 mine and I know that it is a focus of yours with the -- with
13 the Navy and the Marines and to that end there are several
14 very concerning trends that I want to discuss.

15 The first is the fact that China's naval fleet is
16 rapidly outpacing our own and that gap is only widening.
17 The Pentagon reports suggest China may have 420 ships by
18 2025 and 460 ships by 2030. What is worse, Beijing is
19 devoting significant amounts of its maritime training on
20 island capture scenarios.

21 In 2021, the People's Liberation Army, quote,
22 "conducted more than 20 naval exercises with an island
23 capture element, greatly exceeding the 13 observed in 2020,"
24 according to a Pentagon 2022 report on Chinese military
25 developments.

1 This is another indicator, I think, of China's
2 ambitions and Taiwan is in the crosshairs. There is no
3 doubt about it.

4 So to sort of follow up on Senator Scott's questions,
5 to me the best way to support Taiwan's ability to defend
6 itself from Chinese aggression is to bolster their defensive
7 capabilities today.

8 Harpoon anti-ship missiles, which the U.S. government
9 is already committed to providing, is critical, providing a
10 hundred new delivery systems, which I think has already been
11 committed, as well as 400 Harpoon Block II surface-launched
12 missiles.

13 But the fact is that these are not going to be fully
14 fielded until 2027. So to expedite this critical capability
15 as a stopgap until the new systems can be fielded the U.S.
16 should transfer from several hundred older missiles in the
17 military's inventory that are under consideration for deep
18 militarization or destruction.

19 Secretary Del Toro, will you commit to working
20 collaboratively and creatively with the Taiwanese and the
21 administration to leverage existing munitions in support
22 equipment to expedite defense aid to Taiwan?

23 Mr. Del Toro: Absolutely, I will, and we have been
24 actually collaborating within the letter of the law and the
25 authorities that are allowed by law for us to collaborate

1 with the Taiwanese, provide them the munitions that are
2 necessary, the equipment that is necessary for them to be
3 able to defend themselves.

4 Senator Schmitt: Well, I think -- that is good to
5 hear. I think we have heard a lot about the supply chain
6 issues. But Taiwan -- the shock clock has probably started.
7 It is between now and four years.

8 I mean, that is -- this is coming and I just do not
9 know how much time they really have to have the support that
10 they need to deter a Chinese offensive, which they are --
11 seem to be dead set at.

12 So in that vein and also in this broader sort of
13 industrial base you mentioned the discussions that have been
14 had. What would you -- let us say we were at war today.
15 Let us say today the United States is at war with some power
16 -- China, whoever. What would we do differently than we do
17 right now to ramp up that industrial base? What is holding
18 us back?

19 There is a demand signal, which I think is being sent.

20 There is a demand -- what else would we do? I mean, three
21 or four things that we would do differently than we are
22 doing right now to be prepared, and also this also relates
23 to Taiwan.

24 Mr. Del Toro: There are war authorities that would be
25 exercised that are not currently exercised. But let us --

1 the goal here is to prevent war with China --

2 Senator Schmitt: Correct.

3 Mr. Del Toro: -- to deter China from going to war and
4 I think the power of our coalitions with our allies and
5 partners internationally has much to do with that fact.

6 Senator Schmitt: I agree, and I have limited time.
7 And I think the Philippines see what is happening. I think
8 this is --

9 Mr. Del Toro: And in South Korea and many other --

10 Senator Schmitt: Yes.

11 Mr. Del Toro: -- countries in the Indo-Pacific that we
12 rely on as partners actually.

13 Senator Schmitt: But as it relates specifically to the
14 industrial base other than the war powers what is it that we
15 can do differently? Are there state barriers in the states
16 where we have naval shipyards? What is it --

17 Mr. Del Toro: So this President's budget actually has
18 increased the amount of funding for increased munitions by
19 50 percent, for example. That is the most significant
20 increase that we have had in the several past years and its
21 investments in SM-6, LRASM, and numerous other missions as
22 well, too.

23 We are also investing in CPS, for example, to try to
24 get deployable on the Zumwalt-class destroyer by '25 and on
25 the Virginia-class submarine by '30. Those -- we are

1 pushing on all fronts, on all cylinders, to actually try to
2 move as fast as we can.

3 But just like in the shipbuilding industry with regards
4 to the shipbuilding plan as well, too, we can only move as
5 fast as industry can actually produce as well, too, because
6 the opportunity costs associated with making major
7 multibillion dollar investments when industry cannot keep up
8 with those productions means that we cannot spend money in
9 other places as well too where it is badly needed as well.

10 So it is all about finding the right balance and the
11 right compromise to move forward.

12 Senator Schmitt: Right, which is why I am sort of
13 highlighting Taiwan because we are -- I think they have been
14 on the backburner and I do not think they can be anymore.

15 Admiral Gilday: Sir, can I make one --

16 Senator Schmitt: Yeah.

17 Admiral Gilday: So if I would use Austal Shipbuilding
18 in Alabama as an example, that company shifted from
19 completely working with aluminum to working with steel.

20 The reason they could do that -- the sole reason they
21 could do that is because of the Defense Production Act. So
22 to answer your question, there needs to be substantial
23 investment by the U.S. government in those industries in
24 order for them to surge.

25 We stopped doing that in shipbuilding in the Reagan

1 administration. You saw 30 shipyards go down to seven. We
2 saw that in the 1990s during the Clinton administration with
3 the aircraft industry and how it supports the military.
4 That is the first thing.

5 The second thing is you need a bigger Navy and Marine
6 Corps to protect those approaches from the sea to keep the
7 United States economy humming and to deny that to any
8 adversary. Those are the two things.

9 Senator Schmitt: I am going to ask my hypersonic
10 question in closed session. So thank you.

11 Senator Sullivan: [Presiding.] I am taking over as
12 the chairman until the chairman gets back so I will call on
13 myself.

14 General Berger, you have gotten a lot of compliments on
15 Force Design. I have complimented you on it previously.
16 But it is not without risks -- significant risks. You
17 acknowledged this in your testimony last year.

18 Like the Navy, the Marine Corps has minimum force
19 levels that are required by Congress. I have been reading a
20 lot about the history of the 82nd Congress. The Marine
21 Corps loves to cite the 82nd Congress in the aftermath of
22 the Korean War.

23 You know this, General. The only reason the Marine
24 Corps exists -- the only reason the commandant of the Marine
25 Corps is a co-equal to the CNO in a hearing like this is

1 because of Congress.

2 Very importantly, the 1952 law that the Secretary of
3 Defense, Secretary of Navy, the President of the United
4 States all opposed mandated that the Marine Corps has three
5 full combat infantry divisions, three full air wings, and
6 tasks organized for combined arms operations.

7 I am going to talk about some of the Force Design
8 divestments. They have been dramatic. But I have concerns
9 they have been so dramatic that the current U.S. Marine
10 Corps does not meet the congressionally required minimums.
11 And, again, that is not your choice. We gave that to you.
12 So I do not want to debate that right now.

13 What I would like for the record to this committee I
14 would like you to provide a detailed T&O of the Marine Corps
15 as it currently stands. You can use MCR, P1-10, three
16 regiments, everything in here that the Marine Corps has kept
17 these minimums that are required by the Congress.

18 Can I get a detailed detail of the current T&O of the
19 Marine Corps today to make sure Force Design is not taking
20 us under the statutory requirements of the 1952 law?

21 General Berger: We can provide you -- absolutely, it
22 is unclassified -- a task organization of the Marine Corps
23 today. The law -- the statute, as you accurately depicted,
24 three divisions, three wings.

25 Senator Sullivan: Correct.

1 General Berger: There was nothing more specific in
2 that and we have changed it significantly over 70 years.

3 Senator Sullivan: I just want -- just look at the T&O.
4 I have been looking at this. Look at the same one for the
5 air wing and just say that you are meeting it. Again, that
6 is not your call. That is our call and you need to meet
7 that, and I would like to see details on that.

8 I have been focused on Force Design more than any other
9 U.S. senator. Again, I have been very complimentary of your
10 bold approach. It takes a lot of guts, as Senator King
11 said.

12 I have been, as you know, General, frustrated by some
13 of the answers that the committee has been provided with. I
14 think this idea that everything has to be classified -- I
15 think even your comment to Senator Budd that, well, you get
16 classified stuff and the other generals do not. I get
17 classified stuff.

18 So I think it is really in the Marine Corps' interests
19 to be able to explain this. There is a lot of criticism of
20 it. One of the criticisms is that the Marine Corps is
21 creating more of a niche force focused on one combatant
22 command with one littoral mission and putting at risk the
23 critical statutorily mandated global crisis combat
24 capability, kick in the door capability of the Marine Corps
25 anywhere in the world for any contingency, not just littoral

1 contingencies, and without 31 amphibs I believe this is a
2 real concern.

3 Lieutenant General Heckl, recently at the Sea Power
4 Subcommittee when I was asking him, said having a hearing on
5 this -- I have talked to the chairman and others -- just
6 getting it out there. Marine Corps defend this, critics
7 come and I think it is good for the Marine Corps. Would you
8 be supportive of that, General?

9 General Berger: Senator, earlier this week we finished
10 another briefing, as you all have requested. That was, by
11 our count, 429 briefings --

12 Senator Sullivan: Those are classified -- those are
13 classified briefings, General. You need a hearing on this.
14 The Congress of the United States -- the biggest undertaking
15 of reorganization of the Marine Corps in decades merits a
16 hearing. I do not know why you would resist that and I do
17 not know why we keep getting --

18 General Berger: I have never said no to a hearing from
19 any committee in four years.

20 Senator Sullivan: Okay. So would you be up for a
21 hearing?

22 General Berger: Any hearing that is requested by a
23 committee with jurisdiction over the military absolutely I
24 would say yes to.

25 Senator Sullivan: Okay.

1 General Berger: I have not said no yet.

2 Senator Sullivan: I have run out -- I am running out
3 of time here and I have committed to the chairman.

4 Let me just ask one -- one of the things that I put in
5 the Section 1023 of last year's NDAA -- and, again, I do not
6 think we have gotten it in the way in which I was expecting
7 it and it has been classified, which does not help -- is the
8 extent to which the Marine Corps has divested so much
9 capability and I have the long list here and it is very
10 long, and the aviation side is enormously shocking to me
11 that the Marine Corps would have to rely on the Army to
12 provide such capabilities.

13 I do not think anyone has, at least as far as I can
14 tell, given me that -- given this committee that information
15 we requested -- bridging, armor, assault breaching, route
16 clearing, MPs. There is a lot that we do not have anymore
17 that if we go to war tomorrow and there is a river the
18 Marines have to cross they cannot cross the river.

19 So can you -- can you commit to this committee again to
20 take a look at Section 1023 in the letter I sent you on
21 April 5th to answer those questions? You have answered.
22 Maybe I will just ask around.

23 Do you have answers to that question on what capability
24 have the Marine Corps given up that the Army now has to
25 take? And then that is my final question.

1 General Berger: The act required us -- asked us to
2 give briefings, which we provided this month in accordance
3 with the statute.

4 Senator Sullivan: Classified.

5 General Berger: We checked with the committee to make
6 sure that it answered --

7 Senator Sullivan: I do not think classified briefings
8 do that justice, but go on.

9 General Berger: That was what was required in the NDAA
10 --

11 Senator Sullivan: It was not classified. I wrote it.
12 I know what I am talking about.

13 General Berger: It did not specify classified or
14 unclassified. I think across the joint force to get the
15 whole picture of what the capability of any element of the
16 joint force is you need to have unclassified and classified
17 put together so you get a better picture of both capability
18 and capacity.

19 Senator Sullivan: The Army question?

20 General Berger: Pardon me?

21 Senator Sullivan: The Army question?

22 General Berger: What is the question again, Senator?

23 Senator Sullivan: This is in the law -- the extent to
24 which the Marine Corps is relying on the Army to provide
25 capabilities it has divested.

1 General Berger: What requires the combatant commander
2 to make decisions on how to employ the force that is the
3 combatant commander's decision, not mine? We provide, man,
4 train, and equip forces as does the other services. How
5 they are employed that is up to combatant commanders.

6 Chairman Reed: [Presiding.] Thank you, Senator
7 Sullivan. I have two additional questions, gentlemen,
8 before we break.

9 First, unfortunately, there has been an impasse in
10 confirming general offices at a regular schedule we
11 previously used, unanimous consent for all general officers
12 except those with key positions requiring hearings.

13 Are you seeing an impact, Admiral Gilday, in the
14 service not only in terms of readiness but also in terms of
15 quality of life of families, planning for families, planning
16 for schooling, and also decisions at that level about
17 whether they retain themselves in the service or depart?

18 Admiral Gilday: Sir, we are not at that point yet. We
19 are not at that point yet but we will be soon. And so to
20 give you just a few examples, the director of Naval
21 Reactors, responsible for more than 60 reactors and in the
22 middle of AUKUS, is a concern. Four fleet commanders,
23 including the fleet commander of Ford in the Western Pacific
24 and the fleet commander in the Middle East, is a concern.

25 Three force commanders -- surface, air, and subsurface

1 -- three-star officers, the head of Naval Installations
2 Command, the superintendent of the naval academies were
3 beginning to -- as we are on the verge here of bringing
4 another class and to keep that production line moving
5 uninhibited is another example.

6 We have five promotion lists with over 50 people and so
7 it is close to 80 right now and growing, sir, but I would
8 double it in terms of the amount of families that are
9 affected this summer.

10 Chairman Reed: General Berger, do you have comments?

11 General Berger: I think my review is exactly the same.

12 Within 90 days they are going to have significant impacts.

13 At the one- and two-star general list we can move those.

14 At the three- and four-star level they are one by one
15 assignments.

16 As you point out, without confirmation there is no
17 moves. There are vacancies or delayed retirements or family
18 plans that -- they do not know when that will happen. It is
19 -- I think by the late summer, early fall, you will have
20 fairly -- you will have significant impacts to both
21 readiness and quality of life both.

22 Chairman Reed: Let me follow up one question. This
23 force structure is an interesting and should be pursued but
24 you train regularly, I presume, the Marine Corps with Army
25 armored units and the Army has far more tanks and mechanized

1 vehicles than Marine Corps could ever want, not only need,
2 and the whole thrust, I think, of our strategy over the last
3 several decades has been joint fighting, not individual
4 services with their expertise.

5 So you would -- you have available armored vehicles if
6 the combat commander believes that is for the mission. Is
7 that correct?

8 General Berger: Absolutely do. Everything that we do
9 is as a joint force. The Navy, the Marine Corps will not do
10 anything on a large scale by itself. It is entirely as a
11 joint force.

12 And there is some duplication, as you know, Senator,
13 but mostly we want complementary capabilities. We have
14 capabilities the Army does not. They have capabilities we
15 do not. I think that is what you want.

16 Chairman Reed: Yeah, I tend to agree and you could
17 want everything in the world like your own fleet of C-141s
18 so you could be flown everywhere with Marine pilots. But
19 that would not make a lot of sense, would it?

20 So I think, again, we have to look carefully at this
21 because we do have a responsibility to view the force
22 structure changes and make sure they are correct. But I
23 think so far what we have done is try to incorporate the
24 threat that is emerging, not fight the last war.

25 Mr. Del Toro: Mr. Chairman, you could not have said it

1 better. I am sorry to interrupt. It is about today's
2 threat and I fear that some of the critics of both, perhaps,
3 Force Design or our Navy operations fail to understand that
4 the threat very much has changed in the Indo-Pacific, and
5 when you take into account satellites and cyber security and
6 everything else -- cyber warfare that is at play here --
7 they fail to understand that we have to evolve and we have
8 to be able to innovate in order to be able to effectively
9 fight not yesterday's war in 1953 or 1952 but tomorrow's
10 war.

11 Chairman Reed: Well, thank you all very much. We are
12 going to recess until 1230 hours to go into the closed
13 session and in the meantime I hope the second vote is
14 called.

15 So we will reassemble in the SVC-217 at 12:30. Thank
16 you very much.

17 [Whereupon, at 12:15 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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