

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

Subcommittee on
Readiness and Management Support

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE CURRENT READINESS OF
THE JOINT FORCE

Tuesday, May 2, 2023

Washington, D.C.

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1 TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE CURRENT READINESS OF THE JOINT
2 FORCE

3
4 Tuesday, May 2, 2023

5
6 U.S. Senate

7 Subcommittee on Readiness

8 and Management Support

9 Committee on Armed Services,

10 Washington, D.C.

11
12 The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:00
13 p.m., in Room 232A, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon.
14 Mazie Hirono, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

15 Subcommittee Members Present: Senators Hirono
16 [presiding], Shaheen, Blumenthal, Kaine, Duckworth, Kelly,
17 Sullivan, Fischer, and Tuberville.

1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MAZIE HIRONO, U.S. SENATOR
2 FROM HAWAII

3 Senator Hirono: [Technical problems] -- that is
4 distinguished both by their depth of knowledge and
5 experience. I thank each of you for your service to our
6 country and for taking the time to speak with us today.

7 I want to begin by acknowledging the Apache helicopter
8 training accident that occurred late last week and resulted
9 in the tragic loss of three soldiers in Alaska. It was
10 just a month ago that another nine soldiers were killed
11 when two Black Hawk helicopters collided in Kentucky on a
12 training mission.

13 These tragedies have led to the Army Chief of Staff
14 ordering an aviation safety stand down to review the risk
15 improvement process -- approval process, training,
16 standardization, and flight planning process. It is
17 imperative that we thoroughly investigate the root causes
18 of these and other training accidents, and not just from a
19 mechanical malfunction standpoint.

20 The Department must ensure that it is evaluating every
21 training and readiness implementation of these
22 -- implications of these accidents so that we can prevent
23 them going forward. The demands and operational pace for
24 our service members remains high.

25 In your prepared statements, each of you laid out the

1 challenges and obstacles you face. They include
2 difficulties with retention and the desire to appropriately
3 fill out force structure, outside factors like low
4 unemployment, and just a fraction of the U.S. population
5 being able to serve.

6 And the reality that an even smaller number of
7 Americans are willing to serve. Beyond retention, the
8 Department still struggles to maintain and sustain its
9 equipment on schedule to support mission readiness.

10 In the rush to modernize and procure more ships, it is
11 equally critical that the Navy finishes its maintenance
12 availabilities on the ships and submarines that we already
13 have. On the time -- on time and without cost overruns.
14 And that is, I know, an issue for us. We have an extremely
15 capable fleet today, but a state of readiness needs to be
16 improved in a variety of ways.

17 Equally important to readiness is the access to and
18 quality of our training ranges across all domains. This
19 issue is top of mind in Hawaii, and I am interested in
20 hearing from the Army in particular about how you will
21 ensure land lease remains -- renewals that are coming up in
22 some major places, such as Pohakuloa on the Big Island in
23 just a few years, are handled with dignity and respect for
24 the people of Hawaii, while balancing the requirements to
25 train in the Pacific.

1 In addition to the President's budget request, this
2 committee has aggressively funded almost every unfunded
3 priority listed over the last few years, and I know that
4 this year we have quite a lot of unfunded priorities.

5 So measured in both the operation and maintenance
6 accounts, and the military construction program, the demand
7 and pace of munitions support and equipment sent to Ukraine
8 has diminished the amount of ammunition on hand for
9 training and contingencies.

10 Yet, given all the resources you have, I want to hear
11 more about the timeliness and conditions for improvements
12 in readiness recovery. Each of your statements touch upon
13 how important our people are, and I certainly agree.

14 That is why I am concerned about the Department's
15 unaccompanied barracks problems, on top of the well-
16 documented concerns about privatized housing on base. The
17 quality of service members housing has a direct connection
18 to unit readiness and their desire to keep serving. And if
19 we are not serving them well where they live, they will
20 leave. It is not just a matter of building new barracks,
21 though that is imperative.

22 We need to ensure that they have access to healthy
23 food at all hours and we need to ensure that habitability
24 standards meet the simple standard of what we want our
25 family to live in these conditions. Ms. Maurer and the GAO

1 have highlighted many of these readiness challenges in the
2 GAO's comprehensive work.

3 I thank her and her team -- I thank you and your team
4 for the great work that you have done, and caution your
5 success means that you will likely see more work in the
6 future. I want to also highlight the impact that Senator
7 Tuberville's continued hold on all general flag officer
8 promotions has on readiness.

9 Being blunt, this political stunt not only impacts
10 general officers but the chain of promotions behind them.
11 Senator Tuberville's actions are compromising officers'
12 ability to move to keep billets required for growth and
13 promotion and is wreaking havoc on military families. His
14 holds completely disrupt children moving schools, families
15 securing housing in a challenging housing market, and
16 spouses moving jobs.

17 I have spoken openly about all this issue from a
18 policy perspective, but it is equally important to discuss
19 the impact that this has on our readiness and the lives of
20 our service members and their families.

21 These holds are, in my view, reckless, and I hope my
22 colleagues will join me in calling on Senator Tuberville to
23 lift his hold immediately. This is not the way to force
24 the DOD to change a policy with which he does not agree.
25 Senator Sullivan.

1 STATEMENT OF HON. DAN SULLIVAN, U.S. SENATOR FROM
2 ALASKA

3 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Madam Chair, for holding
4 this important hearing on the readiness of our military. I
5 look forward to working with you constructively and
6 respectfully on these and other important issues impacting
7 U.S. military readiness.

8 I appreciate you mentioning the recent loss of life in
9 Alaska. General, our hearts go out to the families in my
10 State, but it is a reminder of the risks that all of our
11 military takes on a daily basis, even when not deployed.
12 In terms of readiness, I think across a number of critical
13 realms, the U.S. military is already in a readiness crisis.

14 The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and Secretary of
15 Defense have come before the full committee in the past two
16 years telling us that we are in one of the most dangerous
17 periods at any time since World War II, and yet three years
18 in a row, the Biden Administration puts forward Defense
19 Department cuts that are inflation adjusted cuts to the
20 defense budget.

21 This committee will almost certainly reject the latest
22 Biden budget and significantly increase support for our
23 military's readiness, modernization, and troops above the
24 President's top line, as we have done in the past two
25 years.

1 Today, I will focus a good part of my opening
2 statement on the Department of the Navy and the challenges
3 it is facing. I want to begin with Marine Corps Force
4 Design 2030, a bold and important initiative that I have
5 complimented the Commandant of the Marine Corps on.

6 I led the charge in the Congress on the 31 amphibious
7 ship requirement last year, and on pushing back against the
8 Navy and Office of the Secretary of Defense when they were
9 tempted to pocket the billions of dollars of Marine Corps
10 divestments in order to apply these funds to non-Marine
11 Corps programs.

12 I have also spent dozens of hours studying and asking
13 questions about Marine Corps Force Design of current and
14 former Marine Corps leaders. But more from the Congress
15 needs to be done on an initiative of this consequence and
16 magnitude. Tough, probing questions are required from this
17 committee.

18 No plan is perfect, especially military plans, and no
19 general is infallible. Force Design needs rigorous
20 oversight, not out of disrespect for the Marine Corps, but
21 out of an abiding respect for this exceptional and unique
22 American institution and the critical role it has played
23 and will continue to play in our nation's defense.

24 My questions about Force Design fall into three broad
25 categories. First, the divest to invest strategy shed in a

1 rapid amount of time a very significant amount of proven
2 Marine Corps combat capability.

3 Some examples in the past few years include, close to
4 10,000 active duty Marines and 6,000 reservists, a
5 reduction of 21 percent of active duty infantry Marines,
6 and 16 percent of reserve infantry Marines, 67 percent of
7 canon artillery, 33 percent of AAVs, 100 percent of tanks,
8 100 percent of bridging along with breech and clearing and
9 proofing equipment, 100 percent of law enforcement.

10 The numbers on divestments in terms of Marine Corps
11 aviation are confusing. Some have stated over 200
12 aircraft. Others are saying there are no divestments. As
13 part of Force Design, the Marine Corps has brought on, or
14 will be bringing on, three additional UAV squadrons, an
15 additional C-130 squadron, new loitering and anti-tank
16 munitions, and three new air defense battalions.

17 These are significant combat divestments and the focus
18 on enhancing lethality around maritime choke points,
19 particularly against the PLA navy, have raised questions
20 about whether the Marine Corps is designing a niche light
21 infantry, missile heavy force focused on one AOR at the
22 expense of the Marine Corps' traditional role as a lethal,
23 robust combined arms force ready to rapidly respond to any
24 global crisis, anywhere in the world.

25 One hallmark of the Marine Corps Air Ground Task

1 Force, the MAGTF, is its ability to kick in the door
2 anywhere in the world and sustain itself for weeks in heavy
3 combat before follow on forces arrive. Is Force Design
4 2030 degrading the Marine Corps' ability to be the nation's
5 911 force?

6 Much of Force Design doctrine focuses on littoral and
7 amphibious operations, but what if the next fight is not in
8 the littorals? What if we are back in the desert? What if
9 it is an urban terrain? What if the Marines need to cross
10 a river?

11 These are important questions. Second, Force Design
12 2030 clearly shows the Marine Corps' commitment to support
13 naval operations. Indeed, that is one of the main reasons
14 for this initiative. But the Navy is not reciprocating.

15 Last year, I wrote an Op-Ed warning that Force Design
16 2030 would fail without the Navy's support. In my view,
17 that is happening now. The Fiscal Year 2023 NDAA created a
18 legal requirement, which I authored, for the Navy to
19 maintain 31 amphibious ships, identical to the legal
20 requirement to maintain 11 carriers.

21 In a stunning display of disdain for Congress, the
22 Navy, who is now ignoring the law completely, as this chart
23 shows -- the 30-year shipbuilding plan submitted to this
24 body does not once hit 31 amphibious. That is required by
25 the law.

1 The Secretary of the Navy committed to appearing
2 before this committee to explain how the Navy is going to
3 comply with the law. He needs to do that soon. The real-
4 world impact of the Navy's lack of investment in the amphib
5 fleet is already occurring. In the past few days, several
6 articles have been published detailing how the 31st MEU
7 based out of Japan, has few Navy assets to deploy on.

8 The insufficient numbers of ships is compounded by
9 their poor maintenance. In March of this year, the
10 commandant said that amphibious ship readiness is 32
11 percent, and has been well below 50 percent for over a
12 decade. If amphibians can't leave port, our MEUs can't
13 deploy.

14 If our MEUs can't deploy, the U.S. cannot provide a
15 timely response to crises around the world. Third, and
16 finally, what if the capabilities of the Marine Corps that
17 is designing and developing as part of Force Design don't
18 work as intended?

19 The Center for Strategic and International Studies
20 recently undertook a comprehensive war game centered on a
21 conflict in the Taiwan Strait, exactly the kind of conflict
22 Marine Corps Force Design was designed for, and they were
23 unimpressed with the Marine littoral regiments, LMRs -- or
24 MLRs.

25 CSIS raised questions about the MLR's ability to

1 sustain itself, how quickly it would expand all its anti-
2 ship missiles, and how it would get to the fight, be it on
3 Taiwan or elsewhere. Does the Marine Corps have the
4 sealift and airlift to execute its stand in forces concept
5 using MLRs? The Navy isn't helping.

6 It will only require six landing ship mediums, LSMs,
7 over the next five years, despite the Marine Corps saying
8 it will need 35 LSMs to provide intra-theater lift. And in
9 terms of airlift, it appears the Marine Corps is divesting
10 more assets than it is acquiring as part of Force Design.
11 Given these challenges, CSIS asks whether other services
12 are better equipped to conduct sea denial operations
13 against the PLA navy.

14 CSIS concluded that could be the case, stating, "a
15 squadron of bombers armed with long range cruise missiles
16 has greater volume of fire than an entire MLR, but without
17 the challenges of transportation and logistics."

18 Finally, let me touch on the other services.
19 Recruiting, recruiting, recruiting. The challenges are
20 threatening our all-volunteer force. I would like to hear
21 from the witnesses today how the Space Force and the Marine
22 Corps continue to meet their recruiting goals, but how the
23 Army and Air Force are significantly missing those goals.

24 We want to all work together to make sure that we can
25 fulfill our Constitutional obligation to raise armies,

1 provide for the National Security. That is so important to
2 this committee.

3 The last thing I want to say is to our GAO witness,
4 Ms. Maurer, we thank you for your work and your team have
5 done on behalf of this committee. Please do not pull any
6 punches today. I don't anticipate you will.

7 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. I do
8 share your concerns about the fact that our amphib ship
9 readiness is well below the standards that we want.

10 Today's hearing is focused on the current readiness of
11 the Joint Forces, and I will just go through the people on
12 the panel today, starting from my left, where you have
13 General Randy George, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army,
14 Admiral Lisa Franchetti, Vice Chief of Naval Operations,
15 General Eric Smith, Assistant Commandant of the Marine
16 Corps, General David Alen -- Allvin, I am sorry, Vice Chief
17 of Staff of the Air Force, General David Thompson, Vice
18 Chief of Space Operations, and Ms. Diana Maurer, Director
19 of Defense Capabilities and Management at the GAO. We will
20 start with you, General George.

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1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL RANDY A. GEORGE, USA, VICE CHIEF
2 OF STAFF OF THE ARMY, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

3 General George: Chair Hirono. Ranking Member
4 Sullivan, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank
5 you for the opportunity to discuss readiness posture of our
6 Army. And first, I want to thank you for your condolences
7 on the Apache incident that we had last week.

8 And we are taking care of the families and we
9 appreciate the thoughts and prayers and will continue to
10 support our 11th Airborne Division teammates. Our Army is
11 focused on war fighting and training for battle in which
12 all domains are contested.

13 All the while, we are supporting combatant commands
14 with ready formations around the world. Got approximately
15 137,000 soldiers right now deployed in 140 countries. We
16 are strengthening our partnership with defense industry,
17 and we are rapidly modernizing our organic industrial base
18 to increase productivity and ensure that we have the stocks
19 to fight when called upon.

20 We are deterring the pacing challenge China by
21 exercising and campaigning across the Indo-Pacific theater
22 and holding the line in the European theater alongside of
23 our NATO partners, all the while adapting in real time to
24 lessons learned from the war in Ukraine, testing the
25 lethality of our equipment, and rapidly incorporating new

1 tactics into our doctrine and training. But readiness for
2 today is not enough.

3 Our Army is also transforming. We don't have an
4 option. Warfare is changing and we must change because of
5 it to ensure that we stay ahead of our potential
6 adversaries. So, among many things, we are modernizing
7 long range precision fires, air and missile defense, ground
8 combat capabilities, and developing counter UAS
9 capabilities and doctrine to name a few.

10 Finally, we are building the team. This includes
11 providing commanders with the resources they need to
12 support soldiers' mental and physical well-being, to
13 maintain healthy command climates, and to build cohesive
14 teams.

15 And it means investing in the quality of life of our
16 soldiers and families, ensuring that they have safe housing
17 and barracks, adequate childcare, and spouse employment
18 opportunities. I will end with recruitment, a critical
19 readiness priority for us right now.

20 We are challenged by the fact that a small number of
21 young Americans, 23 percent, are qualified to serve. Fewer
22 still are interested in serving, and we are working hard to
23 change both of those. Our Army remains a great place to
24 be, and I think our high retention rates speak to that.

25 So, while military service to some Americans seems

1 like a life setback, in reality, it is a life accelerator.
2 That has certainly been my experience since I enlisted as a
3 private, straight out of high school. It is a great team
4 with an important mission and an ample opportunity to
5 learn, grow, and make an impact, and we have got to get
6 that story out.

7 And we appreciate Congress's assistance in amplifying
8 our call to service. Thank you, and I look forward to your
9 questions.

10 [The prepared statement of General George follows:]

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1 Senator Hirono: Thank you, General George. Admiral
2 Franchetti.

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1 STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL LISA M. FRANCHETTI, USN, VICE
2 CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS, DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

3 Admiral Franchetti: Chair Hirono, Ranking Member
4 Sullivan, and distinguished members of the subcommittee,
5 good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to
6 discuss Navy readiness with you today.

7 The United States is a maritime nation. Our security
8 and prosperity depend on the seas. For the past 247 years,
9 your Navy has stood the watch. We are America's away team,
10 operating forward to deter war, protect our economic
11 interests, uphold international law, and respond to crises
12 and natural disasters.

13 Over the past year, we have safely executed 22,000
14 steaming days and nearly 1 million flight hours, providing
15 our nation's leaders with decision space and options,
16 always ready to fight and win if called to do so. As I
17 speak, our sailors and Marine Corps teammates are deployed
18 on more than 100 ships and submarines all around the world,
19 ready to meet the security needs of our nation.

20 The Navy is inherently flexible in the maritime
21 domain. With operations spanning the globe, we have
22 supported the allied response to Russia's illegal and
23 unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, while conducting freedom of
24 navigation operations in the South China Sea.

25 Our ships are assisting in the evacuation of Americans

1 from Sudan, while we are conducting operations in the
2 Pacific to deter potential adversaries and reassure our
3 allies. Just last week, the Makin Island ARG MEU completed
4 our largest ever annual Balikatan exercise with our ally
5 the Philippines, with over 12,000 sailors and Marines
6 participating.

7 Our Fiscal Year 2024 budget request is consistent with
8 CNO's priorities of readiness and sailors, then capability,
9 then capacity, with the Colombia SSBN program as our number
10 one procurement priority.

11 We continue to prioritize readiness to sustain our
12 forces through better maintenance performance, more
13 training, improved parts availability, and increased
14 weapons inventories. Navy readiness begins with our
15 people, the sailors, civilians, and families who are the
16 foundation of our warfighting advantage.

17 We are committed to improving their quality of service
18 by investing in initiatives such as quality housing and
19 childcare, access to mental health, an environment free of
20 sexual harassment and sexual assault. In this 50th
21 anniversary of the all-volunteer force, we continue to
22 focus on recruiting, retention, and reducing gaps in our
23 billets at sea. Navy readiness is also centered on the
24 readiness of our platforms.

25 Using data analytics, improving our planning

1 processes, and procuring long lead time materials, we have
2 decreased maintenance delays in public and private
3 shipyards, but there is more work to do.

4 Our budget request fully funds public and private ship
5 maintenance, aviation depot maintenance, increases parts
6 and spares, and continues to grow our highly skilled public
7 shipyard workforce.

8 Finally, Navy readiness is also driven by our shore
9 infrastructure. We continue to fully fund the
10 recapitalization of our four public shipyards through SIOP
11 program, and our budget request supports increased
12 sustainment of our shore infrastructure, while prioritizing
13 restoration and modernization for water, electrical, and
14 safety systems.

15 Sustained readiness investments in today's Navy are a
16 down payment on America's future security. I thank the
17 committee for your leadership and partnership in keeping
18 the world's greatest maritime force ready to fight at sea,
19 and I look forward to your questions.

20 [The prepared statement of Admiral Franchetti
21 follows:]

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1 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Admiral. General Smith.

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1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL ERIC M. SMITH, USMC, ASSISTANT
2 COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS, DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

3 General Smith: Chair Hirono, Ranking Member Sullivan,
4 and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I am pleased
5 to appear before you today to discuss Marine Corps
6 readiness in the Fiscal Year 2024 budget. Your Marine
7 Corps remains the nation's expeditionary force in
8 readiness.

9 We are ready to deploy to deter adversaries, and when
10 that deterrence fails, ready to strike and enable others to
11 strike. We also provide the crisis response forces that
12 American citizens abroad and our allies have come to expect
13 from their Marines.

14 We provide these expeditionary combined arms forces
15 utilizing the minimum 31 amphibious warships that the
16 Congress has directed. Those ships provide the organic
17 mobility required to bring all of our assets to bear at the
18 critical time and place for our combatant commanders.

19 The most important asset that we bring to bear remains
20 the individual Marine. Our modernization efforts known as
21 Force Design, ensure that we are manned, trained, and
22 equipped to deter peer adversary, and to campaign into a
23 position of advantage should deterrence fail, and lethal
24 force be needed.

25 Our modernization efforts are required to fight and

1 win on future battlefields, make no mistake. Our aviation
2 readiness has increased more than 10 percent in the past
3 few years thanks to the work of this subcommittee to
4 provide us with the operations and maintenance funding we
5 need, and due to our aviation modernization and
6 reorganization efforts.

7 When a Marine Expeditionary Unit deploys on a big deck
8 L class amphib warship today, they provide the combatant
9 commander with 66 percent more fifth generation aircraft
10 than before we made our Force Design changes. Our efforts
11 to modernize our training and education are bearing fruit
12 as we produce an even more lethal Marine.

13 From our basic rifleman training to our service level
14 training exercises, we are becoming more lethal. Our new
15 training integrates our joint and organic fires, improved
16 communications, updated ISR to sense, make sense, track,
17 and destroy targets at ranges and complexities never before
18 seen by our Marine Corps.

19 Our individual Marine remains the most lethal weapon
20 on the battlefield. Our efforts to improve the quality of
21 life of those warriors, and to retain them once we train
22 them, are vitally important. Your continued support
23 matters to them and their families, and I thank you for it.
24 I look forward to your questions. Thank you for letting me
25 appear before you today.

[The prepared statement of General Smith follows:]

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1 Senator Hirono: Thank you, General. General Allvin.

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1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL DAVID W. ALLVIN, USAF, VICE
2 CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE AIR FORCE, DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR
3 FORCE

4 General Allvin: Chair Hirono, Ranking Member
5 Sullivan, and distinguished subcommittee members, on behalf
6 of our Air Force Secretary and Chief of Staff, thank you
7 for the opportunity to discuss the critically important
8 topic of readiness.

9 We greatly appreciate this body's continued
10 partnership and support in delivering the resources
11 necessary for the Air Force to respond to today's threats
12 while preparing for tomorrow. Events of the past year
13 remind us that global actors have the capability and the
14 intent to challenge peace and stability.

15 In the case of our pacing challenge, People's Republic
16 of China, the speed at which they are developing advanced
17 capability and capacity should serve as a warning for us to
18 act with a greater sense of urgency. We must maintain the
19 necessary advantage to deter them from violent pursuit of
20 objectives at odds with our national interests. Your Air
21 Force is laser focused on this task.

22 Our readiness starts with our Airmen, both uniformed
23 and civilian, who consistently prove to be our greatest
24 strength and competitive advantage. Since the beginning of
25 the all-volunteer force 50 years ago, we have been

1 fortunate enough to attract the best of America's youth in
2 sufficient numbers, but recent realities have put us under
3 pressure.

4 As a result, we will likely not meet our recruiting
5 goals this year. We are aggressively exploring multiple
6 options while streamlining processes to attract a broader
7 pool of talented Americans to our formation.

8 We know how focused and resilient Airman is a ready
9 Airman, and we must continue to demonstrate that we value
10 our service members and their families. We continually
11 explore opportunities to expand or initiate programs that
12 support better quality of life, and we greatly appreciate
13 this committee's support in those efforts.

14 The air crew deficit persists due to several factors,
15 but the shortage has not extended to the operational units
16 or pilot training basis. We are continuing on the path to
17 transform our approach to pilot training to increase
18 production, while leveraging numerous monetary and non-
19 monetary programs to retain the experience of our trained
20 aviators.

21 We look forward to working with the committee on these
22 programs, as well as our pursuit of targeted reform,
23 current legislation to enable the hiring of contract
24 simulator instructors to maximize training and optimize
25 manpower.

1 While the proposed budget increases weapon system
2 sustainment by \$1.1 billion, this still only resources 87
3 percent of the estimated requirement due to sustainment
4 challenges of our ever-aging fleet, inflation, supply chain
5 issues, and labor costs. We are pursuing improvements in
6 reliability and maintainability, supporting initiatives
7 that advance data driven decisions.

8 This drives efficiency in what we do today and enables
9 responsiveness in dynamic wartime environments.
10 Significant challenges and tough decisions still lie ahead.
11 We must be thoughtful in adequately funding our readiness
12 accounts, while pursuing the right investments to develop
13 the advanced capabilities to meet future threats.

14 This year, we feel we have struck the right balance.
15 And in closing, I would offer that this Congress can
16 perhaps make the most positive impact on our readiness
17 through a timely budget appropriation. Thank you very much
18 and I look forward to your questions.

19 [The prepared statement of General Allvin follows:]
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1 Senator Hirono: Thank you, General. General
2 Thompson.

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1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL DAVID D. THOMPSON, USSF, VICE
2 CHIEF OF SPACE OPERATIONS, DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

3 General Thompson: Chair Hirono, Ranking Member
4 Sullivan, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, on
5 behalf of the Secretary of the Air Force and Chief of Space
6 Operations, thank you for the opportunity to testify today
7 regarding the readiness of the Space Force.

8 The capabilities and benefits provided from space are
9 essential to our way of life and crucial to effective
10 military operations in every other domain. The overriding
11 consideration in assessing Space Force's readiness remains
12 the dramatic shift to the space domain from a comparatively
13 benign military environment to one that is undeniably
14 contested.

15 This shift was a compelling reason for the creation of
16 the Space Force three and a half years ago. Since then,
17 with the tremendous support of Congress, the Space Force
18 has moved out aggressively to address the challenges the
19 nation faces in space.

20 We have begun to pivot to more resilient and
21 defensible architectures to ensure Soldiers, Sailors,
22 Airmen, and Marines have the space capabilities they need
23 across the spectrum of conflict.

24 We are designing and developing constellations that
25 address the migration of missions to space, including

1 moving target indication, domain awareness on land at sea
2 and in the air, command control, and the movement of data
3 to enable the way the Joint Force expects to fight in the
4 future.

5 Finally, the Space Force has begun the shift to a new
6 training and readiness approach, the Space Force Generation
7 Model. SPF AFFORGEN reached its initial capability on
8 October 1st, and once complete, will deliver space forces
9 that are truly ready against a pacing challenge. The
10 President's Fiscal Year 2024 budget request reaffirms the
11 Space Force's commitment to that threat informed shift.

12 It extends the pivot to more resilient architectures
13 based on proliferated constellations, intelligence driven
14 space domain awareness, aggressive cybersecurity, measured
15 investment in space superiority, and combat credible forces
16 anchored in a full spectrum test and training enterprise.
17 While much remains to be done in all of these areas, the
18 main challenges to Space Force generation today are
19 twofold.

20 The first challenge to creating a combat ready Space
21 Force is an advanced full spectrum test and training
22 infrastructure with high fidelity threats, realistic
23 mission simulators, a professional aggressor force, and a
24 suitable range. This system of systems will allow us to
25 validate tactics, test system limitations, and train

1 operators in live and synthetic environments against a
2 thinking adversary.

3 Without this infrastructure, Guardians will not have
4 defensible systems, proven tactics, or the confidence of
5 competence they need to win conflict in space. The second
6 and primary challenge to Space Force readiness lies in the
7 availability of budgetary resources in a timely manner to
8 execute all we are planning to do.

9 Congress has been a tremendous partner in defining and
10 building the Space Force the nation needs. In each year of
11 its existence, the Space Force has seen a 12 to 15 percent
12 increase in its budget year over year.

13 The Space Force is prioritizing its readiness in all
14 facets to effectively deter adversaries, and if necessary,
15 prevail in conflict. The most important thing Congress can
16 do to help in that regard is pass an on-time budget.

17 Thanks for your support and steadfast partnership. I look
18 forward to your question.

19 [The prepared statement of General Thompson follows:]

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1 Senator Hirono: Thank you, General. Ms. Maurer.

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1 STATEMENT OF DIANA C. MAURER, DIRECTOR OF DEFENSE
2 CAPABILITIES AND MANAGEMENT, GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY
3 OFFICE

4 Ms. Maurer: Good afternoon, Chair Hirono, Ranking
5 Member Sullivan, and other members and staff. I am pleased
6 to be here today to discuss key findings and
7 recommendations from our work on military readiness, and
8 what we have found is rather troubling. Broadly speaking,
9 mission capability, can units execute their missions, has
10 declined since 2017.

11 While the Army and Marine Corps improved in the ground
12 domain, we found declines in the sea, air, and space
13 domains. When it comes to resource readiness, personnel,
14 equipment, training and supplies, we found that the sea
15 domain declined, but units in the ground, air, and space
16 domains generally reported improvements.

17 Now, of course, improvement does not necessarily mean
18 readiness is where the services want it to be or where they
19 need it to be. There is still quite a lot of ground to
20 make up. For example, only 2 of 49 aviation systems met
21 their annual mission capable goals. The vast majority
22 missed by over 10 percent.

23 The F-35 program in particular, suffers from a variety
24 of sustainment woes. Fleet wide mission capable rates have
25 declined every year since 2020, and the Air Force, Navy,

1 and Marine Corps face substantial gaps between what it
2 costs to fly the aircraft and what they can afford. We
3 found the Navy had nearly \$1.8 billion in deferred ship
4 maintenance, mainly in its cruisers and amphibious ships.

5 And over a 10-year period, maintenance delays went up
6 and cannibalization also increased, while steaming hours
7 went down. The Navy also faces a significant crewing
8 shortfall, which can harm mission, maintenance, and safety.

9 The Army needs to improve helicopter safety and
10 address shortfalls in real support and sea sealift training
11 that affect readiness and the ability to move to the fight.
12 The Space Force faces a unique set of readiness challenges,
13 and DOD can better incorporate the evolving space control
14 mission into its strategic readiness approach.

15 To help with these and other challenges, we made over
16 130 recommendations in the 37 reports listed in my
17 statement for the record. DOD Agreed with nearly all of
18 them and started taking action on many, but over 100 remain
19 open. These open recommendations are opportunities to
20 improve readiness.

21 Yet, even with all these challenges you just heard,
22 the U.S. military is the best in the world. Our work helps
23 keep it that way. GAO will continue to provide
24 independent, hard hitting, and constructive reports to help
25 the services and help the Congress carry out its important

1 oversight responsibilities. Madam Chair, thank you for the
2 opportunity to testify and I look forward to your
3 questions.

4 [The prepared statement of Ms. Maurer follows:]

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1 Senator Hirono: Thank you very much, Ms. Maurer,
2 especially for pointing out all of the areas where
3 improvements can be made. And I thank you also for
4 acknowledging that in spite of these major shortfalls, I
5 would say, that we still remain the best military in the
6 world.

7 And for that, I commend all of you who are here today.
8 Let me start the questioning being very specific. General
9 George, I am aware that the Army conducted a survey of
10 unaccompanied barracks residents last summer and that the
11 Army has those results.

12 I have two questions, when can you provide this
13 committee with those survey results, and what are the
14 preliminary results of the survey? And are you already
15 beginning to address the suggestions made in the survey?

16 General George: So, Chair Hirono, yes, we did conduct
17 a survey. We went to five different installations to look
18 at barracks, and the idea of it was actually to conduct a
19 survey on what they would want.

20 As we are building barracks, we are going to be
21 spending \$1 billion a year. And it has got the
22 kitchenettes, size, common areas, and those kinds of
23 things. So that is what the survey was for, so that we
24 could get design feedback as we start to build, you know,
25 barracks into the future.

1 So, we will certainly -- I know we normally provide
2 data on housing, and we will look -- in June, I think is
3 where we could provide. I don't see any reason why we
4 couldn't provide those survey results.

5 Senator Hirono: So, the barracks with kitchenettes,
6 etcetera, that sounds really nice, but what are some of the
7 issues that were evidenced by the survey, such as things
8 like mold and things like having more than the number of
9 people that the barracks were designed in the barracks.

10 I mean, there is some pretty basic kinds of concerns
11 that were expressed, I am sure, by this survey. But
12 something like getting rid of mold, that is pretty basic.
13 I would think that you would want to address those issues
14 first.

15 General George: Yes, Senator.

16 Senator Hirono: Am I correct?

17 General George: Yes, Senator. We -- and to that, we
18 have inspected all 68,000 buildings in the Army for mold.
19 We found about 2,500 of them that had mold. We have
20 already undertaken remediation. It was about \$3.5 million
21 worth of remediation, so that was immediately invested in.

22 And then, you know, innovation from our young troops
23 that came up with the 3D printing that we are trying to
24 make sure that we have something out there to notice that
25 that is happening. But we are absolutely focused on that.

1 Senator Hirono: So, all of you have testified that
2 the people are the important thing, and that is why I would
3 be very interested to get this report from you, General
4 George, and work with you on how we can achieve the
5 recommendations that came out of the survey.

6 I am concerned about the impact my colleague's hold on
7 military nominations has on the readiness of our forces.
8 When we -- this is for all of you. When we cannot confirm
9 officers to the positions they have worked hard for and are
10 best suited to, it is our military families that pay the
11 first price.

12 Planned moves, school changes, spouse employment
13 opportunities, all are now frozen indefinitely. And now
14 going forward, what are the readiness impacts of freezing
15 general and flag officer promotions on the rest of the
16 force and our senior officers' families? We will just go
17 right down the line, starting with you, General George.

18 General George: Yes, Senator, I think you pretty much
19 covered it in your statement. I mean, I think the real
20 challenge right now and, you know, quality of life
21 obviously impacts, you know, readiness.

22 But really the impact is families that are moving,
23 jobs, you know, spouse jobs, getting orders to move kids
24 into school. It is more aligned with that. And there is a
25 cascading effect just given the number of people.

1 Senator Hirono: General Franchetti.

2 Admiral Franchetti: Similarly, this would impact our
3 families. On the flag officer side of the house, a few are
4 critical this year. First of all, the director of naval
5 reactors responsible for 60 reactors. We also have three
6 fleet commanders, including the one in the Western Pacific
7 and the one in the Middle East.

8 And then all of our, specially focused on readiness,
9 our type commanders, so surface, subsurface, and air, they
10 all rotate this year, and they are the ones that do the
11 man, train, equip missions. So again, this will have the
12 biggest impact on readiness if they are delayed.

13 Senator Hirono: General Smith.

14 General Smith: Chairwoman Hirono, I will just give
15 one example. One of our expeditionary forces, about 45,000
16 Marines, has a three star and one star. That three stars
17 will retire this summer. Long service suffered a family
18 tragedy as well, so he will retire. That will leave that
19 expeditionary force with a one star.

20 So instead of focusing on the Marine Expeditionary
21 Units, which is that one star's normal job, he will do that
22 and focus on the rest of the MEF. So that is a significant
23 amount of supervision and experience that is no longer
24 focused where it should be, on our most precious asset, the
25 Marines and those Marine Expeditionary Units. That is just

1 a small anecdote, but that is not a one off. That is a one
2 of many.

3 Senator Hirono: My time is running out, but I did
4 want to give the other two generals a moment. General
5 Smith, and then General Allvin.

6 General Smith: Chair Hirono, just very similar to
7 what the other leaders here have mentioned. We have five
8 either commanders or senior officers in the Indo-Pacific
9 that are scheduled to move their positions, and two four-
10 stars who are ready to retire for similar reasons that the
11 ACMC mentioned.

12 Senator Hirono: General Allvin.

13 General Allvin: Madam Chair, the topic has been
14 covered. Just one specific example. We need to put
15 general officer leaders out into the combatant commands to
16 ensure they are effectively integrating space and dealing
17 with the issues of the contested environment. That is one
18 example of where we need that leadership.

19 Senator Hirono: Thank you very much. Senator
20 Sullivan.

21 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Madam Chair. General
22 Smith, I want to give you an opportunity to follow up on
23 two of the issues that I raised in my opening statement.
24 The first is, at least for me, and maybe you and I have
25 talked about it, maybe I am just too dense to understand

1 it.

2 But the confusion on the impacts on the aviation
3 sector of Force Design. The Marine Corps staff provide in
4 my office numbers that said the Marine Corps would be
5 putting into storage or inventory management as many as 60
6 MV-22s, 30 Cobras, 24 Hueys, 48 CH-53s, and 54 F-35 Bravos.

7 On April 18th, I walked through these numbers with the
8 commandant in a closed session. I asked him if they were
9 accurate. He said they weren't, despite the fact that my
10 office got them from the Marine Corps.

11 So, what -- what are the accurate numbers? And my
12 next question, you can just take them at the same time.
13 CSIS did a very big, comprehensive, important series of war
14 plans. I hope the Marine Corps is reading it. I hope the
15 Marine Corps is looking at it.

16 I hope the Marine Corps is digesting it. I hope the
17 Marine Corps is talking to CSIS about it because they
18 weren't impressed with the Marine Corps littoral regiments.
19 They didn't think they worked very well.

20 Marine Force Design is designed exactly for that
21 scenario, and you have a big war game that says, it is not
22 really working. So, can you address both of those
23 questions for me? The really important and I think we need
24 detailed answers.

25 General Smith: I can, Senator, thank you. I will do

1 the aviation first. The numbers that you cited are
2 correct. I will guarantee you, we provided inaccurate to
3 our commandant. The numbers you cited are what we call
4 pipeline and attrition are correct. The biggest issue I
5 would say is, sir, we haven't, "divested of airplanes."
6 They do go in storage, and I will use an --

7 Senator Sullivan: So, then we are not using those
8 -- we are not going to use 54 F-35 Bravos?

9 General Smith: If I can give you a quick example,
10 Senator. The MV-22s that you referenced, 360 was the
11 number we were to buy. We have bought them all. We have
12 them. We own every one of them. Those aircraft have to
13 last until 2055. That is when our budget plans for them to
14 go out of service.

15 The original attrition model that they were purchased
16 upon is not accurate. The attrition models had hard
17 landings, those kinds of things. If we didn't go from 12
18 to 10 planes per squadron and changed the number of
19 squadrons from 18 to 16, we would have run out of those
20 airplanes years before 2055.

21 So just as infantry officer, sir, I always have
22 something in reserve. We didn't get rid of them, but when
23 they are needed, we will use those airplanes. It is the
24 same for all type models and series.

25 Senator Sullivan: So, if we could get for the record

1 kind of details about, and this was a question for -- in
2 the Commandant's recent testimony as well. How about on
3 the CSIS war study?

4 General Smith: Sir, I appreciate that question. I am
5 very familiar with the CSIS study. One of the key things
6 that it noted was that the MLRs were still more effective
7 than the previous formations.

8 So, war games, as you know, are designed to find
9 holes, gaps, weaknesses, and then you exploit those, and
10 you fix them. We have got a total of 12 additional war
11 games, 10 at the completely classified level, that also
12 looked at the MLR using the correct ranges or systems, the
13 actual employment methods, and they bear a different
14 result.

15 I would note that one of the pieces that CSIS noted,
16 and we value that that study, Senator, we do, was that
17 there would be a political challenge. But the that has
18 proven not to be, I would say, fully correct.

19 The Japanese and the U.S. Government just agreed in
20 the two plus two to keep 12 MLR in Japan, and we are using
21 the third MLR in the Philippines now. So, it is a valuable
22 study, but when it found that we lost 300 airplanes on the
23 ground, most Air Force lost carriers and cruisers, we don't
24 -- or pardon me, destroyers, we don't stop procuring.

25 We find ways to fix those challenges that that war

1 game presents. So, the MLR is better than what we had.
2 Not as good as it will be when we finally get all of our
3 pieces implemented.

4 Senator Sullivan: Let me talk about those pieces.
5 Admiral, as you can tell, and if you watched any of the
6 full hearing, the Secretary of Navy kind of took it on the
7 chin, with good reason because, a, he got his 30 year
8 shipbuilding plan to this committee the night before -- got
9 your climate action plan done 18 months ago, but your 30
10 year shipbuilding plan, you got to this committee the night
11 before the big hearing.

12 And in that shipbuilding plan, 30 years, you don't hit
13 31 amphibious once. And that is just -- as the guy who
14 wrote that provision, and, by the way, is unanimous in this
15 committee, I find it stunning that the Navy can come up
16 here and just say, you know what, Congress, take a hike.

17 So, when are you going to come back here, the
18 Secretary said you would do it soon, to show us when you
19 are going to follow the law. And what I don't want to hear
20 is, well, we are going to do a study, Senator. We are
21 going to look at more options. Kate told us we are going
22 to look -- like we did the studies. Your job is to follow
23 the law. The Secretary needs to get back up here.

24 That hearing from him was a disaster. I have been on
25 this committee for eight years and I haven't seen anything

1 like that. So, I hope you have a better answer than he had
2 in the last committee hearing. What is the answer on
3 getting to 31 amphibs, which the Marine Corps desperately
4 needs?

5 By the way, that is a minimum. You can't just come to
6 the Congress and say, we think that was a suggestion. It
7 wasn't a suggestion. It is just like -- it is actually the
8 same language we gave you on 11 carriers. So, what is the
9 answer on that, Admiral?

10 Admiral Franchetti: Ranking member Sullivan, as you
11 know, and as the Secretary, the CNO, and the Commandant
12 testified, the Commandant and the CNO fully agree and
13 understand the 31 amphibs is the law. We are doing the
14 study, coordinating that with OSD this summer --

15 Senator Sullivan: But again --

16 Admiral Franchetti: That will determine the way ahead
17 --

18 Senator Sullivan: Sorry to interrupt. We did the
19 study. Again, I don't understand why you keep telling us
20 -- we did the study. You are done -- you don't have the
21 option of doing the study. You just have to follow the
22 law.

23 I don't know why this is so hard on the Navy. We did
24 the study, we did the cost. If you don't have the budget
25 for it, request a bigger budget. We will give it to you.

1 But we don't want another study. We want you to follow the
2 law.

3 I want -- I have gone over my time, but can you just
4 answer that again, without saying you are going to do
5 another study? I want to know when you and the Secretary
6 are going to come back here with a plan that doesn't blow
7 off the Congress and the law for 30 years, which is what
8 your current plan -- your plan does not hit 31 amphibs once
9 in 30 years. That is completely unacceptable.

10 Admiral Franchetti: We will finish the study and we
11 believe that this is a PB25 discussion. We put an
12 amphibian contract this year. We are going to deliver
13 another one next year. We currently have 32 and we look
14 forward to that discussion as part of the PB25 discussion.

15 Senator Hirono: Senator Kaine.

16 Senator Kaine: Well, I just -- I want to associate
17 myself with the punch line from Senator Sullivan. I do
18 think that this is a matter for the President's budget, and
19 I know that the service chiefs and you as witnesses don't
20 get to lobby against the President's budget.

21 You know, the President sends us a budget and you are
22 not going to come and testify counter to it. I think this
23 is at the level of the President's budget. And the
24 Commandant was pretty clear in the hearing that 31 was not
25 only the law, but 31 was the requirement in terms of the

1 military mission.

2 And when I asked him point blank, does either the
3 President's budget or the shipbuilding plan get us there,
4 he was -- one word answer, no. So, I think the punch line
5 is we are expecting an answer. We understand -- I
6 understand that you are not going to come in here and lobby
7 against the President's budget.

8 That is not what you do. But I think we do need to
9 find what is up, especially since this is the second year
10 where we have had this conversation with the set of mixed
11 messages. Admiral Franchetti, I wanted to share with you,
12 I have been visiting some of our surface ship, private
13 surface shipyards in the Hampton Roads area and I have
14 heard a very particular challenge that I think could be
15 easy to fix, could be that it might help us with getting
16 ships in and out of repair in a timely way.

17 Because, you know, I think there has been some
18 suggestions that oftentimes ships under repair don't come
19 out timely. The Navy has a stated policy on these repairs.
20 And we are not talking about the like the mid-career
21 refuels of carriers. We are surface ship, not nuclear
22 repairs.

23 The Navy has a policy of trying to enter into the
24 contracts on these repairs 120 days before the work is
25 supposed to start. But it is more common that the Navy

1 enters into a contract 30 to 60 days before.

2 Okay, we need to have it in dock in 45 days, and we
3 need to have it in dock in 60 days. That makes it really
4 hard for the shipyards to staff up. If they are bidding on
5 work, they get a bid of work, they are really excited about
6 it, but the labor market is really tight right now. And
7 so, if they are getting the contract and being told, and
8 you have got to start to work in 60 days, it is hard to
9 staff up to really go at it from day one.

10 Whereas if you can get the contract 120 days out,
11 which isn't that long, that is four months, the -- at least
12 the NASCO, General Dynamics, and the BAE Shipyard, these
13 are the two that I have been at in the last month -- say,
14 if you can hit that 120 day mark, they can staff up and be
15 ready on day one and then really comply with time
16 guidelines.

17 At least one of the shipyards was saying, even though
18 it is dramatically shorter than that, they still think they
19 have a pretty good track record of turning the ships out
20 according to the Navy timetable. But that doesn't seem
21 like an unreasonable request to me that we try to enter
22 into contracts and then give the shipyard 120 days from the
23 date of that contract being signed to fully staff up.

24 And I think if you can do that, you will get ships out
25 the back end in a lot more reliable and regular way. And I

1 just wanted to kind of report that from the field as
2 something that I would like you to pay attention to.
3 General George, I want to congratulate you on your
4 nomination to Chief of Staff of the Army.

5 Just say that really quickly and ask you this
6 question. What is the Army doing to ensure a constant
7 supply of energetics in order to meet current and future
8 munitions requirements and maintain a responsive, organic
9 industrial base, particularly as we are talking about the
10 support that we are providing in Ukraine that can have the
11 effect of diluting some of our efforts in that way?

12 General George: Yes, Senator. Obviously, the organic
13 industrial base is critically important. We spend a lot
14 of, I would say, right after recruitment for us, something
15 that we are talking about all the time, we have invested
16 about \$1.5 billion in the Army budget on that for our OIB.

17 And then thanks to the supplemental, there will be
18 another \$1.6 billion, for example, down at Radford, is one
19 example of some, you know, investments that we are putting
20 down there. So, and as I think you can see, I think, or
21 you may have heard we had -- there was another -- I think
22 we did, there was a \$5 billion deal just done here for
23 GMLRs.

24 And so, it is also the defense industrial base that we
25 are working on. I think what is helping us is the

1 multiyear procurement. Another thing that I think that we
2 have talked about, and we need to look at is, you know,
3 what do we do, to your point, is stockpiling.

4 What are ways that we can get, because we have had
5 some of these supply chain issues, that we would actually
6 have this stuff that we know we are going to need, and we
7 are really supporting the Joint Force. So, we are looking
8 at all of those things, Senator.

9 Senator Kaine: I appreciate it. Thanks, Madam Chair.
10 I yield back.

11 Senator Hirono: Senator Mullin.

12 Senator Mullin: Thank you, Madam Chair. General
13 George, Fort Sill is becoming a hub for innovation for
14 counter UAS, space, and in the process of standing up the
15 counter UAS university. Lawton has also stood up the Fires
16 Innovation, Science and Technology Accelerator in support
17 of Fort Sill for the Army's priority mission.

18 Great achievements and advancements have been made in
19 the counter UAS technology, such as lasers and high-power
20 microwaves. What is the development and fielding plan for
21 these systems?

22 General George: Okay. Senator, yes, Fort Sill is
23 critically important to us, not just for an integrated air
24 and missile defense in addition to the counter UAS and
25 long-range fires. So that is the center for us, for

1 counter UAS, and I mentioned in my opening statement about
2 getting lessons from what we have learned in Ukraine and
3 what we are really attempting to do, and that is happening
4 there.

5 And then we are doing other testing that is out in
6 both White Sands and Fort Huachuca to rapidly innovate with
7 those products. We are getting ready to stand up a counter
8 UAS university that is going to start with an initial
9 operating capability.

10 The whole Joint Force will train there and that will
11 be fully operational capability here in October -- by
12 October.

13 Senator Mullin: October -- that was the answer to my
14 other question. Do we have the right level investment for
15 counter UAS?

16 General George: I think we do. This year there was
17 an additional, you know, \$100 billion that was put towards
18 that. And so, and that is something for the Army as the
19 executive agent really for the joint counter UAS. And it
20 is really supporting research and development across all
21 the services that we are focused on -- we are, you know,
22 kind of just helping to facilitate that. And we are all
23 -- it is a real joint effort throughout.

24 Senator Mullin: Thank you. General Allvin, pilot
25 training is a major priority for this committee, and Vance

1 Air Force Base, which is in Enid, Oklahoma, is one of the
2 best in the business, training more pilots per year than
3 any other training base in the country.

4 Unfortunately, both the pilot training center and
5 their dorms need major work to reach their full potential.
6 That work was not listed as a priority for the Air Force,
7 but rather included on the Air Education Training Command's
8 unfunded priorities list.

9 With the nation experiencing a shortage of up to 2,000
10 pilots, why was this not work -- why was this work not a
11 higher priority?

12 General Allvin: Well, Senator, you are absolutely
13 right, and Vance are leading the way. As a matter of fact,
14 our UPT 2.5 initiative really was started in Vance, and
15 they will be the lead unit for that. With respect to the
16 dormitories overall, there is a dormitory master plan in
17 which actually in the OSD scoring system of the facilities
18 conditions index, 99 percent of our dorms, to include those
19 at Enid, are above the adequate standard.

20 We would like them to be better than adequate, but
21 they do exceed that standard. So, we are prioritizing
22 those dorms that are the closest to 80 percent or below.
23 We will continue to look at the Enid dormitories as well as
24 the pilot train -- the pilot training center obviously is
25 going to need to transform as we transform the way we do

1 pilot training as well. We will continue.

2 Senator Mullin: Have you have you visited Vance?

3 General Allvin: I have. I was there --

4 Senator Mullin: Have you seen the training
5 facilities?

6 General Allvin: I have not recently seen the training
7 facilities.

8 Senator Mullin: I was just there, and it is literally
9 in temporary facilities. Temporary that has become
10 permanent.

11 General Allvin: Yes, sir.

12 Senator Mullin: And as you said, Vance is leading the
13 way. There needs to be more done there. And on top of
14 that, Vance is leading the way and we also received a 2
15 percent cut on reimbursements for housing, when I don't
16 think there is any place in the country that has got a
17 reduction in housing.

18 It is -- I mean, housing is a competition. And in
19 Enid, it is even a bigger competition. I believe that is
20 something we need to get addressed. If we want to recruit
21 and keep the best, and unfortunately, we are competing with
22 commercials too at this point, but we should recruit the
23 best. We can train the best.

24 We also got to make sure we give them adequate
25 housing. We can't -- we obviously are never going to

1 compete with the majors in pay, but we also know that most
2 of these pilots are going to be married, and their spouses
3 need to be -- they need to like where they are staying, and
4 they also need to know it is not costing them to be there.

5 And with the 2 percent cut, I felt like that was kind
6 of a slap across the face. And so, General, I would
7 appreciate it if you would pay attention to that. With
8 that, I yield back. Thank you.

9 Senator Hirono: Senator Shaheen.

10 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you, Generals and
11 Admiral, for being here and for your service to the
12 country. I have a whole list of questions, but I would
13 actually like to throw all of those out and go directly to
14 Ms. Maurer's statement, because I was disappointed to hear
15 your comment that there has been a decline in mission
16 readiness, especially in the air and sea, and that is
17 despite additional funding over the period since 2017.

18 And I wonder if each of you could tell me if you agree
19 with GAO's assessment, or if you have a different view.
20 General George.

21 General George: Yes, Senator. So specific to the GAO
22 report that did she mentioned in her opening statement, one
23 was for us, mobilization and railcars. Yes, I agree with
24 that. That is something that we are investing in, \$10
25 million mainly for the big, you know, for tanks and Bradley

1 and heavy equipment. And then the other aspect of it was
2 safety, and I agree with that as well.

3 Senator Shaheen: Admiral.

4 Admiral Franchetti: I think from the ship and
5 submarine in the sea domain, you know, we are improving our
6 readiness now, I think since 2019. And as we have been
7 able to implement a lot of our performed plan and data
8 analytics, and really focus on the maintenance and getting
9 ships out of the shipyard on time, submarines out on time.

10 We have been able to decrease our days of maintenance
11 delay, which will improve our ability to train. So again,
12 we have a lot more work to do and we are grateful for the
13 work that the GAO provides.

14 On the aviation, again, back in 2018, when we were a
15 challenge to move up from 241 ready Super Hornets, we
16 invested a lot of time and energy in this analytic process
17 to get after the root causes and the drivers of lack of
18 readiness.

19 We have been able to achieve 80 percent readiness,
20 between 80 and 85 percent readiness for the Super Hornets,
21 and now we are scaling that to the remainder of our type
22 model series. So again, we have had some challenges, but I
23 think we are moving in the right direction.

24 Senator Shaheen: Well, let me just zero in on that a
25 little bit because one of the findings has to do with the

1 shipyards and submarines.

2 And it says from Fiscal Year 2014 to 2020, Navy
3 submarines spent 9,563 more days in depot maintenance than
4 expected. Now, as somebody who represents the Portsmouth
5 Naval Shipyard, I really appreciate the shipyard
6 optimization plan and what that is doing for the shipyard.

7 And they have had a very good record of getting ships
8 out on time and under budget. But how do you approach that
9 kind of delay as we are thinking about how we make sure our
10 submarines are operational when they need to be?

11 Admiral Franchetti: That was a very significant
12 delay. And we are really focused, and this has really been
13 the focus of me as the Vice Chief, as I have gone around to
14 visit the different shipyards, to understand the challenges
15 and also met with private industry to see where we can
16 focus on that.

17 I think the three things that we found that have been
18 impacting that, one is workforce development and project
19 management fundamentals, production throughput. The second
20 one is long lead time material, and that has really been a
21 challenge, especially for Virginia class submarines.

22 And then the third one is growth work, unplanned work
23 that we are finding. And so, again, we now have developed
24 a 15-year plan, a strategy to get after all of those
25 things. We have also put in -- requested in this budget

1 \$3.1 billion in Virginia class parts to help us get
2 veritable pools and get rid of challenges with
3 obsolescence.

4 So, in the submarine world, I think we are, again,
5 moving in the right direction.

6 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. General Smith.

7 General Smith: Senator, the aviation portion of that
8 report is correct. We are not where we need to be and have
9 committed to be. In the last four or five years, we have
10 increased marine aviation readiness by just over 10
11 percent.

12 So, we are moving in the right direction, but we are
13 Marines, so we are not going to be satisfied until we
14 achieve the objective. We are doing that through a
15 combination of ensuring that personnel, ranges, fuel,
16 parts, aircraft are all available at the right time.

17 Because if any one of those elements of readiness is
18 not there, you are not going to train and be ready. So
19 that is a focus for us. It is the compilation of manpower,
20 training ranges, and assets at the exact right time.

21 Senator Shaheen: General Allvin.

22 General Allvin: Yes, Senator, unfortunately for the
23 Air Force, those are correct as well. And what is not good
24 news, but is better news, so we are up to, in Fiscal Year
25 2023, this is in Fiscal Year 2023, we had eight aircraft

1 that did meet the MC.

2 That is not nearly where we need to be, but eight
3 better than two. And ours is a combination of a bit of a
4 spiral we are trying to come out from, which is, as we
5 have, 53 percent of our aviation assets are right now
6 exceeding their expected lifecycle, average 29-year-old
7 platform.

8 So, they break 25 percent more, they take 15 percent
9 longer to fix. And because of that, they are longer times
10 in depot, which means we can -- we have a fixed a depot
11 pipeline so we can put fewer through depot, so therefore it
12 has that spiraling effect. And because they are finding
13 new and interesting ways to break, it takes some of our
14 best maintainers to be able to keep those.

15 So, as we are trying to transition to these more
16 modernized platforms that is where some of our maintenance
17 shortfalls come. So not an excuse. It is a condition we
18 need to work through. I think another one, the real good
19 recommendations that they made that we are trying to action
20 on right now is leaving these sustainment reviews for each
21 of the systems that get after the individual pieces of the
22 maintenance and supply issues.

23 We have completed several of those sustainment reviews
24 right now. We are trying to develop useful mitigation
25 plans, not just mitigation plans we can submit as a report

1 and make it complete, but the things we can action on
2 through things like condition-based maintenance plus and
3 stockpiling of supplies and those sorts of things.

4 So, we are on a journey, and but again, the answer to
5 the question is, these are accurate numbers.

6 Senator Shaheen: Madam Chair, can I ask General
7 Thompson to also respond?

8 General Thompson: Senator, we agree with the GAO's
9 assessment as well. Such an incredibly dynamic period
10 addressing a newly contested domain. We don't really have
11 the readiness metrics yet. We don't have the systems.

12 We don't have the training infrastructure. But I
13 absolutely believe we have the plan that we are executing
14 to. We had \$390 million in this year's budget focused on
15 that plan. And our request has another \$340 million above
16 that.

17 So, I agree with the assessment, but I believe we have
18 the plan to get after the readiness needs of the Space
19 Force.

20 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you. And General
21 Thompson, I think your admonition that on time budgeting
22 and being able to count on a budget from Congress is really
23 important to all of the work that you all need to do, so I
24 hope that we can comply with your request. Thank you,
25 Madam Chair.

1 Senator Hirono: Senator Kelly.

2 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to
3 start with General Allvin and Ms. Maurer on the pilot
4 retention issue in the Air Force. And if I have time, I
5 want to address this to the Admiral and General Smith as
6 well.

7 So, I think we share this concern about pilot
8 retention challenges in the Air Force and what this means
9 for the future joint fight. I think the Air Force
10 currently has a 10-year requirement after a pilot gets
11 winged, but I want to get into some specifics on this.

12 So, what does the data say about when pilots are
13 separating from service after their commitment? Is it
14 -- does it tend to be right after the 10-year commitment,
15 or the folks tend to stay in for a little bit longer and
16 then get out before they, let's say, complete 20 years of
17 service?

18 And then what is like the root cause? Like what are
19 they citing as reasons why they are leaving after a 10-year
20 commitment to the Air Force?

21 General Allvin: Senator, thank you for that. So, the
22 biggest decision point is after that 10-year commitment.
23 So, it is not like it is a cliff after that, but that
24 initial 10-year commitment is where the first decision
25 point is.

1 I will talk in a second about the rationale why. And
2 as we understand -- when they approach that 10-year
3 commitment from their pilot training time, as you know,
4 there is that year to get trained and maybe some time you
5 have to wait to get to pilot training. So, you may be 11
6 or 12 years in.

7 What we had been doing in the past, and we have been
8 approaching them at that 11 or 12 year point, and at that
9 point as uniform service, you are making decisions two or
10 three years before then. So, what we have done now is
11 offer these incentives to them three years before the
12 commitment is done.

13 Now, obviously, we are asking for a longer commitment,
14 but at that time, it is helping them cement their future,
15 see where their families are, and have that predictability.

16 Senator Kelly: The incentives, you mean the pilot
17 bonus --

18 General Allvin: The pilot aviation incentives. But
19 also, we are also offering non-monetary incentives. And
20 this goes to your point of why are they getting out? Why
21 are they leaving?

22 And we had an air crew engagement survey that happens
23 every year, the one we just had in March, had three primary
24 reasons. One of them was location stability. The second
25 one was compensation. And the third one is resource

1 initiatives to get after the additional duties because
2 pilots like to fly.

3 So, the location stability, we are doing things now
4 like trying to reduce the number of overseas deployments.
5 Those with the reduction in Afghanistan and Iraq are sort
6 of helping that naturally as a byproduct. We are looking
7 at some of the second assignment in place opportunities.
8 One of the advantages of technology is it allows us to be
9 more interactive with the individuals in the assignment
10 process.

11 Before, it needs the Air Force, we shape your career.
12 Now we have talent marketplace where they can go out and at
13 least provide some more input, have a little more agency in
14 their future assignments. So, we are helping them with
15 that. And then on the resourcing issues, we are looking at
16 other opportunities to shed some of those additional
17 duties.

18 And on the compensation is the aviation bonus. So
19 those are the three ways that we are addressing. But we
20 are really interested to see, we just started this, to see
21 what the feedback is on the engaging them earlier. Because
22 they are making those decisions not the year of, but a
23 couple of years.

24 Senator Kelly: Admiral, has the Navy done anything
25 here with trying to provide some stability in one location

1 for pilots? I know in my 25 years in the Navy, that was
2 something that you would hear the Air Force would do but
3 wasn't typically something the Marine -- or the Navy did.
4 And I am pretty sure the Marines probably did not as well.
5 Are they -- is either service doing that now?

6 Admiral Franchetti: Yes. I think, you know, just
7 like the Air Force, we are working hard to retain people
8 and look for some of those non-monetary incentives. Of
9 course, the monetary ones are important.

10 Being able to award the bonuses and incentive pays at
11 the right time to help them with their decision is one
12 thing. Some of the other things that we are looking at
13 really are, as you mentioned, family stability, very
14 important. Some of the reasons cited for departing are
15 high operational tempo, long deployment lengths.

16 And again, not enough flying time, because they do
17 really like to fly. The other one is looking at potential
18 alternative career paths and designating a professional
19 flight instructor. And because some people would like to
20 do that, as opposed to moving on through some of the other
21 career choices.

22 Senator Kelly: General.

23 General Smith: Senator, along the same lines. We
24 are, through our process called talent management. We are
25 just trying to treat each individual Marine as an

1 individual. Some pilots want to fly a lot more. There are
2 some who want a three year out because they have been
3 flying for eight years straight.

4 So, we are offering not just to pilots, but all
5 Marines, we will ask them, what would it take to keep you?
6 And they say, I want to stay here at Myanmar for another
7 three years, then we can get to yes. If it is, I want to
8 stay here at Myanmar forever that is probably a no. But if
9 you -- if we can extend you. If we can give you three
10 years out of the cockpit, you do a forward air controller
11 tour that helps.

12 You know, so there is three Marines at this table, and
13 we all do it because we love being in the Marine Corps.
14 That will only get you so far because we do have to
15 compensate them, can't compete with airlines, but we have
16 to give them a career path that matches what they need and
17 what the Corps needs.

18 But we are doing stabilization in their geographic
19 location of choice anywhere we can, because we have to
20 retain those pilots, because they are a huge element of our
21 lethality.

22 Senator Kelly: Some of our allies also will allow,
23 and I think this what you alluded to as a in maybe an
24 instructor pilot but allows somebody to be sort of a
25 squadron pilot. They don't advance so much in their

1 career, they stay in a squadron, and that helps in some
2 retention. I don't think we have gone that far yet. Is
3 that accurate?

4 General Smith: Right.

5 Senator Kelly: Right. Thank you.

6 Senator Hirono: Senator Duckworth.

7 Senator Duckworth: Thank you. I am going to follow
8 up on Senator Kelly's questioning about retaining aviation
9 flight crew. General George, the Army made headlines this
10 week when Human Resources Command alerted hundreds of
11 active duty aviation officers that their service
12 commitments are about three years longer than previously
13 thought due to an HR error. And I actually am quoting the
14 language.

15 And General Allvin, last year, Congress gave the Air
16 Force the ability to offer retention bonuses to pilots up
17 to three years away from contract expiration, in addition
18 to a base preference for future assignment location.

19 And to date, the Air Force has not published its
20 aviation retention bonus or base preference plan for
21 eligible aviators for the current Fiscal Year, and we are
22 -- I mean, we are well into the second quarter.

23 Gentlemen, are these issues the result of slow
24 staffing processes on behalf of your service? Are your
25 human resource staff properly trained and equipped to

1 administer these types of programs? What is going on? You
2 have this in the Air Force, this resourcing and yet you are
3 not using it. And how is it that we are telling people, by
4 the way, you owe us three more years than you initially
5 -- we initially told you because of an HR error? What is
6 going on?

7 General George: Senator, yes, there was an error that
8 you read, that actually they should have known that they
9 had, the branch ADSO or the additional service obligation
10 that wasn't on there.

11 We are treating that, you know, going to every
12 individual. For some it is not. It kind of gets back to
13 the individual preference, hey I was planning on staying
14 anyway. There are some that it is a challenge for, and our
15 Human Resources Command CG, General Drew, also an aviator,
16 is reaching out to every one of those directly.

17 Senator Duckworth: But you are not answering my
18 question. You are putting it back on the individual
19 service member. What I asked you is what is going on with
20 your HR training and your personnel that they are making
21 these kinds of mistakes.

22 General George: Well, I would agree with you. We
23 need to make sure that we don't have mistakes like that.
24 But like I said, we did -- we have had a mistake. We did
25 identify it and we are just trying to deal with it right

1 --

2 Senator Duckworth: What are you going to do to fix
3 the problem -- with your HR --?

4 General George: -- directly to take care of --

5 Senator Duckworth: -- so that it doesn't happen
6 again?

7 General George: And we are addressing that as well.
8 As far as how -- what gets into, you know, how the service
9 obligation. The other thing is we are bringing on and we
10 had -- I do think, our integrated personnel and pay system,
11 you know, getting data.

12 We had a bunch of old systems that were kind of -- had
13 been kluged together, and we are working through that. And
14 I think that that will help us. But obviously, for all of
15 us that have been in here, anything -- you know, that
16 something happens to your own pay or anything else, that
17 has a big impact, and we realize that, and we are focused
18 on it.

19 Senator Duckworth: General Allvin, it is six months
20 into the Fiscal Year, and you still haven't published your
21 retention bonus and your base preference.

22 General Allvin: This is something I never like to
23 hear it hearing, but I will tell you, first heard. I will
24 get back -- I was not aware that that was not being done.
25 I just extolled it as a virtue of what we are doing, so,

1 Senator, very soon I will find out what it is --

2 Senator Duckworth: Okay. Thank you.

3 General Allvin: -- and I will personally make sure
4 that you have that, because that is certainly not -- is
5 certainly, things are credibility if you don't follow
6 through on the things you are saying we are doing.

7 Senator Duckworth: Yes. Thank you. I want to
8 backtrack and talk about aviation safety. I do want to
9 offer my condolences to the families, friends, and
10 colleagues of those soldiers killed in last week's Apache
11 crash in Alaska. As an aviator and a member of this
12 committee, I am following it closely and I have asked the
13 Army to come back, once you have done all your
14 investigations, to brief me.

15 This is the second-class A that has rocked the Army's
16 aviation community in the last two months. And aviation
17 units are currently on a stand down. Much needed. The
18 Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force all hosted safety stand
19 down days in recent years after their own strings of
20 mishaps.

21 Study after study points to common causal factors,
22 inexperience in the training schoolhouses and in the
23 operational cockpit, increasing workload on the flight line
24 and in maintenance hangars, and a lack of timely access to
25 spare aircraft parts.

1 General George, Admiral Franchetti, General Smith,
2 General Allvin, how is your service working to address
3 these factors to prevent future tragedies, and what can we
4 do to help you?

5 General George: Senator, as you know, from being an
6 aviator, it is something you have to constantly address.
7 Before this, the previous four years had been the safest
8 aviation for us in history. But, you know, you obviously
9 have to keep focused on it right now.

10 So, we are doing exactly what you said with the safety
11 stand down. They were looking at everything out there, how
12 we are -- what are, you know, the crew mix, maintenance,
13 TTPs, you know, and all the things that -- the tactics that
14 people are using.

15 We are studying that. That was part of the address by
16 the Chief of Staff in the stand down, and we will obviously
17 get the investigations. You know, we got the safety center
18 that is out there looking at both of those right now, and
19 we will certainly follow up with you.

20 Admiral Franchetti: Beyond just aviation accidents,
21 we have had other accidents and we have learned many things
22 from. I would say, two things that we have done to really
23 try to get after them. First, we elevated our safety
24 center to a two-star safety command.

25 The safety center dealt primarily with individual

1 units, and information wasn't shared across the broader
2 community. And the safety command, now he assesses all of
3 the oversight entities, and they do regional assessments as
4 well as community assessments and provide that information.

5 So, we are already learning a lot from them. I think
6 the other one is really going after the root causes through
7 our get real, get better cultural renovation that we are
8 focused on right now, is really identifying them.

9 So, if the root cause for many of these things is
10 fatigue, we are really emphasizing using our human factors,
11 engineers to understand what is happening, and then how do
12 we better train our people to know what to look for, create
13 better watch builds, and move forward from there.

14 General Smith: Senator, the last part of your
15 question, steady, predictable operations, and maintenance
16 dollars for parts and flight hours is the best thing that
17 can be done for flight pilot proficiency.

18 We do twice annual safety stand downs preemptively.
19 We call them BITS, back in the saddle training. But also
20 in that preemptive lane, we just had a V-22 have an in-
21 flight emergency a few weeks ago at Cherry Point. The
22 group commander said -- and the pilots landed it very
23 safely. So rather than wait for something, they simulated
24 that same emergency.

25 They stood the entire group down, a colonel level

1 command, for two days and they made every single pilot go
2 back through that scenario until they got that exactly
3 right. Because we don't want to wait for an incident.

4 We always want to be proactive. And for us, I am the
5 safety officer of the Marine Corps. Safety Division works
6 for me. There is no one between me and the colonel who
7 runs it. It is me, so I am responsible to you.

8 Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

9 General Allvin: Similarly, for the Air Force, the
10 last two years. So far in Fiscal Year 2023, the same as
11 last year, 1.2 per 100,000 flying hours. We would like to
12 get that obviously to zero. We have had a couple of very
13 safe years.

14 But to your point, we -- and to General George's
15 point, we have got to be -- even though you might have the
16 safest on record, it only takes one or two, and suddenly it
17 becomes the worst on record.

18 We have found over -- our analysis shows that over the
19 last two years, our incidents have been a product of
20 material, as you mentioned, risk management, and
21 noncompliance with guidance. So, we really, we have been
22 attacking the material.

23 To General Smith's point, we want to make sure we have
24 the right parts and availability. But the risk management
25 and noncompliance, these are things we are finding those

1 Venn diagrams, and our safety commander, she is brilliant
2 in getting back and finding root causes, reeducating, and I
3 think it is those human elements that we need to continue
4 to focus on with all the environmentalals that my colleagues
5 here talked about.

6 Crew resource management, understanding the risk. We
7 are also starting to better integrate our human performance
8 wing to understand those things in fatigue that we can now
9 hold ourselves better accountable for with the advent of
10 technology. But those elements are the things that we are
11 really focusing on now.

12 Senator Duckworth: You have been very generous, Madam
13 Chairman.

14 Senator Hirono: Senator Blumenthal.

15 Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Madam Chair. I want to
16 focus on a different aspect of readiness and personnel,
17 which is recruitment. And in particular, the -- some of
18 the numbers, that I know are troubling you as they have
19 troubled us, of the levels of recruitment and the failure
20 to make many of the recruiting goals, which I think is
21 troubling not only for the present, but also what it
22 indicates for the future.

23 And I note, particularly General George, the numbers
24 on the Army that are provided here today, only 23 percent
25 of Americans aged 17 to 24 are qualified to serve without a

1 waiver, which I think is a pretty damning indictment of
2 education, health, however you want to characterize it.

3 And the as you say, the problem is not just finding
4 qualified recruits. Propensity to serve among young men
5 and women is also the lowest in recent history at 9
6 percent. Only 21 percent of youth from Generation Z
7 believes that Army culture is consistent with their values
8 and beliefs. And 56 percent report that their impressions
9 of the Army is mostly negative in parentheses, are driven
10 by non-Army media.

11 I don't know how we keep our military as the greatest
12 in the world, and it is now. As a parent of two sons who
13 have served, one in the Marine Corps, the other is a Navy
14 SEAL, I don't know what we can do to change the culture,
15 the propensity to serve, the readiness and physical, and
16 mental and emotional and educational qualification.

17 But I would like to know from the services, perhaps
18 beginning with you, General George, are we strategizing
19 this fundamental longer-range problem. I know that the
20 Army wants to meet its immediate recruiting goals.

21 That is certainly on your mind. But what about the
22 larger problems? Is there a strategy in the services for
23 recruiting? We have been talking mostly about retention so
24 far, I think.

25 General George: Yes, Senator. So, I mean, obviously,

1 we talk about this all the time, and two aspects that you
2 kind of talked about. I mean, what are some of the
3 adjustments that we can make? But we are obviously, we are
4 having a big challenge and we don't -- we want to see this
5 also as an opportunity to change how we go about doing
6 things.

7 We have done some where it is like the future soldier
8 prep course that we are doing to get people in to actually
9 raise them. So, they go down and they are able then to
10 meet the physical standards, they are able to pass the
11 ASVAB test and that is working.

12 I mean, greater than 95 percent that have gone there
13 -- you know, going through that. And we are looking at how
14 we select recruiters. And do we have recruiters in the
15 right places? We are looking at JROTC programs, we are
16 looking at marketing.

17 And then, you know, we are just looking longer term at
18 how we approach this. You know, we are at the 50-year mark
19 of the all-volunteer force. What do we need to change?
20 And as I mentioned, you know, I enlisted right out of high
21 school and, you know, we have a lot of people in our
22 service have done that.

23 It is a great, you know, way to advance, and we just
24 got to -- you know, we are pouring our heart into getting
25 the message out. And I think everybody has got that and

1 across all the services. And so, you know, we have a big
2 part to play in that.

3 Senator Blumenthal: Admiral.

4 Admiral Franchetti: I would just add that we, too,
5 are doing a lot of the things that the Army is doing with
6 regards to having a future sailor prep course for physical
7 fitness. We just started that, and then this fall we will
8 be doing more on the academic side.

9 I think we are looking hard at our campaign, forged by
10 the sea, and working hard for it to make it to where all of
11 the young people will be able to get a better understanding
12 of what the Navy is all about and really what they can
13 learn and what they can have as a career in the Navy,
14 whether it is through social media, whether it is through
15 career fairs.

16 Making sure that we take the time to educate people
17 who may not live near the Navy, so they understand what it
18 is. We are kind of taking the approach of every sailor is
19 a recruiter and giving them opportunities to go back home,
20 talk about it, and be part of our fleet weeks, and engage
21 not only the youth but the influencers and their life
22 coaches, schoolteachers, principals, and then, of course,
23 their parents.

24 Senator Blumenthal: General.

25 General Smith: Senator, as you know, you don't join

1 the Marine Corps, you become a Marine. And that is what we
2 will stay with. We value our recruiters heavily. When our
3 recruiters finish a successful three-year recruiting tour,
4 they select their duty station, or they are sent to one of
5 our service schools.

6 My own son is a recruiter right now. I was a
7 recruiter. Most of our senior leaders were either on the
8 recruiting side or the drill field side, fleet Marine force
9 specific, all recruiters. The key for us is that
10 professional recruiting force and incentivizing them to do
11 great work.

12 For us, those recruiters, it is a big reward in that
13 the bulk of our meritorious promotions go to the recruiting
14 force because we believe it is so important. And the final
15 thing that I think is the secret sauce for us, the
16 Commanding General of Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San
17 Diego, and then recruiting Depot Parris Island dual hat as
18 the Commanding Generals of the Eastern and Western
19 recruiting region.

20 So, they have to both find and train the individuals.
21 So, you better find good ones and you better train them
22 right, because the same General is responsible for both.
23 And we just value the recruiting force, and we stay on it.
24 We made it a mission last year. We will make it this year,
25 sir.

1 General Allvin: I know we are over, but I will --

2 Senator Blumenthal: General, I am over time, but --

3 General Allvin: Thank you, Chair. Because I think
4 this is very important. By the time it gets down to this
5 end of the table, there may be fewer things just because we
6 have lunches together -- we understand this is not just a
7 service problem. We have many meetings together. We look
8 across the table. So, I am stealing things from what Eric
9 is doing. And this idea of -- for us as the Air Force,
10 last year, we barely made, and this year it looks like we
11 will not.

12 So, this is -- we have a wakeup call. We are looking
13 at everything. Why do we have this particular restriction
14 in place? Why -- and sometimes it was just because we
15 could before and because we were able to make it. And that
16 is part of it.

17 But, Senator, I want to talk about your larger point,
18 which is all these things are making it harder on the
19 outside. And we are trying to figure out that as a group
20 of senior leaders, and I think one of them is this, that
21 there is a cacophony of narratives out there that we are
22 competing with.

23 Again, not an excuse. It is just a fact. It is
24 -- now, there are so many different media that the youth of
25 America can get insights from and get their impressions

1 from and so we need to be both amplified and unified in the
2 way that we describe the value of service. And that this
3 is not something that puts your life on hold, it is
4 something that accelerates your life.

5 So, there is a combined thing that we need to do to
6 have this awareness because there is a lack of familiarity
7 with the military service. And so that is -- those are
8 some of the things that we have been talking about as we
9 look across the services do that, in addition to what we
10 are each doing at individual services.

11 General Thompson: And Senator, just briefly, if I
12 can, since our challenge is a lot different than everyone
13 else, our numbers are relatively small. We can't be in
14 every hometown and recruiting station, and we don't need to
15 be. So, we are looking a lot at new approaches to
16 recruiting, targeting regions, targeting specialties.

17 And when we look at that and the use of social media
18 and some of the things, there are perhaps things that we
19 can learn and trailblazer for the rest of the force that
20 may help them in future recruiting opportunities as well.

21 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you all.

22 Senator Hirono: Thank you. We will start a second
23 round of questioning. I am glad that you all get together
24 and learn from each other and share best practices as
25 applicable. And as long as we are on the subject of how

1 important recruiting and retention issues are, my
2 impression is that the Air Force and the Space Force have
3 fewer recruiting and retention challenges. Is that right?

4 Although, Admiral Allvin, you said that you are
5 currently facing some recruitment issues. But am I -- do
6 have the accurate impression that the two of you face fewer
7 of these kinds of challenges than the other services? And
8 if so, why?

9 Senator Hirono: Chair, I will try and then you can
10 go. But I think the Space Force is different because they
11 do have a lot of folks wanting to come in, and --

12 Senator Hirono: Yes, it is kind of a --

13 General Allvin: But ours is --

14 Senator Hirono: -- snazzy thing, I guess.

15 General Allvin: Ours is a disturbing trend because we
16 have made it all the time. This year, we are actually
17 seeing the things that the Army and the Department of Navy
18 -- the Navy has dealt with for a while, so that is why I
19 want to learn those lessons earlier. So, but overall, we
20 will be closer to meeting our numbers than perhaps some of
21 the other services.

22 Senator Hirono: So, what do you think is causing this
23 trend? All of the other kinds of opportunities that a
24 young person could have them besides joining the Air Force?

25 General Allvin: I think part of it is that we,

1 because we are always making our numbers before, we might
2 have maybe underpopulated our recruiting force, something I
3 am learning from my fellow -- from my Marine here that
4 says, the value of the recruiting force, the individual
5 face to face, that is how they are making their numbers.

6 The idea that we had some standards -- no, not really
7 standards, there were restrictions that we had that were
8 tighter than the DOD standards. So now we are finding if
9 we loosen those and we stay within the DOD standards, we
10 are allowing more to be able to come through our door.

11 So, we are like just, I said, we are looking at
12 everything we had done before that was maybe unnecessarily
13 restricted, and then we believe we are also -- there is
14 -- the chickens are coming home to roost with respect to
15 the propensity to serve, and we are going to have to
16 counter that as well in the Air Force.

17 Senator Hirono: Yes. And one of the trends being
18 that there are so few people who even qualify, and even
19 fewer still who are willing. This is for the Army and Navy
20 in particular. How important are the Junior ROTC programs
21 to your recruitment efforts?

22 General George: I will be real quick, Chair Hirono.
23 We have about 1,700 JROTC, and what we see is whether or
24 not people are actually in JROTC or not. If they have that
25 exposure, I think that is where it is helping us the most.

1 You know, we are at like 44 percent of the folks who
2 have a JROTC in their high school are more likely to serve.
3 So that is where I think it helps us. And we are looking
4 at how we can expand some of those. We are in the process
5 of doing that now.

6 Senator Hirono: What about Navy?

7 Admiral Franchetti: JROTC is very helpful for us, as
8 is the Sea Cadet Program. So again, the more opportunities
9 we have to expose people to what the Navy does and what it
10 can do for them, I think is a really great opportunity.

11 Senator Hirono: And how much of an inducement are the
12 educational opportunities that you all provide to people
13 who join, in terms of particularly, I suppose, of
14 recruiting and retention? Anyone want to respond? General
15 Allvin.

16 General Allvin: Yes, Chair Hirono. I will mention
17 one thing that we have reinstated this year that has been
18 very successful and is actually our enlisted college loan
19 repayment program.

20 So, these are individuals who are out of high school,
21 maybe thought right then they weren't -- that maybe
22 military service wasn't for them, have had a couple of
23 years of college and have built up some debt, and now we
24 are relooking that.

25 So, some of our incentives are just that way because

1 not only are we offering the ability to repay their college
2 education, but they can continue their education through
3 our community college of the Air Force and other
4 educational opportunities.

5 So, we are seeing some of that cohort coming in may be
6 a boost as well. So, we do believe that is an attractive
7 feature.

8 Senator Hirono: It is annoying how expensive college
9 is. So, do the other services also provide college
10 repayment programs?

11 General George: We have similar programs, Senator.

12 Senator Hirono: By the way, do you help with the cost
13 of graduate education, i.e. becoming lawyers? You need
14 your JAG. Do you pay for someone to go to law school?

15 General Smith: Chairman, I can tell you we do. We
16 have a program called, Funded Law Education Program. Those
17 individuals that we select from a very competitive board go
18 to law school. We pay. We also have PhD programs for
19 select individuals who fill things at the Marine Corps.

20 Senator Hirono: How long have you had that? Because
21 I have a JAG person on my staff who didn't get her law
22 school paid for.

23 General Smith: We have to -- we have a couple of
24 programs. We have a funded, which is pretty small because
25 it is expensive, but we also have excess leave law program.

1 We have several --

2 Senator Hirono: I think that that -- it seems to me
3 that the educational opportunities that you provide could
4 be a big incentive for people to consider joining.

5 I just want to get to one thing. In recent years,
6 storm damage has had a major impact on DOD infrastructure
7 in places such as Tyndall Air Force Base, Camp Lejeune, and
8 the Army's Military Ocean Terminals, Sunny Point.

9 What plans do your services have to improve the
10 resilience of your facilities in the face of extreme
11 weather? And what kind of readiness impacts have you
12 observed when our facilities are not resilient? And I
13 would like the GAO, Ms. Maurer, to chime in also. So,
14 let's do this really quickly.

15 General George: Chair Hirono, yes, we are looking at
16 that. Some of that is when anything that we are going to
17 construct new is make sure it is at the right standards.

18 The other things that we are looking at is actually
19 for power, having, you know, ways that we can store power
20 so that we have resiliency. And then the other aspect I
21 would say would be cyber and strengthening yourself there.

22 Senator Hirono: Admiral.

23 Admiral Franchetti: Similarly, we look at that. We
24 are especially concerned about any sea level rise as we are
25 building our new piers. Making sure that they are above

1 the 100-year floodplain, as well as our dry-dock down in
2 Norfolk Naval Shipyard. Building a floodwall there again
3 to make sure that it is protected from any sea level rise.

4 Senator Hirono: General Smith.

5 General Smith: Senator, those bases are our power
6 projection platforms, so they are vital to us. Camp
7 Lejeune, for example, rebuilding after that significant
8 hurricane. It is about rebuilding the building such that
9 they are ready to withstand a hurricane.

10 We have bases such as Marine Corps Recruit Depot,
11 Parris Island, who export power. We have our own micro
12 grid, and we are actually off the grid at Albany, our
13 logistics base. And we pass power back out into the
14 communities by being off base. That is a combat multiplier
15 lethality.

16 For us, it is less about green than it is about being
17 able to project power from those platforms when we are cut
18 off from outside power.

19 General Allvin: And Chair Hirono, the same programs
20 as the other services do. I would say in addition, we also
21 have our instituting energy resilience exercises where we
22 make sure we -- what happens when the base goes dark to
23 make sure we have a primary alternate contingency
24 emergency, so we can operate in those energy degraded.

25 But to the extent of building codes in hurricane zones

1 and flood plains, we do the very same thing with our --

2 Senator Hirono: Yes. Maybe Space Force doesn't have
3 quite those kinds of issues.

4 General Thompson: We -- no, Madam Chair, we have
5 exactly the same issues. The one additional factor is
6 since it primarily our missions are employed in place, we
7 operate every day in our satellite command control centers.

8 We also create redundancy in backup, such that when
9 you have weather problems in one area, you can transfer the
10 mission to other areas and continue in that regard. So, we
11 do all the things the other services have in terms of power
12 and building codes, but then we also build in redundant
13 control centers to be able to continue to operate.

14 Senator Hirono: Ms. Maurer.

15 Ms. Maurer: Yes, it is great to hear all the actions
16 being taken by the services to address the issue of climate
17 change vulnerability. It affects all of the services.
18 Some of our work has identified some of the mammoth
19 environmental -- future environmental liabilities facing
20 the Department.

21 I think one of my colleagues testified recently on
22 that, and said that that price tag is about \$91 billion,
23 and that is on top of \$137 billion in deferred maintenance
24 across the DOD facility enterprise.

25 So, this is an infrastructure issue in part that sort

1 of mirrors some of the broader infrastructure challenges
2 facing the country as a whole.

3 Senator Hirono: Thank you. Senator Sullivan.

4 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going
5 to continue my line of questioning, Admiral, with the
6 Navy's support for the Marine Corps. The Navy's forward
7 deployed naval force in Sasebo, Japan was cut from five
8 amphibys to four. The Navy wants to cut it again to three,
9 my understanding is.

10 With a 32 percent readiness rate, that really means
11 one amphib ship will be ready for deployment out of Sasebo
12 in the INDOPACOM theater. Again, to me, this is a real
13 problem. Is that the current plan for the Navy ought to
14 Sasebo?

15 And then, General Smith, I would like to follow up
16 with a question to you. How effective is the 31st MEU with
17 one ship? It is really not even a MEU or an ARG at that
18 point, is it? But why don't we begin with you, Admiral.
19 Is that the plan?

20 Admiral Franchetti: We currently have five amphibious
21 ships there, and we are currently reviewing our strategic
22 laydown plan. And once that is finally approved, we will
23 be happy to come back and brief you on that.

24 Senator Sullivan: So, is that going to three ships,
25 you believe?

1 Admiral Franchetti: The five ships.

2 Senator Sullivan: Five to three. That is what I am
3 hearing. Is that what you are contemplating?

4 Admiral Franchetti: So, I am -- the strategic laydown
5 review is still ongoing. Has not been briefed to the
6 Secretary yet, so it would be premature for me to say what
7 those --

8 Senator Sullivan: Okay. General, I assume that the
9 Navy goes to, from five to three amphibs, 32 percent
10 readiness rate means essentially one amphib. How effective
11 is the 31st MEU -- a lot of articles in the last 48 hours
12 on how ineffective the 31st MEU is because it has no ships.
13 So, one ship for the 31st MEU. Is that even a MEU? What
14 is that?

15 General Smith: Sir --

16 Senator Hirono: Do you mind if -- I need to enable
17 General Thompson, who has a hard stop, to enable you to go
18 and testify at another committee. Thank you very much --

19 Senator Sullivan: Thanks, General.

20 Senator Hirono: -- for being here.

21 General Thompson: Madam Chair, Ranking Member
22 Sullivan, thank you so much. Will certainly take other
23 questions for the record.

24 Senator Sullivan: Yes, thanks.

25 General Smith: Senator, anything less than three

1 ships is not an amphibious ready group or MEU. It is an
2 amphibious task force. When you do not have a full three
3 ships, depending on which ship you don't have, if you
4 didn't have the big deck, for example, you lose 10 F-35s,
5 you lose 4 C-53s, etcetera.

6 So, you have to have three, but it is not just for
7 deployment. You have to have those ships to train. The
8 first time that you are sailing away into harm's way,
9 because crises happen when you don't expect them and you
10 don't want them to happen, that is not the time for a young
11 first lieutenant, V-22 pilot, to do their first deck
12 landing qual.

13 Or for a young lance corporal driving an amphib combat
14 vehicle into a wet well in 3-foot seas to do it -- so you
15 need them for training safety, but you have to have them
16 for combat readiness. So, three ships, all stop.

17 Senator Sullivan: So, I am assuming the Marine Corps'
18 recommendation to Navy would be, as they are doing their
19 strategic laydown, don't go from five to three amphibs at
20 the forward naval force in Sasebo.

21 General Smith: Senator, what we would say is provide
22 three ships for the ARG. We wouldn't say how to do it, but
23 provide three ships for the ARG.

24 Senator Sullivan: To train and deploy.

25 General Smith: To train and to deploy. And I am

1 mindful I have got the former 31st MEU Commander sitting
2 right behind me. He is the mean looking one. He just
3 finished that deployment. He and I talk about this all the
4 time.

5 Senator Sullivan: Let me go on to the point I raised
6 in the -- in my opening statement. The Marine course
7 requirement is for a 35 landing ship medium naval vessels
8 for Force Design and the Marine littoral regiments.

9 Right now, it looks like the Navy budget through
10 Fiscal Year 2028 will be for six. So, again, a combination
11 of Admiral Franchetti and General Smith, why is the Navy
12 not even in the ballpark on what the Marine littoral
13 regiments need.

14 This goes again to my broader point. A lot of Marine
15 Generals are saying Force Design is meant to support the
16 Navy. I hear that. Okay. Naval forces. Okay. We are
17 going to shoot Chinese warships out of the ocean. Okay.
18 But the Navy isn't coming back on, and we are going to make
19 Force Design successful.

20 To my very obvious reading, there is not much support
21 at all. So, is the Navy plan on trying to get to 35 LSMS
22 at all? And General Smith, is a Marine littoral regiment a
23 viable fighting force without LSMS, because right now you
24 are not going to get many. You are not going to get hardly
25 any at all. And I will start with you, Admiral. You plan

1 on going about five or six?

2 Admiral Franchetti: So, the Navy is continuing to
3 work with the Marine Corps to identify the requirements,
4 and we will continue to work to support them throughout our
5 shipbuilding plan. As far as the readiness goes, you know,
6 we are fully committed to supporting the Marine Corps
7 training requirements.

8 We have met all of our deployment requirements. In
9 the particular case of 31st MEU, we were able to surge a
10 different ship, the Ashland, to support them after an
11 emergent repair to the Rushmore. So again, we are fully
12 committed to supporting the Marine Corps training
13 requirements.

14 Senator Sullivan: And I am not talking about just the
15 training. Force Design, again, lays out the need for 35
16 LSMs. Is that even remotely in the Navy's 30-year
17 shipbuilding plan?

18 Admiral Franchetti: Again, we continue to work with
19 the Marine Corps to define that requirement and put that
20 into our budget as it goes forward.

21 Senator Sullivan: General, is an LMR a viable
22 fighting force without any means of delivering it?

23 General Smith: Senator, it has to have --

24 Senator Sullivan: Be viable with five or six LSMs?

25 General Smith: Well, the -- our studies show that

1 maximized one MLR requires nine landing ship mediums. So,
2 nine for one MLR to absolutely maximize it. The organic
3 mobility for the MLR, Marine littoral, also comes from our
4 C-130s.

5 As you noted, sir, we added a second squadron to the
6 Pacific. So, we need all of our organic mobility, L class,
7 LSMs, etcetera, all the way down. And the one thing I
8 would want to note, sir, is that the Force Design issue was
9 for the Joint Force. It certainly supports the naval
10 force, but it supports the Joint Force.

11 And for Admiral Franchetti's point, what we want is
12 -- we just -- neither of us want a gap in time. So, when
13 one ship is trading for another one, any day you lose at
14 sea is a day lost. That is what no one wants.

15 Senator Sullivan: Let me ask one final question to
16 you, General Smith. I want you to respond to some of the
17 criticism. I mentioned in my opening statement that the
18 MAGTF ability to kick in the door anywhere in the world and
19 sustain itself for weeks in heavy combat to enable the
20 Marine Corps to continue to be the nation's 911 force is
21 being somehow degraded or de-emphasized by Force Design.

22 I know you don't agree with that. It is a criticism
23 that is out there from some very respectable Marines. What
24 is your argument against that? And doesn't that argument
25 have some weight when we are looking, again no offense,

1 Admiral, at a Navy that is not supporting you guys, at a
2 Navy that won't get the amphibs that you need, a Navy that
3 won't get you the LSMs that you need?

4 I mean, the Marine Corps does become less effective as
5 the number of amphibs decreases. That is a fact. What is
6 your response to those kinds of questions that I am
7 raising, that others have raised, including the amphib
8 component?

9 General Smith: Thanks, Senator. The Marine Corps is
10 ready. So, sir, we have and have retained the same --

11 Senator Sullivan: And the critics are saying, well,
12 you just -- and I listed some of it. You just divested an
13 enormous amount of combat power. I said, I used a line
14 like that. The Commandant didn't agree it was enormous. I
15 think it is pretty enormous, but maybe not enormous, let's
16 just say significant. I don't think anyone would disagree
17 with the numbers I read are significant.

18 General Smith: So, let me focus the part on
19 expeditionary force and readiness, and kicking in the door,
20 as you said, because I agree, both the --

21 Senator Sullivan: And sustainability --

22 General Smith: And sustainability. The 82nd and
23 114th Congress both gave a sense of the Congress that we
24 should be most ready when -- a position of the Congress,
25 pardon me, most ready when the nation is least ready.

1 And we firmly believe that. So, we have seven new
2 headquarters. We have the infantry battalions. We have
3 the fixed wing squadrons, the combat engineer platoons,
4 reconnaissance platoons, HIMARS batteries, artillery
5 batteries.

6 We have those to deploy, heel to toe Marine
7 Expeditionary Force, but what we do not have is the
8 amphibious ships. So, when you are talking global crisis
9 response kicking in the door, you have to get there.

10 So those amphibs are absolutely vital because we have
11 the forces that are ready to go to the pier, but they have
12 to have the amphibious shipping to deploy. That is what
13 makes us ready, those combinations. But the Marines are,
14 in fact, ready to go, sir.

15 Senator Sullivan: Madam Chair, can I ask one more
16 question? I didn't want General George to be so lonely
17 over there in the corner, so --

18 Senator Hirono: Only if he can respond in less than a
19 minute.

20 Senator Sullivan: So, General, two initiatives, one
21 that is taking place in Alaska that I think is going well
22 is a stand up of the 11th Airborne Division, and your work
23 on multi-domain task force. Said in some ways, I don't
24 know who is mimicking who, but in some ways, it does look
25 like Marine Corps Force Design and littoral regiments.

1 Your multi-domain task force, how are both of those
2 initiatives going? I talked to General McConville. I know
3 you are looking at a third multi-domain task force for
4 deployment. We think Alaska is a very strategically
5 important place that you might want to look at those there.
6 Can you just give the committee an update on those two
7 initiatives that are important for our nation's defense?

8 General George: Senator, I will start with the 11th
9 Airborne. And I know you -- we just had a very big Arctic
10 exercise. So, I mean, really what we are focused on is
11 reestablishing ourselves as Arctic experts up there.

12 And I think, General Eifler and that whole team up
13 there is doing great things. They just did a Joint Force
14 entry up there, had 8,000 people. We have given them the
15 new Arctic equipment and they have got CAT Ds. So very
16 good training up there. And then, you know, working some
17 of that with our partners.

18 Senator Sullivan: And is that still the number one
19 requested unit in the U.S. Army?

20 General George: It is up there as far as, you know,
21 places that people want to go. Definitely, we saw a
22 definite uptick on that up there. So, the other thing is
23 on the multi-domain task force, and we stood up -- I stood
24 up the first one several years ago as the First Corps
25 commander.

1 Very capable units that are exercising right now
2 across the Pacific. We have the other one that is out in
3 Europe supporting EUCOM and is very active out there. We
4 have one temporarily stationed right now down in Hawaii.

5 And there is two more that we are actually -- you
6 know, are part of our Army structure that is coming up,
7 that we are standing up with those capabilities. We
8 haven't made any final decisions. Those are, you know,
9 forthcoming on where those assets and those capabilities
10 would go.

11 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

12 Senator Hirono: I thank each of you for your time
13 today, and we will continue to dialog with you. And I also
14 want to thank you, Ms. Maurer. This hearing is adjourned.

15 [Whereupon, at 4:53 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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