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STATEMENT  
OF  
GENERAL DAVID H. BERGER  
COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS  
AS DELIVERED TO CONGRESSIONAL DEFENSE COMMITTEES  
ON  
THE POSTURE OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

23 **Introduction**

24 Chair, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to  
25 present this annual report and share my perspective on the opportunities and challenges confronting your  
26 Marine Corps, the naval services, and the larger joint force. As recent events in Ukraine so clearly  
27 illustrate, our strategic adversaries and competitors are ready and willing to employ violence – at scale –  
28 to support their revisionist aims. They are willing to sow chaos, destroy cities, inflict mass casualties, and  
29 suffer casualties themselves to rewrite the international order – an order that has broadly and deeply  
30 benefitted humanity. To ensure the joint force remains able to deter, and if necessary, defeat these  
31 adversaries, we need to move at even greater speed to modernize the force.

32  
33 As Commandant, I offer the Service’s sincere thanks for the committee’s support to our modernization  
34 efforts – anchored on Force Design 2030 and Talent Management 2030. Today, I respectfully ask you to  
35 recommit to our modernization program. Embracing change before a catastrophic event occurs takes both  
36 courage and foresight; thank you for demonstrating both. As I have stated in the past, the Marine Corps  
37 does not seek any additional resources for modernization. Rather, we seek your oversight and assistance  
38 in ensuring that the resources the Service generates through divestments, reorganization, and redesign are  
39 reinvested in our Corps’ modernization priorities.

40  
41 As I have previously testified, the suggestion that we have to choose between preparing to fight tonight,  
42 which we are ready to do, or preparing for some distant point in the future presents a false dichotomy.  
43 We must balance the very real and delicate resource tension between the force we employ today and the  
44 development of the force needed for the future. Our Nation can no longer afford to hold on to capabilities  
45 that do not create a relative advantage over our potential adversaries at the expense of capabilities that  
46 will keep us ahead of them – no matter how culturally significant or nostalgic to an individual service  
47 those capabilities may be.

48  
49 **We Will Remain “Most Ready When the Nation is Least Ready”**

50 When defense leaders submitted their posture statements last spring, few of us would have predicted that  
51 a major conventional war in Europe – the largest since 1945 – was only a year away. Russia’s brutal  
52 invasion of Ukraine is a stark reminder that despite our best efforts, we can never know with certainty  
53 when, where, or how an adversary might precipitate conflict. Reflecting on this challenge in a related  
54 context, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said: “When it comes to predicting the nature and  
55 location of our next military engagements, since Vietnam, our record has been perfect. We have never

56 once gotten it right, from the Mayaguez to Grenada, Panama, Somalia, the Balkans, Haiti, Kuwait, Iraq,  
57 and more—we had no idea a year before any of these missions that we would be so engaged.”

58  
59 *Why does this matter?* From the perspective of a service chief, it matters because we don’t have the  
60 luxury of building a joint force for one threat, one region, or one form of warfare. We must be prepared  
61 for the full range of operations in places we might not expect, and on timelines we did not anticipate.  
62 While this is true to some degree for all the services, it is especially so for the United States Marine  
63 Corps. Our history is footnoted by examples of our readiness to respond to crisis at a moment’s notice in  
64 “any clime and place.” This is essential to our identity as Marines, and part of our enduring value to the  
65 Nation. In these times of increasing complexity and uncertainty, the Nation needs one force, maintained  
66 at the highest levels of readiness that can respond to the crises that few saw coming. We are that force.  
67 Maintaining the entire joint force at heightened readiness levels is both unnecessary and unaffordable.  
68 Ensuring that the Marine Corps *does* is both strategically vital and fiscally prudent. As Marines, we have  
69 been, and will continue to be, “America’s 911 Force” – the Nation’s force-in-readiness.

70  
71 Our ongoing efforts to modernize through Force Design 2030 (FD 2030) and Talent Management 2030  
72 (TM 2030) will ensure the Marine Corps’ ability to meet our statutory role and be ready to respond to  
73 crises – across the Range of Military Operations – from active campaigning to conflict. While China, as  
74 the pacing threat, is critical to informing our force development efforts, the capabilities we seek are  
75 theater agnostic. The fact is, our current modernization efforts will enable us to operate, fight, and win in  
76 a more diverse set of scenarios and geographic regions than we can today. We are, and will remain,  
77 “most ready when the Nation is least ready” – a force in readiness prepared to respond to any crisis,  
78 anywhere, at any time.

79  
80 **Posture**

81 Today, approximately 30,000 Marines are forward-deployed or forward-stationed, with hundreds more on  
82 watch at our embassies across the globe. However, in contrast to earlier periods, fewer of these forward  
83 deployed Marines are afloat in service to the Fleet. I remain committed to a robust forward posture to  
84 support campaigning and to expanding this forward presence through the employment of additional  
85 Marines aboard L-Class ships, Light Amphibious Warships, and other expeditionary vessels operated by  
86 the Fleet or our allies and partners.

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90 **L-Class Ships & Light Amphibious Warships (LAW)**

91 L-Class Ships. For decades, the Navy and Marine Corps have demonstrated the power and versatility of  
92 Marine expeditionary forces embarked on amphibious ships. Operating as a combined arms team,  
93 Marines have come “from the sea” to support all manner of operations, to include: projecting combat  
94 power ashore, providing humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR), reinforcing U.S. embassies,  
95 training allies and partners, and executing non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO). No naval vessel  
96 in our inventory is capable of supporting a more diverse set of missions across the range of military  
97 operations than amphibious ships.

98  
99 Amphibious ships provide platforms from which to base and employ a host of multi-domain capabilities –  
100 air, ground, surface, undersea, and cyber. Amphibious ships serve as mobile command posts, strike  
101 platforms, expeditionary maintenance facilities, search-and-rescue platforms, floating hospitals, sources  
102 of potable water and electricity for disaster response, transport and docking stations for smaller vessels,  
103 and locations where Marines can train with international partners without the requirement for host nation  
104 access. In the near future, amphibious ships with well decks will increasingly be used as mother ships for  
105 uncrewed vessels, carrying a wide variety of unmanned surface vessels (USVs) and unmanned  
106 underwater vehicles (UUVs) for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), anti-submarine and  
107 anti-surface warfare, mining, command and control, and military deception. Amphibious ships are also  
108 visible signs of U.S. reach and resolve, and because of their unique characteristics, can deploy to a region  
109 with a less escalatory posture than many traditional warships. Those unique characteristics include an  
110 ability to self-sustain embarked forces for weeks at sea without replenishment. Such resilience and  
111 persistence are a unique and vital capability for our combatant commanders.

112  
113 Viewed through the lens of both the 2018 and 2022 National Defense Strategies, big deck amphibious  
114 ships (LHA/LHD), which carry F-35Bs, MV-22s, CH-53s, unmanned aerial systems (UAS), and surface  
115 landing craft, are arguably the most versatile warships in our inventory. These ships, when paired with  
116 their embarked Marines, have the highest utility across the entire spectrum of conflict from building  
117 partner capacity to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, to embassy reinforcement, to recovery  
118 operations, to strikes and raids against a peer or near peer adversary. This is the very epitome of  
119 campaigning forward from mobile sovereign platforms.

120  
121 During his March 2022 testimony before the House Armed Services Committee (HASC), the Commander  
122 of United States European Command (USEUCOM), General Tod Wolters, noted that his requirement for  
123 a 365-day Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) presence could not be met due to the limitations of the

124 current amphibious fleet inventory, and further characterized the MEU as “precious for effective  
125 deterrence.” A week later, Secretary Austin noted in his HASC testimony that, “Amphibs are important  
126 to us today. They will be important to us going forward.” I wholeheartedly agree with the conclusions of  
127 both leaders, as requested in the FY 2023 Budget. Our MEUs need them; our Fleets need them; and our  
128 combatant commanders need them. The National Defense Strategy cannot succeed without them.

129  
130 Light Amphibious Warship (LAW). Distinct, yet complementary to traditional L-Class amphibious ships,  
131 the LAW is envisioned to be a small, amphibious warship purpose-built to provide tactical maneuver for  
132 Marine Littoral Regiments (MLRs), forward-deployed naval forces, and other expeditionary advanced  
133 base-enabling forces operating within contested environments. The LAW will be a maneuver asset, and  
134 as a shore-to-shore connector, is unique and critical to expeditionary littoral mobility. It will facilitate  
135 campaigning and will be capable of supporting diverse missions such as security cooperation, HA/DR,  
136 logistics support, and the launch and recovery of uncrewed systems for maritime domain awareness.  
137 While not optimized for any one threat or region, we envision the LAW as being of particular utility in  
138 the sort of maritime gray zone contests we see in the Indo-Pacific. This type of vessel would be well-  
139 suited as a platform for Marines countering threats posed by groups like the People’s Armed Forces  
140 Maritime Militia (PAFMM), and because of its size and characteristics, could be employed with lower  
141 risk of escalation. The LAW will be an important asset to advancing our strategic interests by allowing us  
142 to more effectively counter our adversaries’ strategies, support and reinforce alliances and partnerships,  
143 and do so at a relatively low cost.

144  
145 On 9 September 2021, the Secretary of the Navy commissioned the Amphibious Fleet Requirement Study  
146 (AFRS). The study directed a determination of the “required size and composition of the future  
147 amphibious warship fleet . . . needed to support combat operations, global presence, and safe and  
148 effective training.” The study found we should have a mix of traditional L-Class Amphibious Warfare  
149 Ships and Light Amphibious Warships. The study will be one of many factors considered by the  
150 Secretary of the Navy, the Secretary of Defense and the Administration as shipbuilding plans and future  
151 budget requests are formulated. In my military judgment we will need to employ a mixed fleet of no less  
152 than 31 traditional L-Class Amphibious Warfare Ships and 18-36 Light Amphibious Warships to enable  
153 us to carry out the NDS.

#### 154 155 **Naval Expeditionary Crisis Response Forces and Campaigning**

156 While the traditional role of crisis response forces in disaster relief operations, such as those executed by  
157 the Expeditionary Strike Group centered on the *USS Bonhomme Richard* during *Operation Unified*

158 *Assistance* or via the *USS Essex* during *Operation Tomodachi*, is well-documented and well-understood,  
159 these operations are not always perceived as ones that create relative advantage in strategic competition  
160 and campaigning. They do. Our response to humanitarian crises and other natural disasters using  
161 expeditionary forces – quickly and decisively – demonstrates to our allies and partners that they are never  
162 alone when partnered with the U.S. Further, our ability to execute HA/DR operations from amphibious  
163 shipping – without a large logistical footprint ashore in support of U.S. forces – maximizes our flexibility  
164 and capability to respond while preserving resources best used for relief. In the strategic sense, the  
165 significance of this amphibious-based capability and its impact should not be underestimated. While our  
166 ability to “be there first” on the scene of a natural or man-made disaster is, of course, critical to the  
167 preservation of life, it is also a strategic imperative, affecting our bilateral relationships and matters like  
168 access and overflight, as well as our international standing. This is true in every region, but today is most  
169 pronounced in the Indo-Pacific, where China aims to expand its regional influence through its own  
170 amphibious crisis response capabilities.

171  
172 At the same time, it is important to recognize the criticality of campaigning with our allies and partners –  
173 in their regions – on a daily basis. Naval expeditionary forces operating forward and persistently provide  
174 combatant commanders with a sort of “escalation rheostat,” prepared to respond to crises – or prevent  
175 them – by employing capabilities that are credible across the range of military operations. Both our  
176 presence and the credibility of our forces reassure allies and partners.

177  
178 **Marine Rotational Force - Darwin (MRF-D)**  
179 In 2011, we established the Marine Rotational Force - Darwin (MRF-D) in the Northern Territory in  
180 partnership with the Australian government. Our rotational presence has grown from a company-sized  
181 element with limited capabilities to a MEU-sized Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF). Through our  
182 recurring presence, we have achieved a high level of mutual confidence and interoperability with the  
183 Australian Defence Force, to the point where Marines routinely operate from Australian amphibious  
184 ships. The training areas in the Northern Territory and other regions of Australia are some of the best in  
185 the world, and certainly the region, affording Marines an opportunity for high-end training alongside one  
186 of our closest allies. Additionally, our rotational presence in Australia has enabled Marine forces to  
187 engage and train with a range of international allies and partners in ways we did not predict when MRF-D  
188 was first established.

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192 **VMFA 211 Deployment Aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth**

193 From April to December 2021, ten F-35Bs from Marine Corps Fighter Attack Squadron 211 (VMFA 211)  
194 deployed aboard the United Kingdom’s aircraft carrier *HMS Queen Elizabeth*. This historic deployment –  
195 the first in which a Marine squadron completed a deployment aboard an allied vessel – represents the  
196 culmination of ten years of focused bilateral cooperation and demonstrates how far we have progressed in  
197 building U.S.-UK interoperability. Together with the UK’s embarked F-35B squadron, VMFA 211  
198 completed nearly 1300 sorties, flew in excess of 2200 hours, and executed 44 combat missions in support  
199 of *Operation Inherent Resolve*. The deployment also marked the first time an F-35B cross-decked from a  
200 foreign vessel to a U.S. vessel (*USS America*) to refuel and arm before a strike. During its approximately  
201 seven month deployment, which spanned three U.S. geographic combatant commands’ areas of  
202 responsibility, VMFA 211 conducted exercises with 10 partner nations and flew from the flight decks of  
203 three allied ships: Japan’s *JS Izumo*, Italy’s *ITS Cavour*, and the *HMS Queen Elizabeth*. Finally, VMFA  
204 211 was our first F-35B squadron to deploy as a 10-jet squadron in accordance with our FD 2030 goals  
205 and as outlined in my 2019 planning guidance.

206

207 **Force Design 2030 and Stand-In Forces**

208 As we further refined Force Design 2030 through wargaming, experimentation, and analysis, it became  
209 apparent that we required new thinking to address anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) strategies, that our  
210 Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEF) needed additional operational flexibility, and that Marines operating  
211 with our MEUs and MLRs could be a substantial part of the solution. This new approach is reflected in A  
212 *Concept for Stand-In Forces*, which describes how forward-postured forces, operating in contested areas,  
213 and capable of transitioning rapidly from campaigning, to crisis, to conflict, and back again, can create  
214 strategic advantage for the joint force.

215

216 Stand-in Forces (SIF) are small, lethal, low signature, mobile forces that are relatively simple to maintain  
217 and sustain, and designed to operate across the competition continuum within a contested area as the  
218 leading edge of a maritime defense-in-depth. The enduring function of SIF is to help the fleet and joint  
219 force win the reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance battle at every point on the competition  
220 continuum. That means SIF monitor a potential adversary’s activity and track its forces and sensors at a  
221 level that facilitates targeting by the fleet or joint force. Below the threshold of conflict, SIF’s tracking of  
222 adversary actions can help expose its malign behavior, which can contribute to deterrence. If armed  
223 conflict does erupt, SIF will have already gained and maintained contact with opposing forces in a posture  
224 that provides relative positional advantage, enabling the fleet and joint force to attack effectively first,  
225 seizing the initiative.

226 Winning the counter-reconnaissance fight means SIF make themselves difficult to find by maintaining a  
227 low signature, moving frequently and unpredictably, and using deception to impose costs on potential  
228 adversaries, forcing them to expend limited ISR resources. In the context of a naval campaign, it also  
229 means that SIF will help screen for the fleet and joint force, protecting it and increasing the fleet  
230 commander's freedom of action.

231  
232 Beyond reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance, SIF possess lethal capabilities for warfare at, on,  
233 below, or from the sea. For example, SIF can contest a chokepoint, sanitize a strait, or deny a specific  
234 area, presenting a surface behind which the fleet can maneuver. Area denial could also serve to canalize  
235 or "herd" an adversary into a maritime zone where the joint force enjoys relative advantage. Integrated  
236 with other elements of organic and joint capability, the SIF becomes both an enabler and a lethal executor  
237 of the joint force mission. In competition / campaigning, SIF provide capabilities that support new  
238 deterrence approaches like deterrence by detection, integrating the results of its reconnaissance with other  
239 elements of national power. In conflict, SIF serve as battle managers and provide long-range precision  
240 fires at the forward edge of a maritime defense-in-depth, enabling naval and joint forces to persist within  
241 contested areas rather than attempting to force access into them by fighting through an adversary's  
242 A2/AD defenses. Our ongoing experiments with SIF have focused on building a globally-relevant  
243 capability of value to all geographic combatant commanders, rather than more narrowly on a single  
244 potential threat or theater. While some view the SIF concept as Indo-Pacific focused, the fact is that some  
245 of our most aggressive experimentation is occurring in other theaters. For example, in his March 2022  
246 HASC testimony, the USEUCOM Commander noted of his II MEF SIF capabilities: "a brown water  
247 force that can shoot, move, and communicate, and that is very, very expeditionary, is priceless for 21<sup>st</sup>  
248 century security."

### 250 **Force Design 2030 and the Russo-Ukraine Conflict**

251 It is too early to draw definitive conclusions about the changing character of war based on the current  
252 conflict in Ukraine. Marines aim to be careful and humble students of the ongoing struggle, and resist  
253 temptations to declare that it validates or invalidates the foundational assumptions of FD 2030. With that  
254 said, we can draw some preliminary conclusions. First, winning the reconnaissance and counter-  
255 reconnaissance battle matters. If you are located on a modern battlefield saturated with sensors, you will  
256 be targeted. Signature management, maneuver, deception, and tempo are playing an increasingly  
257 important role on the modern battlefield. Second, loitering munitions, missiles and rockets are  
258 increasingly capable of rendering major weapons platforms vulnerable, whether MANPADS against  
259 helicopters, modern anti-armor systems against armor, or ground-based anti-ship missiles against surface



260 vessels. Finally, highly-trained and distributable small units able to create combined-arms effects  
261 continue to prove their worth on the modern battlefield. Assertions as to the waning utility of dismounted  
262 infantry are proving baseless.

263

#### 264 **Force Design 2030 and Close Combat Lethality**

265 Generations of Marines have been educated and trained to locate, close with, and destroy the enemy  
266 through fire and maneuver. While the tactical tasks associated with that mission set have not changed,  
267 *how* we satisfy those tasks on a modern battlefield is changing. In addition, the weighting of the discrete  
268 tasks within that simple statement is changing, and we must change with it. “Locating,” for example, has  
269 become far more important on the modern battlefield. Marines within our three experimental infantry  
270 battalions, as well as those participating in force-on-force field exercises, are learning and fine-tuning  
271 their skills, integrating existing and emerging capabilities in a combined arms system that accounts for the  
272 ongoing changes we see on modern battlefields – changes witnessed since at least the 2006 Second  
273 Lebanon War. We will build upon the major investments made by the 37<sup>th</sup> Commandant in close combat  
274 lethality (e.g., investments in the Multi-purpose Anti-armor Anti-personnel Weapons Systems  
275 [MAAWS]) by adding loitering munitions, organic UAS, and additional Javelins to our infantry units.  
276 Finally, it is important to note that throughout the Force Design process, the focus has been, and remains,  
277 maneuver warfare in every dimension and combined arms in all domains, including space and cyber.

278

279 In the midst of this organizational change, it is also important to highlight those things that are not  
280 changing. When we consider ways to maximize our close combat lethality, two things that will never  
281 change are: (1) our commitment to growing and sustaining smart and tough small unit leaders – those  
282 Marines actually tasked with locating, closing with, and destroying the enemy; and (2) our commitment to  
283 what the 29<sup>th</sup> Commandant called *operational excellence* – the ability of a Marine to apply their training,  
284 leadership, and discipline with lethal proficiency. No new piece of equipment or warfighting concept can  
285 ever be as important. We have always maintained that the individual Marine is the most formidable  
286 weapon on the battlefield. We still do.

287

#### 288 **Force Design 2030 Prioritized Investments**

289 MQ-9 & related sensors. We remain on-schedule to both modernize and increase the number of Marine  
290 Corps uncrewed aerial vehicle squadrons (VMU). In 2022, we will expand fielding of the MQ-9,  
291 immediately improving the Marine Corps’ capability to support both naval expeditionary forces and the  
292 joint force. Uncrewed aerial systems are ubiquitous on the modern battlefield, as recent global conflicts  
293 have powerfully demonstrated – whether in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Gaza, Yemen, Nagorno-Karabakh,

294 or Ukraine. Over the next two years, the Air Force will transfer ten MQ-9AER Block V aircraft to the  
295 Marine Corps, saving the Service approximately \$170 million in procurement costs, which can be  
296 invested into sophisticated sensors like *Skytower* or sonobuoy dispensing pods. These advanced sensors,  
297 employed from our MQ-9s, will radically improve our ability to conduct reconnaissance and counter-  
298 reconnaissance, and further reinforce our competitive advantages in undersea warfare.

299  
300 F-35B/C. The F-35 is the most advanced fighter, strike, and sensor platform in the world. As the  
301 Commander of United States Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) recently noted during  
302 testimony, “The importance of the F-35 cannot be overstated.” We remain convinced that low observable  
303 and very low observable, short take-off and vertical landing (STOVL) aircraft like the F-35B provide  
304 combatant commanders a competitive warfighting advantage. Mindful of both cost per flight hour  
305 (CPFH) and cost per tail per year (CPTPY), I remain committed to working with the Joint Program Office  
306 to reduce costs for both acquisition and sustainment. The Marine Corps remains focused on accelerated  
307 transition to an all F-35 tactical aviation (TACAIR) fleet in order to stay in front of our pacing challenge.  
308 We have procured 176 of 353 F-35Bs and 48 of 67 F-35Cs to-date.

309  
310 Organic Precision Fires – Infantry/Mounted (OPF-I/M). OPF-I/M will provide multiple echelons of the  
311 Fleet Marine Force (FMF) with an organic, loitering, beyond line-of-sight, precision strike capability,  
312 profoundly enhancing the close-combat lethality of maneuver forces. We are currently investing \$2  
313 billion in OPF across the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP), and expect the first systems to be  
314 fielded with our enhanced infantry battalions and new mobile reconnaissance units in Fiscal Year (FY)  
315 2025. OPF-I will be employed at the low tactical level to allow Marines to rapidly engage the enemy  
316 beyond the range of direct fire weapons, while minimizing collateral damage and exposure to enemy  
317 direct and indirect fires. OPF-M will integrate a vehicle mounted, multi canister launch platform on our  
318 Joint Light Tactical Vehicles (JLTV), Light Armored Vehicles (LAV), and Ultra-Light Tactical Vehicles  
319 (ULTV). On its own, OPF-M can strike targets at ranges beyond 40km. However, its lethality is  
320 amplified when employed with Group-2 UAS as part of our emerging “hunter-killer team” employment  
321 concept. Operating as a hunter-killer combination, our mounted units can deliver precision effects, as  
322 well as surveillance before, during, and after striking targets, at ranges previously reserved for the air  
323 wing. These combat-tested and combat-proven capabilities will redefine how small units close with and  
324 destroy an adversary. Once fully fielded, each infantry and mobile reconnaissance battalion will possess  
325 no fewer than four “hunter” UAS (potentially the Stalker VXE Block 30) and seven dedicated “killer”  
326 mounted launchers.

327

328 Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV). In 1989, the 29<sup>th</sup> Commandant wrote in his posture statement that  
329 his number one priority was the procurement of an advanced amphibious vehicle to “replace our current  
330 amphibious assault vehicle (AAV), now approaching the end of its service life.” Thirty-three years later,  
331 we divested of the AAV and are now focused on accelerating the procurement of the ACV. It remains a  
332 “must-have” capability for our forces operating in the global littorals – especially in archipelagic environs  
333 across the Pacific. We remain committed to an approved acquisition objective (AAO) of 632 vehicles  
334 and have procured 267 to-date. We anticipate procuring another 74 in FY23.

335  
336 Medium Range Missile (MMSL) Batteries. Due to the continued support of Congress, we remain on-  
337 schedule to reach initial operating capability (IOC) for one MMSL battery in the Pacific by 2023 (to be  
338 employed by 3d MLR). We remain focused on fielding 14 total MMSL batteries (142 total launchers) by  
339 FY30. These MMSL batteries – combining the Navy Marine Corps Expeditionary Ship Interdiction  
340 System (NMESIS) and ROGUE Fires – will be capable of firing the Naval Strike Missile (NSM) and  
341 Tactical Tomahawk, thereby holding adversary targets at-risk both afloat and ashore, further complicating  
342 their decision-making. This capability is just as relevant in the Western Pacific as it would be in eastern  
343 Ukraine, where shore-based fires have already been used to destroy enemy surface combatants.

344  
345 Long Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM). In addition to the investments made in Ground-Based Anti-  
346 Ship Missiles (GBASM), we have also begun investing in AGM-158C (LRASM) to further expand the  
347 range and lethality of our aviation-delivered fires. Marine aircraft equipped with LRASM, operating from  
348 both ship and shore, will thicken the existing network of fires, further distribute lethality across a theater,  
349 and enhance the credibility of our existing deterrent in any region.

350  
351 CH-53K. The CH-53K provides the FMF and combatant commanders with an unmatched vertical heavy-  
352 lift capability to project, maneuver, and sustain combat forces. It remains the only fully marinized heavy-  
353 lift helicopter in development or production. The CH-53K can lift more, farther, and faster than any other  
354 rotary wing platform in the world. We declared CH-53K IOC on 22 April after fielding a four-plane  
355 detachment worth of aircraft, support equipment, and trained aircrew and maintainers. While we remain  
356 concerned by the continued growth of procurement costs, we have actions in place to try to mitigate  
357 growth. We are further concerned by the projection of the sustainment costs and the total cost of  
358 ownership, which may exceed \$390 million per aircraft. We are actively working with industry to reduce  
359 those costs and will continue that fight throughout the life of the weapon system. Still, a marinized,  
360 heavy-lift capability is an absolute “must have” for the joint force as the costs of maintaining the  
361 increasingly outmoded CH-53E inventory is prohibitive. To date, we have procured 40 aircraft.

362 Ground Based Air Defense (GBAD). GBAD includes multiple FD 2030 priority programs such as the  
363 Marine Air Defense Integrated System (MADIS) and Medium Range Intercept Capability (MRIC).  
364 MADIS will enable our low altitude air defense (LAAD) battalions to provide short-range air defense  
365 (SHORAD) for our maneuver forces and fixed facilities, to include against hostile aerial threats from  
366 UAS. MRIC – currently in development – is an air defense system for fixed sites, designed to counter  
367 large UAS (Groups 3 and 4), cruise missiles, and fixed/rotary wing aircraft. Based on on-going  
368 operations in Ukraine, and lessons learned from recent conflicts in Syria and Nagorno-Karabakh, we  
369 believe these GBAD programs to be essential for our Marine expeditionary forces.

370

### 371 **FD 2030 Emerging Capabilities**

372 Long-Range Unmanned Surface Vessel (LRUSV) and Unmanned Underwater Vehicles (UUV). Just as  
373 our MQ-9AER and successor platforms will provide persistent surveillance and reconnaissance of  
374 competitors and strategically critical geography from the air, the Long-Range Unmanned Surface Vessel  
375 (LRUSV) will do the same from a sea-based platform. It will also provide unique capabilities for  
376 undersea scouting and C2 enabling. The rapid evolution of long-range precision munitions allows for  
377 form factors that can be employed at sea or ashore, and will progressively increase deterrence options as  
378 they become available. Our plan is to home-station these capabilities in Guam, Japan, and Hawaii. In  
379 addition, UUVs deployed from our existing inventory of L-Class ships or from future Light Amphibious  
380 Warships can further reinforce our competitive advantages in undersea warfare, expand our battlespace  
381 awareness and that of our partners and allies, and when armed with torpedoes, further reinforce sea-denial  
382 operations in contested spaces.

383

384 Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Enabled Counter-Intrusion and Counter-UAS. For the past 18 months, we  
385 have conducted tests with AI-enabled counter-intrusion and counter-UAS systems aboard several of our  
386 bases and stations. The performance of these systems has exceeded all expectations. As a result, the  
387 Commander of Marine Corps Forces, Pacific submitted an urgent-needs statement requesting the  
388 capability be fielded at all bases and stations in the Pacific. Initially, this capability will be employed at  
389 fixed sites. However, in the near-to-mid-term we anticipate employing a mobile version of this small  
390 footprint, AI-enabled sensing platform. This will allow our stand-in forces – with allies, and partners – to  
391 better sense and make sense of the dynamic maritime and urban terrain where we operate.

392

393 Swarming UAS. Over the next 12 months, we will conduct a series of experiments at I MEF with AI-  
394 enabled swarming UAS and loitering munitions. While planning for this effort is in the early stages, we  
395 are confident this capability will create game-changing improvements to close-combat lethality for our

396 ground forces and will further realize the vision of the 31<sup>st</sup> Commandant's Hunter Warrior experiments  
397 from 1997-1998. Swarming UAS will extend the area of influence of every maneuver element, creating  
398 competitive warfighting advantages over our adversaries.

399  
400 Unmanned Logistics System-Aerial (ULS-A) and Future Vertical Lift (FVL) Family of Systems (FOS).  
401 The past five years of wargames have demonstrated that our logistics and sustainment capabilities will be  
402 targeted by near-peer competitors. As the ongoing conflict in Ukraine has poignantly illustrated, even  
403 traditional ground logistics resupply, executed over interior lines and relatively short distances, can be  
404 disrupted, with operational level effects. As we develop our new naval expeditionary units and expand  
405 our uncrewed aircraft capability, we will increasingly invest in uncrewed logistics aircraft such as the  
406 ULS-A Medium and ULS-A Large. This year we will invest \$32 million in ULS-A Medium (Group 3  
407 UAS), which is capable of carrying 300-600 pounds of cargo a distance of 100NM, while developing  
408 plans to procure ULS-A Large. To date, the Air Force has the most mature understanding of this  
409 capability, and has experimented with an electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft that may  
410 satisfy our needs in the future. We are wrapping all these efforts together within our aviation enterprise's  
411 FVL (VTOL FOS) program, and have invested \$584 million over the FYDP.

412  
413 **Force Design 2030 Installations and Logistics**

414 Our ability to sustain our tactical forces across time and space is a critical component of integrated  
415 deterrence. The pacing threat continues to erode our traditional warfighting advantages, particularly the  
416 ability to close and sustain our forces at times and places of our choosing. Unfortunately, most of our  
417 current logistics processes and procedures play right into their strengths. Because the operational  
418 environment is increasingly contested, our logistics efforts from the tactical edge all the way back to the  
419 homeland will have to fundamentally change. As we are witnessing in Ukraine, even a numerically  
420 superior force will struggle to sustain itself and protect supply routes against persistent attack and  
421 disruption. We cannot allow this occur.

422  
423 As part of the broader logistics enterprise, we must improve the ability of our installations to provide the  
424 critical requirements that enable FMF readiness. We must have resilient infrastructure and services that  
425 provide the platforms necessary to enable delivery of capabilities from across the service enterprise.  
426 Because the environment is dynamic, we must have the means to protect our installations and organic  
427 industrial base from an increasingly complex range of operational, environmental, and climate-related  
428 threats. With the proliferation of the Mature Precision Strike Regime and expanding information-related

429 threats, we need to better leverage technology, specifically AI, to ensure we maintain the ability to defend  
430 ourselves from emerging and evolving threats such as those posed by small, unmanned aerial systems.

431  
432 In the Pacific, we are experimenting with command and control and organizational proofs of concept so  
433 our installations and logistics units can make more effective, direct contributions to FMF warfighting  
434 capability. We will place our installations under an operational command structure to ensure they are  
435 more resilient to operational, environmental, and climate-related threats, and better postured to meet the  
436 needs of the FMF.

437  
438 We are pursuing a range of material capabilities to diversify and modernize our logistics portfolio, aligned  
439 to a contested littoral environment. At the tactical level, we are currently testing and assessing several  
440 platforms that will enable us to transition from a battlefield maneuver and sustainment capability based on  
441 crewed aircraft and wheeled vehicles to a diverse collection of crewed and uncrewed air and ground  
442 platforms that are smaller, cheaper, and collectively result in a more resilient distribution network of  
443 platforms and connectors. In addition to our efforts to generate, store, and distribute renewable energy  
444 forward, these platforms will exploit rapidly moving technologies that the Department and our industry  
445 partners are pursuing to decrease our dependence on vulnerable fuel supply chains, while enabling us to  
446 deliver critical commodities via the naval and joint logistics enterprise across the vast distances of the  
447 Pacific, despite enemy sensing and targeting capabilities. The most visible platforms will be a family of  
448 uncrewed logistics air systems, the smallest of which are already in prototyping and live experimentation.  
449 Our experimentation is yielding exciting results that underscore the need to expand into large and medium  
450 uncrewed logistics systems. Additionally, we will begin exploring options to replace our ground logistics  
451 fleet with a smaller, lighter, fuel-efficient replacement for vehicles that have run long past sustainability.  
452 We are now exploring emerging technologies that we can leverage to deliver capable, yet affordable  
453 vehicles that reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. As a modest first step, we will lease 3,875 non-tactical  
454 electric vehicles this year, and likely expand our inventory of electric vehicles in the future.

455  
456 As I have said numerous times over the last year, logistics is the pacing function, and the on-going  
457 conflict in Ukraine appears to validate that conclusion. As such, logistics provides the resources and sets  
458 the limits for what is operationally possible, even as logisticians attempt to extend those limits as far as  
459 possible.

460  
461  
462

463 **Force Design and the Reserve Component**

464 We recently established the Marine Innovation Unit (MIU) within our Reserve Component. The MIU's  
465 work will complement that of our Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory (MCWL) by accelerating  
466 advanced technology development. Reserve Marines in the grades of sergeant through colonel will be  
467 assigned to this unit on the basis of their expertise in areas like artificial intelligence, data science, human  
468 systems, advanced manufacturing, quantum computing, autonomy/robotics, space, supply chain  
469 management, cyber, synthetic biology, energy and materials sciences, and other technology fields. This  
470 initiative will allow us to tap into the diverse talent pool in Marine Corps Forces Reserve, and through its  
471 collaboration with MCWL, integrate research in multiple advanced disciplines into Force Design and  
472 related efforts.

473

474 **Readiness**

475 Though some aspects of our military require substantial change, we should be clear to acknowledge those  
476 foundational tenets which remain as relevant and operationally suitable today as they have been over the  
477 previous 70 years. In 1952, Members of Congress noted the Marine Corps "can prevent the growth of  
478 potentially large conflagrations by prompt and vigorous action during their incipient stages. The nation's  
479 shock troops must be the most ready when the nation is least ready...to provide a balanced force-in-  
480 readiness for a naval campaign and, at the same time, a ground and air striking force ready to suppress or  
481 contain international disturbances short of large-scale war..." This role as the Nation's force-in-readiness,  
482 prepared to create strategic advantage via its ability to be quickest to respond to either crisis or conflict,  
483 and prepared to both prevent and contain conflict below the threshold of armed conflict, remains as valid  
484 today as it was when first articulated. I remain as committed to ensuring your Marine Corps can fulfill  
485 this vital role as those who preceded me.

486

487 But as I have previously noted, readiness and availability are not the same things. Ready forces are those  
488 that create competitive warfighting advantages. As we are witnessing in Ukraine, available Russian  
489 forces are being met by Ukrainian forces possessing competitive warfighting advantages. Prior to the  
490 commencement of hostilities, if one had asked for a relative combat power assessment based on each  
491 side's bench of ready (available) forces, that assessment would have been disproportionately skewed  
492 towards the Russians. As we have seen in Ukraine and in other recent conflicts, true readiness is a  
493 hypothesis to be tested and proven via employment in combat, and is not something that can be  
494 determined via availability alone.

495

496

497 **Readiness and COVID 19 Update**

498 As of 22 April 2022, 96% of the Active Component is fully vaccinated and 97% partially vaccinated.  
499 Within our Reserve Component, 91% are fully vaccinated and 92% partially vaccinated. 3,702  
500 Marines asked for a religious accommodation and seven have been approved. 1,067 Marines have  
501 received approval for a medical or administrative exemption. As of 22 April, 1,978 Marines have been  
502 separated for a failure to comply with a lawful order.

503  
504 **Climate Readiness and Resilience**

505 The Secretary of the Navy has directed the Navy and Marine Corps to develop plans for increasing our  
506 capability and capacity to mitigate both the near-term and long-term operational impacts of climate  
507 change. He has also set a goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions at our bases and stations by 2040.  
508 For the Marine Corps, I view our climate-related mitigation efforts as crucial to increasing the Service's  
509 operational capability, capacity, and resilience in the face of serious environmental challenges, including  
510 extreme storms along the East Coast, rising oceans levels along the Carolina coast, and water scarcity at  
511 bases and stations in the Southwest. It also important to note that many of the communities surrounding  
512 our installations share our climate-related vulnerabilities. We believe that partnering with Federal  
513 agencies, states, localities, tribes, and territories on climate change related planning is critical to  
514 maximizing the impact of our collective mitigation efforts.

515  
516 **Talent Management 2030**

517 Late last year we published *Talent Management 2030* (TM 2030), and in doing so, took a major step  
518 toward realizing the goals of Force Design 2030 and our larger service modernization effort. TM 2030  
519 aims to create a personnel system that better harnesses, develops, and aligns the talents of individual  
520 Marines with the needs of the service to maximize the performance of both, improving both individual  
521 and unit readiness, capability, and lethality. The report details the deficiencies in our current manpower  
522 model and directs a series of reforms, initiatives, and changes that will fundamentally improve our  
523 service's organization, processes, and approach to personnel and talent management. TM2030 was  
524 informed by years of studies, reports, and other research, as well as the work of our sister services in the  
525 joint force. The influence of Congress is also evident throughout the report, and many of the most  
526 important initiatives described in its pages are the direct consequence of expanded authorities that  
527 Congress gave the services in the *John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year*  
528 *2019*.

529



530 The totality of changes described in TM2030 are significant. They are also essential, especially within  
531 the broader context of our ongoing Force Design 2030 effort. In short, the capabilities we are building as  
532 part of Force Design 2030, along with the complementary concepts of Stand-In Forces, Expeditionary  
533 Advanced Base Operations (EABO), and Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO), cannot reach their full  
534 potential without a profound change to our personnel system. In that way, TM2030 should be viewed as  
535 a critical requirement to the success of our overall service modernization.

536

537 We plan to fully implement the changes described in TM2030 and transition from our current manpower  
538 system to a talent management system no later than 2025. Change of this magnitude requires the  
539 dedicated commitment and long-term support of both military and civilian leaders. While I believe we  
540 have most of the necessary authorities to fully implement TM2030, I will be sure to inform Congress if  
541 any challenges or obstacles arise for which we may need your assistance.

542

543 Among the more important changes, the implementation of TM2030 will adjust our decades-old  
544 recruiting-centric enlisted personnel model, placing more emphasis on retention. This change will raise  
545 the aggregate age of our Marines and create a more mature force, consistent with future warfighting  
546 requirements. We expect this will raise personnel costs, yet well within accepted norms. For example,  
547 today the average cost per Marine is \$73,800 per year (pay, housing, training, etc.). By comparison, the  
548 average cost of a Soldier is \$79,800, the average cost of an Airman is \$82,500, and the average cost of a  
549 Sailor is \$89,900. While we anticipate a cost increase in the short term, we also expect a cost savings  
550 over the long term as we reduce the number of recruiters, instructors, and other resources required to  
551 maintain a recruiting-centric enlisted personnel model. In the near term, the most visible sign of our shift  
552 towards a more mature retention-based force will be a drop in the annual recruiting mission by several  
553 thousand, and a congruent increase in retention.

554

### 555 **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

556 I remain committed to maintaining a total workforce that benefits from the whole of our Nation's vast  
557 human capital by recruiting, developing, and retaining Marines and civilians from all personal, cultural,  
558 and professional backgrounds. In practice, that means eliminating all structural, administrative, cultural,  
559 or other obstacles that might limit a Marine's ability to have a successful career. Capitalizing on the  
560 talents, knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences, and perspectives of every Marine will make our Corps  
561 stronger, more lethal, and more effective on the battlefield, today and tomorrow.

562

563 As a Corps, we have made great strides over the last five years in eliminating obstacles to the upward  
564 mobility of talented Marines from traditionally underrepresented demographics. One way to measure our  
565 progress is to examine the rate at which Marines from these backgrounds are selected to command  
566 battalions and squadrons at the O5/lieutenant colonel level, a key career milestone that indicates a Marine  
567 has potential for a significant leadership position within the Service. Five years ago, 19% of African  
568 American Marines screened for O5 command were selected. Since then, the average is 34% with a high  
569 of 44%. Five years ago, 3% of our battalions and squadrons were commanded by female Marines. Today  
570 that number has increased to 9%. In FY21, for the first time, a higher percentage of female Marines who  
571 screened for O5 command were selected than their male counterparts. We do not select our commanders  
572 based on gender, race, or any other marker, so the fact that Marines from these diverse backgrounds are  
573 being selected for O5 command indicates to me that we are making progress in reducing obstacles to the  
574 upward mobility of talent.

575

576 While there is evidence of some progress, there is also evidence we still have obstacles to eliminate. For  
577 example, we continue to experience a concerning lack of diversity within our TACAIR community.  
578 Despite a significant increase in the number of African American officers over the last four decades, we  
579 have the same number of African American TACAIR pilots today as we did in 1981. Last year we asked  
580 former NASA Administrator and Marine, Major General Charles Bolden (USMC, Ret.), to conduct a  
581 third-party review to examine the structural and systemic issues that might be leading to this outcome.  
582 His observations and conclusions were valuable, and I am confident his recommendations will help us to  
583 create a more equitable playing field.

584

### 585 **Sexual Assault Prevention and Military Justice Reform**

586 The eradication of sexual assault from our ranks has been a goal of every Marine Commandant for  
587 decades. Despite making progress in fostering a culture where reporting of sexual assault crimes has  
588 increased and where victims are more willing to communicate with their leadership, we have admittedly  
589 been unable to accomplish what we all seek – the elimination of sexual assault altogether. In 2021,  
590 there were 1,202 reported sexual assaults in the Marine Corps. We must consider any policies that  
591 could increase prevention and offender accountability, and reduce or eliminate retaliation or retribution  
592 against victims. I remain committed to timely implementation of the Independent Review Committee’s  
593 (IRC) recommendations, as well as implementation of changes in the FY22 National Defense  
594 Authorization Act (NDAA) that seek to improve the investigation, disposition, and litigation of victim-  
595 related crimes.

596

597 **Parental Leave and Childcare**

598 As part of TM2030, we will begin making several key updates to our parental leave program beginning in  
599 2022. First, we are grateful to the Congress for the additional authorities to increase the duration of  
600 parental leave for primary and secondary caregivers; we have expanded our secondary caregiver leave  
601 and are working with OSD on the timely implementation of increased leave in cases of adoption or long-  
602 term foster care. Second, we are developing mechanisms by which primary and secondary caregivers can  
603 take additional parental leave – beyond the congressionally-authorized 12-weeks – if they agree to extend  
604 their service contracts. Third, we will implement a phased return to work program for the primary  
605 caregiver, allowing the caregiver to return to work gradually. Finally, and most importantly, we won't  
606 stop learning. We will carefully study the best practices of top performing American companies and  
607 institutions, always with an eye to enhancing our service parental leave programs as new research  
608 becomes available.

609  
610 Increasing the availability of childcare remains a top priority for the Service. Unfortunately, persistent  
611 supply and demand imbalances have resulted in unacceptable wait times for our Marine families. The  
612 average wait time for childcare across our major bases and stations is 65 days. However, based on a  
613 number of actions taken this year, we anticipate a decrease in the average wait time by 50% over the next  
614 12 months. Additionally, we increased funding for our Marine Family Care Programs by \$91 million,  
615 beginning in FY23 across the next five years. To provide a variety of options that fit a families' needs  
616 and to mitigate lengthy Child Development Center (CDC) waitlists, we also offer fee assistance for  
617 eligible Marines who are geographically remote, reside more than 15 miles from an installation, or are  
618 assigned to an installation with a lengthy CDC waitlist.

619  
620 **Barracks and Family Housing**

621 In FY21, we renovated 13 barracks, and in FY22, we plan to renovate another 10 at a cost of \$93 million.  
622 We anticipate renovating a further 10 barracks in FY23 at a cost of \$112 million. This will leave 94  
623 barracks for future renovation. The renovations completed in FY21 to FY23 will positively impact 3,780  
624 Marines living in the barracks. In terms of family housing, our biggest challenge is related to ongoing  
625 efforts to renovate over 300 homes at MCAS Iwakuni, for which we recently issued a contract to renovate  
626 44, to be completed by FY23. Additionally, we anticipate spending a further \$104 million in FY23 to  
627 further remediate housing deficiencies across our bases and stations.

628  
629  
630

631 **Training Philosophy**

632 In 1990, then Commandant Gray stated, “Training will reflect the fact the modern battlefield demands  
633 high levels of initiative and an ability to operate at a fast tempo in an atmosphere of uncertainty,  
634 confusion, and rapid change. Unit training will largely be free-play training in order to develop this  
635 ability. Individual training, starting with boot camp, will seek to develop independent action and  
636 initiative.” This guidance remains as relevant today as it was 32 years ago.

637

638 **Training Ranges**

639 The Marine Corps has no outdoor training spaces or ranges where ground units can operate in an  
640 electromagnetic spectrum operations (EMSO) denied, degraded, or disrupted environment, and limited  
641 opportunities to replicate such an environment in simulation. Today, we are able to conduct some of this  
642 training at joint facilities, most notably in Alaska’s Joint Pacific Alaskan Range Complex (JPARC).  
643 However, we need to be able to train in a similar manner at all of our major training facilities. This is a  
644 critical shortfall of our existing training infrastructure in Arizona, California, Hawaii, and North Carolina.  
645 Additionally, we lack littoral maritime training ranges akin to our legendary Range 400 at the MAGTF  
646 Training Center in Twentynine Palms, California. As we modernize the force for naval expeditionary  
647 operations in contested environments, we will require a maritime training site with suitable seaward and  
648 landward ranges where we can train with the full range of our multi-domain weapon systems, to include  
649 uncrewed systems. Finally, we must remain mindful of the impacts of urbanization and community  
650 growth on our training capacity, especially in Hawaii.

651

652 **Enhanced Infantry and Leader Training**

653 In 1997, the 31<sup>st</sup> Commandant gave a speech at the National Press Club in which he articulated the need  
654 to transform our most valued Marine Corps asset – the Marine infantry non-commissioned officer (NCO).  
655 While most remember his characterization of the future “Three Block War” and the new importance of  
656 the “Strategic Corporal,” most forget the context of his argument. General Krulak described to his  
657 audience the Battle of Teutoburg Forest, during which the Roman pro-consul Quintilius Varus had his  
658 force of three legions ambushed and destroyed by an adversary he put down three years prior. As his  
659 force was collapsing around him, Varus was heard to say, “Ne cras, Ne cras” (Latin for “not like  
660 yesterday”). General Krulak’s prescient assumptions about the future of ground combat in urban areas  
661 has proven accurate time and again – whether in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, or Ukraine today.

662

663 Our continued force-on-force experimentation and training in support of FD 2030 further demonstrate  
664 that the future battlespace will not be like yesterday, and change is required – even among the elite

665 Marine infantry community. As a result, over the past year we have greatly expanded our infantry  
666 training by adding an additional six weeks to the program of instruction. This expansion provides our  
667 infantry Marines with the training necessary to employ networked communications, organic precision  
668 fires to include loitering munitions, and multi-domain ISR capabilities at the lowest tactical level. The  
669 result will be a more technically competent and tactically proficient infantry than has ever existed in the  
670 Marine Corps – prepared to operate, fight, and win on any modern battlefield. And, one with both the  
671 physical stamina and mental resilience required of all Marine infantry past and present. These changes  
672 are not limited only to our enlisted force. We have made significant improvements at our Infantry  
673 Officers Course (IOC) to expand practical applications via a new live-fire ambush, a new amphibious  
674 operations package, uncrewed aircraft systems integration instruction, and final live-fire exercise against a  
675 multi-domain threat. Through our continued wargaming and experimentation, it is perfectly clear that an  
676 elite infantry is a critical requirement to success on the future battlefield, and the changes that are  
677 occurring at IOC and at our Schools of Infantry are now producing that force.

678

#### 679 **Recruit Training**

680 In the 2020 NDAA, Congress directed the Marine Corps to gender integrate training at both Marine Corps  
681 Recruit Depots (MCRDs) Parris Island and San Diego no later than Fiscal Year 2025 and Fiscal Year  
682 2028, respectively. We are on pace to achieve those deadlines. Since enactment, we have trained 26  
683 integrated companies at MCRD Parris Island and 3 at MCRD San Diego – a total of 11,121 male and  
684 female Marines who started their service and journeys together. At present, each MCRD company  
685 consists of five male platoons and one female platoon (5+1 model), although there are times when a four  
686 male platoon plus two female platoon model (4+2 model) has been employed to accommodate increased  
687 female recruit throughput.

688

#### 689 **Afghanistan**

690 In August of last year, our collective mission in Afghanistan ended. During nearly 20 years of operations,  
691 115,992 Marines served in Afghanistan; 5,101 Marines were wounded in action; an untold number  
692 sustained invisible and permanent emotional wounds; and 478 families became Gold Star Families after  
693 the loss of their Marine. We have a moral obligation to each of our Marines and their families to resist  
694 the temptation to push Afghanistan into our distant memory, and instead bring our experiences there into  
695 sharp focus in order to learn. Thousands of Marines, Sailors, Soldiers, and Airmen answered the call to  
696 serve in Afghanistan, and while the outcome there was not what any of them expected, their service was  
697 honorable and their courage real. We owe them a hard look at how the war was executed – what we got

698 right and what we got wrong. To that end, I fully endorse the nonpartisan Afghanistan War Commission  
699 and its aims to help us more completely understand the full scope of the conflict.

700

701 When reflecting on our experience in Afghanistan, we also cannot forget the significant contributions of  
702 our allies and partners. The U.S. military was fortunate to operate alongside patriots from dozens of  
703 allied and partner nations, and we will never forget the service and sacrifices of these brothers and sisters  
704 in arms.

705

### 706 **Joint Chief Perspective**

707 Trust and Confidence in the Military. I remain concerned with continued reports of the public’s declining  
708 trust and confidence in the uniformed leadership of the armed services. I am old enough to remember  
709 when military service was not perceived in the positive light that it is today. I entered service within a  
710 decade after the collapse of the U.S. position in Southeast Asia and a year after the failed rescue attempt  
711 known as Desert One. Within two years of my commissioning, faith in the uniformed and civilian  
712 leadership of the military was further rocked by the tragedy of the suicide-bombing of the Marine  
713 Barracks in Beirut.

714

715 We must address negative perceptions of the military without hesitation. We must also remain mindful  
716 that the deeper we dig into the decisions of the past, particularly related to our campaigns in Afghanistan  
717 that such negative perceptions may grow. The long-term health of the Marine Corps, naval services, and  
718 entire joint force is dependent upon the cultivation and sustainment of a special bond of trust and  
719 confidence between the military and the public. We must ensure that Americans who wish to serve, and  
720 the families who support them in their service, trust their military and pursue their service “without any  
721 mental reservation.” To that end, we must all make a concerted effort to speak with precision, encourage  
722 transparency, and welcome any and all oversight that would restore the public’s confidence in the  
723 military.

724

725 Finally, I am increasingly concerned that in our shared desire to eliminate discrimination, harassment,  
726 sexual assault, extremism, and every other destructive act within the joint force that is contrary to the core  
727 values of all the services, we are unintentionally creating a harmful mental model and stereotype of the  
728 services as places where these are the norm vice the exception. The vast majority of young men and  
729 women across the joint force serve honorably, and are incredible representatives of their individual  
730 families and communities across the entire country. We must never allow the public to think for a  
731 moment that military service is anything other than the most honorable service one can provide to their

732 fellow citizens. The success of our all-volunteer force requires the special trust and confidence of the  
733 public. As you hold me and the other senior leaders accountable for all we do or fail to do, and rightfully  
734 seek to eliminate persistent behaviors inconsistent with our values, please continue to help me spread the  
735 word that military service is honorable service, and that you remain incredibly proud of the young men  
736 and women in uniform.

737  
738 Wargaming and Transparency. In September 1964, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff sponsored a  
739 wargame on Vietnam for uniformed and civilian leaders from the Department of Defense (DoD), Central  
740 Intelligence Agency (CIA), and Department of State (DoS). The wargame was intended to provide senior  
741 policy makers with an opportunity to re-examine our national strategic objectives and the strategy  
742 required to attain those objectives. For those passionate about wargaming, SIGMA II 64 is “Exhibit A” in  
743 the case for its importance. Once declassified, the wargame report provided clear evidence that senior  
744 uniformed and civilian leaders understood the situation in Vietnam much better than historians previously  
745 assumed.

746  
747 The story of SIGMA II 64 illustrates the potential of wargames to increase the breadth and depth of our  
748 understanding, but more, it illustrates the damage that can result from a lack of transparency. The  
749 SIGMA II 64 wargame results were classified and tightly controlled, not shared widely or with those who  
750 maintain oversight responsibilities, like Congress. While it is impossible to know if our national leaders  
751 would have pursued a different course in Vietnam had the SIGMA II 64 results been more widely shared,  
752 it is certain that the debate would have been better informed.

753  
754 As a joint force, we should make every effort to increase the frequency, sophistication, and scope of our  
755 wargames. In particular, we should look to expand the participation of our allies, partners, interagency  
756 teammates, and industry, whose collective insights are essential to a strategy which aims at integrated  
757 deterrence. At the same time, we must seek greater transparency. I encourage Congress and staff to  
758 participate in wargames, continue asking tough questions, and challenge us to be as transparent as  
759 possible.

760  
761 **Conclusion**

762 As HASC Chairman Smith recently noted, “The Pentagon tends to reward conformity. As long as you  
763 check all the boxes and go up through the 15 layers of decision making, we’re all good, instead of you  
764 saw a problem and solved it.” This *has* to change, *is* changing, and can continue to change with your  
765 oversight and assistance. For some, the daily feed of images and intelligence from Ukraine has persuaded

766 them that a change in our availability-based model of readiness and our warfighting investments are  
767 required. I agree with these individuals. For others, the case for change has long since been made on 21<sup>st</sup>  
768 century battlefields with little if anything in common. I agree with those individuals as well. However,  
769 this does not mean that everything requires change, and that our forces are not ready today, to create  
770 advantage today, and to succeed today in whatever challenge confronts them. While the need to train and  
771 equip our Marines and Sailors with modern capabilities and equipment that create advantage is beyond  
772 dispute, what is also beyond dispute is that those individuals – the individual Marine and Sailor – are a  
773 source of competitive advantage for the service and for the larger joint force, and will always be the most  
774 important resource. Your Marines are ready today, just as they have always been. What they need is  
775 your continued support for resourcing, your continued policy oversight, and your continued faith and  
776 confidence. With those things, they will never fail.