

STATEMENT  
OF  
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AS DELIVERED TO THE  
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
ON  
THE POSTURE OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

## **Introduction**

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, and distinguished members of this committee, thank you for this opportunity to present the annual report on the Marine Corps. More importantly, thank you for your continued support and leadership over this challenging year. I believe strongly that major change in existing force structure and ways of doing business are needed in this era of renewed great power competition. The strategic environment the Marine Corps and joint force operate in has changed, as has the domestic context as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 and related relief measures. We must therefore make appropriate adjustments to our investment plans to ensure a proper return on the taxpayers' investment. The promotion and sustainment of the Marine Corps that our nation and fleets will need in 2030 and beyond requires your continued active support.

Since testifying last year, our nation has engaged in a long overdue conversation on race and social justice sparked by several visible incidents of institutional racism, and perhaps more importantly – how to remedy the inequities of the present. As with all other Americans, I – and every other Marine – have acknowledged these challenges, and will continue to do our part to overcome them once and for all. While confronting issues of inequality, we have simultaneously endured the adverse consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Like millions of others, Marines and their families across the country and globe suffered the consequences of isolation, closure of our public schools, and increased childcare demands; and like those millions of other Americans, Marines made the necessary sacrifices to stop the spread. I am proud of every one of those Marines with their collective leadership and of their ability to rapidly adapt and lead by example.

Our nation witnessed a small but violent minority attempt to subvert the rule of law through an overt act of violent coercion on January 6, 2021. Like most every other American, I was shocked by this attack on our democracy. I was even more dismayed to learn that some of those engaged in that attack had previously served in the military – to include the United States Marine Corps. Thankfully, we as a nation and military have done as we always do – learned, endured, and grown stronger. We have and will continue to actively work to identify recruits and Marines who hold extremist views and we look forward to participating in the Secretary of Defense's new Countering Extremism Working Group to develop additional methods of keeping extremists from within our ranks.

Over the past year, I have continued to communicate my understanding of the future demands of naval expeditionary warfare and maritime gray zone competition. Related to the future of naval campaigns, I have articulated a case for change to reinforce and expand existing naval warfighting advantages and create future strategic advantages. It is abundantly clear that a future operating environment characterized by a maturing and proliferating precision strike regime will place heavy demands on our Nation's Naval Services. We are not yet organized, trained, equipped, or postured to meet those demands and support fleet operations. This is no longer a controversial assertion as it was when my predecessor first uttered it. The vast majority of defense professionals – including the Members of the bipartisan *Future of Defense Task Force* – perceive the same challenges I do in the emerging operating environment, as well as the urgent need for real innovation and rapid change in response. Although there is an ongoing, healthy debate about how and what we should change across the Armed Services, there are very few

lining up to defend the status quo. We must continue to discuss these changes, but defense professionals have almost unanimously acknowledged that real change is required – and soon.

Though some things require substantial change, we should be clear to acknowledge those foundational tenets which remain as relevant and operationally suitable today as they have been over the previous 70 years. In 1952, Members of Congress noted the Marine Corps “can prevent the growth of potentially large conflagrations by prompt and vigorous action during their incipient stages. The nation’s shock troops must be the most ready when the nation is least ready...to provide a balanced force-in-readiness for a naval campaign and, at the same time, a ground and air striking force ready to suppress or contain international disturbances short of large-scale war...” This role as the nation’s force-in-readiness, prepared to create strategic advantage via its ability to be quickest to respond to either crisis or conflict, and prepared to both prevent and contain conflict below the threshold of traditional armed conflict remains as valid today as it was when first articulated.

### **Personnel and Talent Management**

None of our *Force Design 2030* aspirations are possible without addressing the people within our ranks. As Secretary Austin highlighted, “our most critical asset...is our people.” I believe this is even more relevant within the Marine Corps. Marines are the heart and soul of the Corps.

Almost all of your 225,000 Marines serve honorably every day, representing the very best of our country and your constituencies. No institution, however, is without flaws. As I noted last year, malignant individuals and small malignant subcultures continue to exist within your Marine Corps. In this era of profound ideological division within our nation, some individual Marines

regrettably bring with them, or fall victim to while in service, misogynistic, racist, and homophobic/transphobic ideologies driven by hate, fear, and ignorance. While I have instituted even more rigorous policies than previously existed to ensure we identify such individuals during enlistment and accession screening, I remain committed to identifying and holding accountable any Marine unable to uphold our core values and to adhere to our unapologetically high standards. This is what you should expect from me, and you will get it.

Within the context of the larger national conversation on race, social justice, and equality, it became clear to me early in my Commandancy that there were symbols and behaviors within our Corps that challenged the cohesion and unity essential to military effectiveness. The Confederate Battle flag stood out as one such symbol. I am not a historian and do not take a position as to the true meaning of this ancient banner, but some in today's world have rallied around the colors of that defeated rebellion to foster division and hate. As a result, I prohibited its display aboard all Marine Corps installations beginning last spring. My primary responsibility is to prepare Marines to fight and win in combat, and we cannot tolerate artificial division driving wedges among your Marines – especially ones so easy to identify and remove. I will do everything within my authority to remove any obstacle preventing equality and cohesion. Signs or symbols that support or endorse hatred, ignorance, or injustice have no place in our Corps.

While these acknowledgements of past prejudice are good first steps, we must do more than simply look over our shoulders at the past. We must acknowledge the real bias and obstacles in the system today. We must promote and retain the very best Marines; however, it is clear to me

that a degree of structural racism and sexism exists within our current system. We must create a system of structural equality that ensures all Marines – of all backgrounds – are able to use their best talents to solve the problems we soon will face. The diversity of thought and actions each Marine brings will help us find more creative and innovative solutions to these future challenges. We must actively work to retain and grow this diversity of thought through a more diverse group of talented individuals, while at the same time protecting against extremism.

Over the past decade and in close coordination with Congress, we've prioritized the prevention of sexual harassment and sexual assault as well as dedicated tremendous effort into providing the appropriate response to these criminal acts. I am convinced of the linkage between sexual harassment and sexual assault, thus we will continue to make every effort to eliminate both from our ranks with your continued assistance. We have increased the number of Victim Legal Counselors dedicated to supporting sexual assault victims over the past 12 months. However, all of these efforts are dedicated to the response after a tragic event has occurred. We must do better at the prevention in order to stop sexual assault and sexual harassment before they occur.

Although we conduct regular training aimed at preventing this from happening, we are still working to overcome unhealthy attitudes and behaviors recruits arrive with to Recruit Training. We must develop practices that identify those negative behaviors before they turn into heinous acts and prevent such behaviors from occurring in the first place.

Improving the capabilities and proficiencies of the individual Marine necessitates we must also have the very best senior leaders for those Marines. I am humbled to serve alongside the General Officers and Flag Officers within the Department of the Navy. But even one instance of

misconduct or misbehavior within our General Officer ranks is too many. Over the past decade, the Marine Corps has selected several officers for promotion to brigadier general who subsequently failed to be confirmed by the Senate. This is unacceptable. Over the coming months, I will announce several major policy changes related to talent management to include how we screen and select our commanders and most senior leaders. We are currently reviewing the efficacy of implementing a 360-degree review for all lieutenant colonels and colonels eligible for command selection and all colonels eligible for selection to brigadier general, to help ensure we identify the absolute best who have earned the trust and respect of juniors, peers, and seniors alike. In addition to these issues related to screening, I remain concerned at the absence of Black officers within the senior ranks of our aviation enterprise and specifically within the ranks of our fixed-wing pilots, as well as the paucity of female general officers. We are currently studying both issues, and will share the results of those studies once completed.

As you are aware, we cannot create new senior leaders in a day. If we are to correct our gap in diversity at the senior ranks, we must also address diversity at accessions. The largest single source of commissioning within the Marine Corps is the U. S. Naval Academy, accounting for nearly 20% of officer commissions each year. A recently released study identified that almost 75% of the nominations to our service academies were given to white students. The diversity of this population has a direct impact on what leaders are available for selection to our senior ranks.

It is not enough that we recruit and train the very best. Once Marines have joined our ranks, we must nurture and incentivize them along their individual journeys through a modern talent

management system flexible enough to account for changing career interests and common life choices over time. Without such a system, we will increasingly struggle to retain the very best people in an ever more competitive marketplace. Our one-size-fits-all, industrial-era approach that treats individuals as interchangeable cogs within a larger machine does not appropriately incentivize the most talented individuals to remain in service. We are currently reviewing policy options that will offer Marines greater flexibility when it comes to tour lengths based on an individual's circumstances – most notably when a Marine has a child entering or completing high school. Our Marines must not be forced to choose between being good parents or being good Marines. Those sterling goals must be compatible. I remain committed to improving the lives of our Marines as they become parents and we are looking into ways that would prevent them from having to choose between the newborn and continued service as a Marine. I truly desire a Marine Corps known for being the best within the joint force for our treatment of new parents and families – and not just our warfighting prowess.

It is a well-known issue that the Marine Corps is struggling to recruit and retain Americans possessing the crucial science, technology, engineering, and mathematical skills and competencies required for the future. Technology companies present exciting and challenging opportunities for software developers, cyber professionals, and engineers. We must offer opportunities that allow someone to choose both service *and* professional reward. In addition, we must do a better job targeting the application of our NROTC scholarships to these individuals, as well as explore new possibilities with Historically Black Colleges and Universities to satisfy these shortfalls.



The military services - including your Marine Corps – continue to lose the competition with the civilian airline industry for pilots and maintainers, even with the adverse impacts of COVID-19 on the airline industry. We are not maintaining sufficient numbers of naval aviators and F-35 maintainers to sustain either our existing inventory of aircraft or aircraft programmed for the years to come. Within our F-35 community, we have a shortfall of both pilots and maintainers. I am concerned that if we do not remedy these shortfalls in the very near future, we may be in a situation in which we are directed by Congress to procure aircraft for which we have insufficient pilots and maintainers.

### **Training and Education**

A key element of our larger force design transformation is our need to adopt an information age approach to training and education that produces better leaders and warfighters more effectively and efficiently. The essence of this approach is to focus on identifying, developing, and sustaining the unique talents of individual Marines, not turning out MOS-shaped cogs to fit MOS-shaped slots in a machine. Better warfighters in an era of exponential change means adaptive, critical thinkers who are also tactical and operational masters of their profession. Among many implications of this shift will be higher expectations and intellectual standards for Marines, especially commissioned officers, at every stage of their selection for and attendance at formal schools. We still need standardized training and education to set a baseline and inculcate our core Service values and ethos, but there are significant aspects of entry-level training that must be adapted. Much of our current understanding of future warfighting requirements, associated concepts, and force design point to a more highly trained force from the entry-level onward. We need to change *how* we train and educate as well. We have known for a long time

that rote repetition and even “perfect practice” against static, unresisting targets is only the barest beginning of mastery. Consistent opportunities to make tactical and operational decisions against a thinking enemy must be a critical part of our curricula at all levels. This kind of force-on-force wargaming and training must stand on a solid foundation of military history and theory – games, simulations, and exercises are necessary, but not sufficient. We will develop that foundation in school, but sustain it by rigorous, accountable, self-directed effort. We must address the question of “standards” transparently and head-on to create the force we desire, and to create the force we advertise. In an initial step to creating a philosophy and culture of a learning organization, last year I signed the first all-new service doctrine since 1998; *MCDP 7 Learning* was released in February and *MCDP 1-4 Competing* in December. In addition to releasing new doctrine, we have elevated command of our Training and Education Command to a three-star general, equal to all other Deputy Commandants, and are in the process of re-establishing a robust Futures Directorate.

Achieving diversity of thought requires fixing our entry-level instruction to allow every new recruit and officer candidate the same opportunity to master these skills without it impeding their future career opportunities. Not every young man or woman who joins our ranks grew up participating in activities relevant to individual battlefield skills such as marksmanship, orienteering, water survival, or technical skills. As a matter of longstanding practice, however, we continue to assess potential at the very earliest stages of our recruit and officer training programs based on performance in precisely those skills. There is no doubt of the continuing importance of these military basics, but we cannot expect every new Marine to master those individual skills with the same amount of in-service instruction, regardless of previous

experience. A new recruit who has never touched a rifle cannot be expected to master marksmanship in the same amount of time as a recruit who grew up handling rifles regularly, and a Marine who never learned to swim should not compete unaided for job placement with a Marine who grew up as a competitive swimmer. In effect, we penalize Marines who fail to master these basic skills because they did not start with the same knowledge or skill base. While holding the line on the standard of basic competencies that define a Marine, our entry-level training must provide the instruction necessary for every recruit and officer candidate to achieve mastery in basic skills, regardless of how much time it takes.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought new challenges and opportunities to your Marine Corps. During the entire time, your force-in-readiness continued recruiting, training, operating, and deploying around the globe. Although we did not stop any of our activities, we did learn many lessons from the pandemic that we can continue to use going forward to make a more resilient and capable force. We devised new methods of virtually connecting with potential recruits and with our force, internally. For entry-level training, we spread out recruits while they slept and installed more handwashing stations, which has virtually eliminated the inevitable illness that the new recruits will pass around as they come in from all over the country. A key factor in this success has been the level of discipline instilled by small unit leaders which prevented any significant outbreaks and kept Marines healthy. Your Marines continue to serve their communities by establishing federal COVID-19 vaccine sites in local communities in support of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. As President Biden highlighted, we don't have enough people to provide vaccination shots – put the shots in people's arms – so Marines are filling in this immediate shortfall.

## **Gender Integrated Training**

The FY 2020 NDAA directed the Marine Corps to integrate training at both Marine Corps Recruit Depots Parris Island and San Diego. Since the signing of the law, we have trained multiple integrated companies at MCRD Parris Island. In February, the recruits of Lima Company were the first gender-integrated company at MCRD San Diego in the installation's 100-year existence. To train the first females at MCRD San Diego, we graduated the first gender-integrated class at Drill Instructor School in San Diego in December and relocated female drill instructors from MCRD Parris Island. We will take the lessons learned from this company as well as a concurrent study to identify the requirements needed to fulfill the 2020 NDAA within the prescribed timelines. However, as I have publicly stated several times, we will prioritize options that provide the best training and most efficient use of resources to ensure Marines graduating from boot camp are ready for the rigors of service in an elite organization during challenging times.

## **Force Design**

Shortly after I testified before this Committee in the spring of 2020, I published the *Force Design 2030* report. *Force Design 2030* is how your Marine Corps is changing its trajectory to create advantage for the fleets and joint force in both maritime gray zone competition and more traditional conflict. Although we need new capabilities to deter adversaries, we must fundamentally change how we think about armed conflict. We can no longer view warfare through the binary lens of war and peace, but should recognize the existence of a cyclical continuum of competition that occurs every day and involves all elements of national power. Historically, the military viewed maintaining the peace as deterring war through denial or by

punishment. *Force Design 2030* offers a third option in addition to those two that will counter strategies below the threshold of armed-conflict by winning the reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance competition and facilitating deterrence by detection.

At its core, *Force Design 2030* is a campaign of learning. Through wargames, analysis, and limited experimentation, it has become clear the joint force needs a capability that operates persistently and with maximum organic mobility and dispersion to compete and deter in the contact and blunt layers. The vulnerability of large fixed bases and shore-based infrastructure to long-range precision strike, combined with the impracticality of defending such infrastructure from the pacing threat's emerging capabilities at any politically-feasible level of resourcing and regional posture, necessitates that the stand-in force be able to perform these functions from a strictly expeditionary and highly mobile and resilient naval posture. This refined analysis and understanding is what is driving our *Force Design 2030* to support concepts like *Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO)*, as well as informing the recently released *Tentative Manual on Expeditionary Advanced Based Operations*. We will continue to refine and update the *Tentative Manual* with the lessons learned from our FMF experimentation. In the near future, we will release our latest concept – *Stand-In Forces*.

Much as our 29th Commandant codified maneuver warfare in our principal doctrine *MCDP-1 Warfighting* to instill a maneuver warfare mindset into every Marine, I felt it necessary to codify how we compete every day around the globe. We recently released a doctrinal publication entitled *Competing* to instill a competitive mindset into every Marine, whether above or below the threshold of armed conflict. Marines – and the military as a whole – must be aware that

every action or inaction has an effect on reassuring our partners and allies and deterring our competitors. All that we do, from our force laydown, to the activity at each location, to the equipment we buy, signals our commitment to reassure and deter. In a globally connected operating environment, we no longer have the luxury of maintaining a binary combat or garrison mindset; our posture and mindset must be one of continuous competition.

### **Naval Expeditionary Stand-In Forces**

Expeditionary advanced bases are a platform for small, mission-tailored groups of Marines to distribute and hide in plain sight with the assistance of advanced camouflage, cover, concealment, detection, and deception (C3D2) capabilities against a competitor who is seeking to locate our forces. Expeditionary advanced bases will enable the convergence of capabilities from multiple domains and create the virtues of mass without concentration. The Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR) – the base unit for our future force – will provide fleet and joint force commanders with persistent, survivable forces that will enable the generation of effects within areas that our adversaries hope to deny to us through their integrated systems of anti-access and area-denial capabilities. In terms of hardware, Marine capabilities will include anti-ship Naval Strike Missiles (NSM) loaded on the unmanned Remotely Operated Ground Unit Expeditionary (ROGUE) Fires; self-sustainment and mobility with the Light Amphibious Warship (LAW); and, long-loiter aerial reconnaissance in an expeditionary environment with the Medium Altitude, Long Endurance (MALE) Group 5 unmanned aerial systems (UAS). Future infantry units operating within the MLR construct will be equipped with organic precision fires to include loitering munitions. The MLRs will be networked with our F-35 capabilities, providing a further layer of combat credibility and sensing. In the future, these forces could employ more advanced

munitions such as Tomahawk Land Attack Munitions (TLAM), Maritime Strike Tomahawks (MST), SM-6 containerized anti-ship missiles; and a wide array of unmanned or optionally manned systems to enhance deterrence. Without these long-range precision fires, the MLRs will not be suitable to support the fleets and will lack the ability to influence the vast maritime area your Marine Corps must do.

In the even more critical human domain, these capabilities will encompass the necessary training and education to produce leaders who understand how to deter competitors and provide civilian leadership strategic options across a wider spectrum. The MLRs will offer deterrence by detection through constant surveillance of the competitor, complicating their decision-making calculus if they attempt fait accompli gambits, and doing so while networked into the larger architecture of naval and joint command, control, computers, communications, cyber, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and tracking (C5ISR-T) articulated in the Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2) concept and previous discussions on Mosaic Warfare.

With global sensors becoming ubiquitous, the value of reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance or scouting and counter-scouting will increase. *Force Design 2030* offers civilian leaders strategic options to identify, deter, and hold accountable competitors challenging U.S. interests or infringing on international norms at any point on the globe. It creates advantage by providing uniformed and civilian leadership with a force capable of denying key maritime terrain to an adversary or to force a change in decision calculus and facilitate de-escalation. Those naval expeditionary forces will also be capable of rapidly sensing, making sense, and acting upon information from inside the enemy's weapon engagement zone (WEZ) in support of

the fleet and larger joint force, further complicating adversary decision calculus. These stand-in forces will be able to support anti-submarine warfare (ASW) efforts and help sanitize key maritime straits, thus expanding our strategic undersea warfare advantage. Your Marine Corps is transforming into a force capable of competing and winning the hider/finder competition by proliferating sensors to detect adversary presence, employing advanced C3D2 for resilience, and maintaining a lethal array of long-range precision fires to prosecute targets at a time and place of our choosing – whether ashore or afloat or in the air. Stand-in forces will simultaneously satisfy traditional requirements from the fleet and combatant commanders for a modern, resilient crisis response force capable of responding across the range of military operations. And, as noted in the most recent testimony by the Commander, USINDOPACOM, these stand-in expeditionary forces are further required as the forward leading-edge to any strategic defense in the Indo-Pacific and any maritime defense-in-depth.

From our continued wargaming and experimentation, we have learned much about the utility of multi-domain reconnaissance. As a result, over the coming months a new Marine reconnaissance enterprise will consolidate disparate elements of existing organizations within a structure capable of generating a coherent, persistent, forward-presence focused on key maritime terrain that is vital to U.S. national security interests. The next step will be the development of our Mobile Reconnaissance framework which will deliver expanded all-domain capabilities to our naval expeditionary forces and fleets via a combination of Marine Commandos, manned and unmanned surface platforms to include the Long-Range, Unmanned Surface Vessels (LRUSV) and small boats, manned and unmanned ground Ultra-Light Tactical Vehicles (ULTV), unmanned aerial systems, and unmanned subsurface vehicles. As with other force design efforts,



these forces will be fully capable of networking with our 5th generation F-35 capabilities as well as connecting with the larger joint architecture.

In addition to offering continuous surveillance in the contact layer, the MLR increases lethality, disbursement, mobility, and survivability in a way that our current stable of large, expensive, high-signature platforms cannot match to deter and counter aggression in critical regions. The MLRs will provide a unique expeditionary advanced base capability, but they will not be the sole definition of the FMF as our Marine Expeditionary Units will remain our “crown jewel.” Your Marine Corps can compete, deter, and win as part of a naval expeditionary force operating in international waters and with light footprints ashore on the territory of local allies and partners. It does not require the sustained presence of heavy ground forces or the regular deployment of large, land-based aviation elements. These unique capabilities make the Marine Corps the ideal choice for a force-in-readiness that serves as the backbone of the contact layer because our forces can cooperate with allied and partnered nations without burdening their local infrastructure, whether for steady-state operations or disaster response operations. Additionally, the sensing elements of the FMF coupled with lethality are key attributes in preventing conflict.

## **Posture**

21st century strategic competition requires a new posture to deter modern threats. Our current force posture is strikingly similar to the one designed coming out of the Korean War. That posture was designed to deter and confront a Soviet threat that consisted of strategic bombers and Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles. Over the last two decades, our strategic competitors took note of our strengths and designed forces specifically to counter them. We must now adjust our

posture against the pacing threat of China due to its ability to hold our fleet at stand-off ranges and prevent significant force projections. This does not mean abandoning our forward position of advantage, but rather adopting a more robust and resilient forward-deployed posture as described in testimony by Admiral Davidson as part of a larger defense-in-depth.

Marine forces working with Navy ships must occupy space within the contested first and second island chains in the Indo-Pacific with the ability to effectively operate in all domains. Guam remains one of our most important strategic locations as it is US territory located closest to contested maritime regions. In order to effectively deter by detection, our forces must be within sensor and striking range to impose cost on the adversary through their allocation of limited C5ISR-T assets or determining that the cost is too high to attempt anything that would cross the line of established international laws and norms. However, while Guam remains a strategically important location within our larger defense-in-depth, we must not ignore the potential impacts to it due to the adverse effects of climate change. We must take the necessary steps to protect Guam and the strategic advantage it provides.

Our posture includes more than the laydown of our forces around the world, it also must include what our forces are doing in those locations. As Secretary Austin has told us, “our success will depend on how closely we work with our friends around the world to secure our common interests and promote our shared values.” Marines regularly conduct training with allies and partners globally. This training is beneficial to building trusting relationships and interoperability. These relationships are not - and should not be – one way, in that US Forces tell partners and allies how to operate. We can learn from other nations as much as we can teach.

For example, the Japanese Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade may have used the U. S. Marine Corps as an example in its development, but we have much to learn from them based on how quickly they designed, assembled, tested, and operationalized the brigade. Our commitment to working with allies and partners creates a mutually beneficial relationship for our military organizations while simultaneously signaling our resolve to competitors. Initiatives like the Pacific Deterrence and the European Deterrence are so important in supporting our posture.

### **Competition and Risk**

Some critics of our *Force Design 2030* suggest that non-stealthy platforms such as the LAW, LPD-17 class amphibious ship, and the current Group 5 UAS are operationally unsuitable for high-end warfighting. This critique's foundational assumption is that our decades-old stealth technology or military-standard naval architecture will be overcome with technological countermeasures and that stealth technologies will become affordable enough to proliferate the operating environment in large quantities. Survivability under such conditions is likely to prove far more a matter of quantity, dispersion, signature management, and distributed lethality than of being able to avoid technical detection or defend against all threats. We must view survivability in terms of the entire system – the entire system must be able to survive long enough to accomplish the mission vice an individual platform. The expeditionary system of platforms our Marines employ – and the networks they operate on – must be capable of competing and deterring below the level of armed conflict as well as fight at the high-end to reassure our partners and allies as well as demonstrate a credible capability to a would-be adversary. For example, while not a part of the currently envisioned program, LAWs operating in plain sight with containerized missiles could effectively compete and deter. Such a reimagining of the

program could involve greater costs, so we will have to study the benefits and make resource informed decisions about tradeoffs in capabilities and capacity. Traditional amphibious ships, such as the LPD-17s, possessing tactical advantages derived from well-decks will confound adversaries and force them to consume resources attempting to positively identify those capabilities loaded inside – whether unmanned surface vessels, unmanned underwater vessels, or more traditional capabilities. Long-endurance Group 5 UAS, like the MQ-9, also provides the persistent presence necessary to win the hider /finder competition for the fleet. Additionally, a proven platform like the MQ-9 supports quickly learning the platform through the experience of the US Air Force while continuing adaptation and innovation over time as we procure the future system.

If competition expands from opening volleys or punishment strikes to large-scale conflict, the Fleet Marine Force offers the Joint Force Commander a persistent stand-in force capable of conducting reconnaissance, counter-reconnaissance, and targeting in the blunt layer. A stand-in force with the ability to support allies and partners while striking the adversary with long range precision fires, 5th generation short take-off and vertical landing aircraft, and a host of electronic warfare options combined with the mobility of the Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV), LAW, and unmanned surface and undersea vehicles provides a survivable option to buy time for the remainder of the joint force to bring war-winning capabilities.

### **Logistics and Resilience**

Sustaining the force we are developing now becomes even more critical in the years ahead. The relative ease with which we have been able to project power into the Middle East over the last

few decades has lulled us into a false sense of security. As a result, we have optimized service logistics efforts to support requirements without regard to the threat actions that could disrupt them. My predecessor said “we are going to have to fight to get to the fight.” I will take that a step further by saying we will have to fight to sustain our warfighting efforts over time. The Joint Logistics Enterprise must connect our emerging operational concepts at the tactical edge all the way back to the defense industrial base. We have been an end user of the system, but that needs to change. We must develop new methods for the Naval Force to enable broader joint force sustainment efforts. On a day-to-day basis, today’s distributed force strains our systems to the limits. This will only get more challenging considering the dynamic, evolving threats that competitors can apply against our supply chains, manufacturing bases, and global sustainment network.

Based on anticipated funding levels and the additional budget uncertainty that has been introduced by the COVID-19 response, we must clearly consider risk as we move forward. Our force design efforts for the future will provide the context necessary to make the difficult choices for our installations and logistics enterprise. We can no longer accept the inefficiencies inherent in legacy bureaucratic processes nor accept incremental improvements. In order for our installations and logistics organizations to change effectively, we must better understand the implications that *Force Design 2030* will have on the FMF across multiple time horizons so we can resource our installations and logistics enterprise appropriately. In coordination with partners both inside and outside the service, we will evolve our organization to meet the future FMF’s operational requirements in the air, on land, and at sea while continuing to provide world-class support to the force today. This may require a change in the existing command

relationships between the bases and stations and the forces they support. I will keep the committee fully informed of any such changes as our understanding evolves.

Finally, in an effort to modernize our bases and stations in a manner commensurate with our overall force design, we are experimenting with advanced force protection systems enabled by artificial intelligence at several of our installations. This capability is promising and may provide the service an opportunity to greatly enhance the protection of our installations while drastically cutting personnel costs.

### **Major Defense Acquisition Programs**

I have always operated under the assumption that evidence, wargame findings, modeling and simulations, and my own best military advice as Commandant would persuade people across the defense enterprise and within Congress that we need change now. While I remain convinced that this assumption remains valid and look forward to a continued dialogue with the Committee, we have more work to do to persuade key audiences of the merits of our desired changes.

Congressional support for Ground Based Anti-Ship Missiles (GBASM); LRUSV; Medium Altitude, Long Endurance UAS; and I believe that Light Amphibious Warship (LAW) will be essential to our modernization efforts. We will continue to work with the Congress to demonstrate the importance of a rapid acquisition of these critical capabilities. I have repeatedly asked for Congressional support to change legacy programs that are no longer operationally relevant or have become cost prohibitive, as well as support for new initiatives that create a relative warfighting advantage. This is the kind of agility we will need going forward in order to sustain that warfighting advantage.

Based on my understanding of the strategic challenges before us and my desire to remain the best steward of taxpayer dollars, I am convinced that we must be willing to critically assess the scope of current Programs of Record for our Major Defense Acquisition Programs (MDAP). As we reduce the end strength of the Marine Corps in order to internally fund our modernization, each MDAP must be reevaluated for capacity and sustainability. We will need the continued support of Congress to re-scope any program that exceeds our requirement or is unaffordable to procure, man, and sustain.

In addition, we should acknowledge that up to three quarters of a weapon system's cost occurs in sustainment-- the operational and maintenance upkeep after the initial acquisition. With the new procurement of large weapon systems like the F-35B/C, CH-53K, MV-22, JLTV, and ACV – to name but a few – we should be prepared to modify programs of records to ensure affordability and viability throughout the entire lifecycle of each program. Prioritizing high-end platforms without resourcing the supplies and infrastructure needed to sustain its operational capability is fundamentally irresponsible; the result would be a hollow force.

With every dollar we expend to upgrade a legacy platform that is no longer survivable against a peer competitor, we are slowing our rate of transformation. Our competitors no longer wait to see what America does and follow suit; they have embarked on their own trajectory, which currently outpaces ours. Our *Force Design 2030* addresses this problem by forcing the competitor to adapt to us through the tactical, operational, and strategic challenges a truly modern force presents. This does create domestic dilemmas as we are forced to transition from legacy platforms built in certain districts to modern and relevant equipment that may be built

elsewhere. However, if we are to succeed in this great power competition, we must make those difficult choices. I remain confident that this can occur in a responsible and balanced way, without creating winners and losers, and look forward to discussions with each of you on a way ahead that satisfies shared interests.

The Marine Corps remains constrained by an acquisition process that tries to eliminate risk – risk poorly defined as uncertainty. We must recognize that incrementally better versions of the current Marine Corps is not going to be enough for real great power competition. As noted in the House Armed Services Committee’s *Future of Defense Task Force Report 2020*, our acquisition process is too sluggish to work effectively at scale with many technology companies, as they need to innovate and compete daily to survive in their dynamic industry. With the rapid transition we need to make over the next decade, we must be willing to incur some short-term risk to better prepare and compete in the future. The ability to prototype new technologies, then aggressively experiment and exercise with prototype equipment to understand its full capability on the battlefield is paramount. Lastly, I agree with the *Report’s* recommendation that we need a process that better bridges the “valley of death” to transition critical prototype equipment into full-scale fielding without taking years through the traditional planning, programming, budgeting, and execution process.

### **Readiness and Strategic Advantage**

As we build a more capable and lethal force, we must also take into consideration the readiness of that force. Since 2017, the Marine Corps has significantly increased the availability of forces to Combatant Commanders based on the generous funding of Congress. As Marines deploy



forward in support of operational requirements, they buy down today's risk by deterring competitors from violating international norms while assuring allies and partners of the strength of our commitments. However, the mere availability of those Marines does not equal readiness to compete in the maritime gray zone, nor does it create strategic advantage to deter or defeat rapidly evolving threats. It is time for us to embrace a more sophisticated and balanced understanding of military readiness and cease using availability as the primary metric in our readiness evaluations. This antiquated model is hugely consumptive and forces us to spend limited resources ensuring the availability of platforms designated for retirement and replacement. This also applies to equipment that we are attempting to transition to more modern capabilities. For example, every dollar spent to make a 4<sup>th</sup> generation aircraft that has exceeded its intended service life is a dollar that cannot be spent to accelerate the fielding of 5<sup>th</sup> generation very low-observable aircraft and advanced UAS. We must invest in future capabilities that create, maintain, and expand warfighting advantage to ensure a ready force tomorrow that maintains its ability to compete and deter.

During the most recent conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Armenian ground forces that we would have labeled ready based on availability, were easily targeted and destroyed by Azerbaijani forces employing elements of a precision strike regime to include swarms of loitering munitions and lethal unmanned systems. While Armenia's tanks and infantry fighting vehicles were available, they were not operationally suitable, thus not ready for the conflict. As our competitors continue to expand their capabilities, we will soon find ourselves outmatched unless we change our readiness framework. To do so, we should embrace a new readiness paradigm in which availability ranks behind generating a relative warfighting advantage. A

ready capability in the future must be one that is both available when we need it and creates a strategic warfighting advantage against a specific threat in great power competition and conflict.

A ready force that creates a strategic advantage over the pacing threat must be organized to generate faster decision cycles against the enemy. A large part of our *Force Design 2030* efforts is aimed at developing the right capabilities for the future force, but just as important is devising the correct organizational model to employ those capabilities. I do not support creating more or larger headquarters organizations to accommodate the larger quantities of data coming in as I feel this will only slow the decision-making process. I'm also not committed to organizations that we have employed in the past if they don't work to fulfill our future requirements. In addition to right-sizing our FMF, I've also directed an ongoing assessment to reduce 15% of our personnel across Headquarters Marine Corps to generate savings that we can reinvest into our warfighting capabilities without losing the institutional processes necessary to support an adaptable force.

Your Marine Corps, and the Naval Service as a whole, have a proven record when it comes to driving change. Both the People's Republic of China and Russia modernized their militaries over the past decade based on what they assessed as our strengths and our competitive warfighting advantages. They adapted their operational and strategic approaches to counter us and now we must modernize in order to remedy shortfalls and drive the next cycle of change. Simply making our legacy platforms better or more of them available will not force our competitors to change course, nor will it create the strategic advantage required. I concur with the Air Force Chief of Staff General CQ Brown: we must accelerate change or lose.

One way we can accelerate change is by seeking a more nuanced understanding of readiness as it applies to each service or even common force elements within each service, and to ask – how many forces-in-readiness can we collectively afford? A critical factor of understanding readiness is identifying when a joint force will need a capability in accordance with a detailed mobilization plan. The Marine Corps – as well as other critical elements of the joint force – will always be at the front of the timelines because we are the force who is present before conflict and deters an adversary’s early escalation. Serving as the foundational element of our persistent contact layer allows time for the joint force to mobilize and surge the war winning capabilities of the other services. However, without your Marines forward deployed to tamp back the aggressor and create decision space, the joint force will not have the time and opportunity to deploy.

### **Fleet Design and Naval Integration**

Thus far, my comments have focused on issues germane to my role as Commandant of the Marine Corps – to organize, train, and equip Marine Corps forces in support of the Fleets and Combatant Commanders. Please now allow me to share a few thoughts with you as one of the three senior naval officials testifying before you and also as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. My experience and role as a senior Naval officer requires that I share my best military advice in the ongoing fleet design conversation. One thing is clear: serious naval professionals both in and out of service agree that the status quo fleet will not provide the strategic advantages required in an era of great power competition, and must change.

I would like to state for the record my thanks to the CNO and his OPNAV staff for their continued support redesigning the fleet and the amphibious / naval expeditionary portion of it

without reservation or hesitation in support of our shared understanding of the operational dilemmas created by peer adversaries. The CNO is leading a major change in future fleet design and I wish to acknowledge that for the record, and formally communicate my support. I agree with the CNO that the Navy does not need to be “reimagined” or “reinvented,” and neither does the Marine Corps for that matter. However, as the CNO has noted, *how* we perform our core roles and functions of deterrence, maritime security, power projection, and sea control must change – just as it has many times in the past.

Being physically present within the area of responsibility is no longer evidence of success, and we should no longer think presence somehow produces deterrence in and of itself. For naval presence to deter competitors, physical positioning must create real strategic advantage. The specific capabilities present must provide a competitive warfighting advantage against specific peer threats and do so in a resource neutral manner. Dispersing large numbers of militarized fishing vessels with a nuclear aircraft carrier may result in the temporary absence of those adversary vessels in key maritime terrain, but it comes at a fiscally prohibitive cost, not to mention the operational cost of not having that warfighting capability postured to project power via its carrier air wing. However, having a robust inventory of submarines, frigates, light amphibious warships, and networked unmanned or optionally manned surface vessels – or even T-AGOS and military sealift vessels – operating in the same region would provide a competitive warfighting advantage without resource prohibitive operating costs. Such a fleet would further reinforce our strategic advantages in undersea warfare through their modern ASW capabilities and our advantages in naval expeditionary warfare. The process of redesigning the fleet will not be an easy or inexpensive, nor will it be accomplished quickly, but it can be done with your

continued oversight and support. I wish to thank the Secretary, the CNO, and the members of this committee for their continued commitment to the construction and sustainment of our ships necessary to support amphibious operations.

Not that long ago, the Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) that comprised the Navy ships for the Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) consisted of five ships with a combined gross tonnage of approximately 73,000 tonnes. Today, our standard three ship ARG/MEUs operate in a distributed manner from platforms with a combined gross tonnage of approximately 86,000 tonnes. As with many other systems and capabilities across the joint force, our ARG/MEU has become smaller yet heavier, while simultaneously being asked to be more agile. Distributed Maritime Operations is not only the future of naval operations, but in reality – the present. As we modernize our Marine forces as part of our force design efforts, we must also modernize the ARG/MEU. We have seen the great value of disaggregating the ARG/MEU with each individual ship conducting its own mission within the same Area of Operational Responsibility for a Combatant Commander. Greater numbers of smaller ships would allow us to disaggregate for a greater number of mission sets while maintaining the ability to reassemble into a large force with expansive mission sets. Defining our future operational concept will also help drive us to better understand what we need from LXX – or the next class of amphibious ships. We know they will need to be smaller, faster, more lethal, and better networked, but we don't yet know to what degree we need these characteristics. As we continue our analysis with the Navy, we know that they must be affordable so that we can purchase and maintain the number of ships we need to operate globally. Therefore, our requirements will be matched to a program that is affordable and sustainable over the long-term.

Finally, I wish to state my support for the observations, positions, and conclusions articulated by Admiral Davidson in his most recent testimony. The vision he articulated for a strategic defense to include a defense-in-depth with naval expeditionary forces postured forward and west of the international dateline is one I share, and have attempted to communicate as often as possible over the previous 22 months. I share his conclusion that highly lethal and distributable expeditionary forces than can generate the effects of mass without the liabilities of concentration are of the highest utility, and am doing everything possible to create such forces via my force design efforts with the Marine Littoral Regiment.

## **Conclusion**

The American people expect us to be our own toughest critics, and we are. We have significant strides to make in the near future, but I know the leadership and support of this Congress will help us to revolutionize our approach to competition and conflict. I pledge to keep you informed and involved in the transformation of your Marine Corps. The American people are counting on their Marines, Navy, and joint force to maintain our ideals and way of life now and into the future. The dustbin of history is crammed with once successful militaries, businesses, and organizations that recognized the world was changing and attempted to meet that change through merely incremental improvements in existing ways of doing business. Despite their previous successes, these institutions failed in the new environment because they could not make the fundamental changes necessary to remain on top. We are now in the midst of just such a period of change, and we will need all the help and support of this Congress to ensure we continue our long history of successful innovation and adaptation.

While our aspirations and expectations are great, I am certain that you expect nothing less from your Marine Corps. With your continued support, we shall succeed. We will achieve our goals of transformation, both in our culture and warfighting capability, to best support the naval campaign and the joint force.