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Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF: GENERAL ERIC M.
SMITH, USMC FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF
GENERAL AND TO BE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

Tuesday, June 13, 2023

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1 TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF: GENERAL ERIC M. SMITH, USMC
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6
7 U.S. Senate

8 Committee on Armed Services

9 Washington, D.C.

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11 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m.,
12 in Room G-50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Jack
13 Reed, chairman of the committee, presiding.

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

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

3 Chairman Reed: Good morning. The committee meets
4 today to consider the nomination of General Eric Smith to
5 be the 39th Commandant of the United States Marine Corps.
6 General, I would like to welcome your wife, Trish, your
7 daughter, Elise, son in law, Matthew, and your son, Travis,
8 Captain Travis, and daughter in law, Hadley.

9 I know that military service runs deep in Smith
10 family, especially service in the United States Marine
11 Corps, and I thank each of you for your selfless commitment
12 to the nation. General Smith, you are well qualified to
13 serve as Commandant of the Marine Corps.

14 As a current Assistant Commandant, you have been
15 instrumental in helping to modernize and lead the Corps
16 -- past years. Prior to this assignment, you led the Marine
17 Corps Combat Capability Development Directorate and served
18 as the Senior Military Assistant to both the Deputy
19 Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Defense.

20 An infantryman by training, you have commanded Marines
21 at every level and across multiple theaters. Indeed, this
22 leadership experience and understanding of the Joint Force
23 will be critical for successfully guiding the Marine Corps
24 in today's complex global security environment.

25 The Marine Corps is in the midst of a substantial

1 transformation, focused on competition in the Indo-Pacific,
2 but capable of global employment. The service is
3 restructuring around two concepts, littoral operations in a
4 contested environment and expeditionary advanced base
5 operations. The key element of these concepts is a more
6 flexible amphibious force that can support a broader naval
7 fight once ashore.

8 Rather than simply acting as a landing force, the
9 Marine Corps intends to help control the sea and air in
10 support of the Joint Force. To achieve this, the Marine
11 Corps is prioritizing a number of modernization efforts,
12 including deep sensing, long range fires to include anti-
13 surface capabilities, enhanced air and missile defense, and
14 improve ground and amphibious combat vehicles.

15 These platforms will equip the Marines with improved
16 force protection, lethality, and mobility. I have
17 appreciated the Marine Corps' thoughtful approach during
18 this restructuring, including its regular communication
19 with Congress.

20 Further, I appreciate the Marines' willingness to
21 modify structural decisions such as increasing the number
22 of cannon batteries or the size of fighter attack
23 squadrons, when experimenting and wargaming demonstrated
24 the need to do so. General, I would like to know your
25 plans for continuing these modernization efforts and any

1 concerns you have with the Marine Corps ability to operate
2 as envisioned by Force Design 2030.

3 As the Corps shifts to become a more tactical force
4 capable of operating in forward dispersed environments, it
5 will require more seasoned, experienced Marines. As such,
6 the service will continue to see the average age and
7 retention rate of its Marines increase. These trends,
8 while generally positive, will require the service to
9 reconsider how it manages its enlisted force.

10 The Marine Corps has not experienced the same level of
11 recruiting disruptions as the other services, but it is not
12 immune from these challenges, particularly in its reserve
13 forces. I would ask for your views on the Marines' talent
14 management strategies and opportunities to succeed in the
15 current recruiting environment.

16 Considering the challenges facing the United States
17 today, it is important for the Marine Corps to operate not
18 just as its own service, but as part of a Joint Force.
19 Succeeding against our potential adversaries will require
20 all U.S. military services to work together, operate
21 faster, and deliver greater capabilities from farther
22 distances in contested environments. These are significant
23 challenges that will require joint experimentation and
24 collaborative research and development to overcome.

25 I am encouraged by the kind of work underway at the

1 Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory, where in particular
2 technologies are being developed to help enable logistics
3 in a contested environment. I hope you will share your
4 views on service and joint experimentation, and how the
5 Marine Corps can ensure that its capabilities are
6 interoperable and complementary across the force.

7 Finally, your highest priority must be ensuring the
8 readiness of Marines to perform their missions. If
9 confirmed, you will be expected to support a culture of
10 leadership, trust, and teamwork throughout the force with
11 no tolerance for behavior that erodes that culture.

12 General Smith, I would ask that you share how you plan
13 to address this responsibility. I am confident that you
14 have the requisite skills and experience to provide the
15 nation's Marines, their families, and Marine civilian
16 employees with the leadership they deserve.

17 Thank you again for your continued willingness to
18 serve. I look forward to your testimony. Now, let me
19 recognize the Ranking Member, Senator Wicker.

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

3 Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for a very
4 fine opening statement. And General Smith, I want to thank
5 you for your service and offer my congratulations on your
6 nomination. It is -- I will join my distinguished chairman
7 in welcoming your family. They ought to be awfully proud
8 of your unwavering and devoted service to your country. I
9 think you are exceptionally well qualified to serve as
10 Commandant of the Marine Corps.

11 Marine Corps Modernization Plan, Force Design 2030 is
12 geared toward strengthening deterrence against China. I
13 would like to hear today your honest assessment of where
14 Force Design 2030 has succeeded and where work remains to
15 be accomplished. The United States is entering a window of
16 maximum danger for conflict with the Chinese Communist
17 Party. Xi Jinping intends to have a force capable of
18 invading Taiwan by 2027.

19 He has told us this. Even in the past month, China
20 has shown it is serious about determining our --
21 undermining, about undermining our military and diplomatic
22 power. It has harassed a U.S. reconnaissance plane and a
23 U.S. Navy warship, disturbed WWII wrecks, engaged in
24 espionage at an Alaska military installation, and
25 threatened cyber activity in Guam.

1 The threats from Russia, North Korea, and Iran are not
2 getting any better either. The window in which Congress
3 can effect real change in our force posture and hopefully
4 correct some of the troubling trends we see in the Western
5 Pacific is closing. This is the decisive decade for the
6 21st century in the Indo-Pacific. In my view, the Marine
7 Corps has met the challenge with vigor and urgency, even if
8 change at scale is always hard and imperfect.

9 Throughout the nation's history, the Marine Corps has
10 distinguished itself as flexible, fast, and adaptable.
11 Hence its motto, first to fight. The ability for
12 amphibious forces to search, target, and sink potential
13 enemy naval and air combatants while maintaining a low
14 signature is hard work. It requires new capabilities,
15 concepts, and formations.

16 General Smith, I would like you to explain to the
17 committee how you intend to continue that work, including
18 unfinished business regarding amphibious lift capabilities.

19 As Commandant Berger testified repeatedly before this
20 committee, the leading edge of our deterrence is the
21 ability to transport Marines and materiel across the vast
22 distances in a maritime environment. Congress reflected
23 this operational demand in the Marine Corps -- in the
24 Marine Corps' 31 amphibious ship force requirement. I am
25 frustrated by President Biden's woefully inadequate defense

1 budget proposal, which would slash funding for LPD-33, a
2 critical platform in fulfilling a range of the Marine Corps
3 submissions, including disaster response and alliance
4 assurance.

5 I would appreciate your views, General, regarding the
6 amphibious ship requirement LPD-33. If confirmed, you
7 would be at the tip of the American spear in observing the
8 Chinese military and ensuring the Marine Corps remains
9 trained, equipped, and organized to deter conflict in the
10 Western Pacific. I look forward to the testimony, and
11 thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

12 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Wicker.
13 And before we call on General Smith, a quorum is now
14 present, and I ask the committee to consider a list of
15 4,194 pending military nominations. All of these
16 nominations have been before the committee for the required
17 length of time. Is there a motion to table report this
18 list of 4,194 pending military nominations?

19 Senator Wicker: So, moved.

20 Chairman Reed: Is there a second?

21 Voice: Second.

22 Chairman Reed: All in favor, aye.

23 [Chorus of ayes.]

24 Chairman Reed: The motion carries. General Smith,
25 please.

1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL ERIC SMITH, UNITED STATES MARINE
2 CORPS

3 General Smith: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker

4 --

5 Chairman Reed: Bring that closer, please, sir.

6 General Smith: Yes, sir. Chairman Reed, Ranking
7 Member Wicker, and distinguished members of this committee,
8 it is a privilege to appear before you today. I am humbled
9 to have been nominated as the 39th Commandant of the Marine
10 Corps.

11 As our 38th Commandant prepares to retire after 42
12 years of service, I want to publicly thank him and his
13 wife, Donna, for the countless sacrifices that come with
14 that length of service.

15 On behalf of the young Marines who will do most of the
16 fighting and the dying when our nation next goes to war,
17 thank you for your steadfast support of your Marine Corps.
18 Your work ensures that future fights are heavily tilted in
19 their favor. I suffer no illusions that I arrived at this
20 hearing myself.

21 The young lance corporals, and lieutenants who so
22 gallantly served with me in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the
23 sergeants major and senior officers who have mentored me,
24 have my enduring admiration and gratitude. My family is
25 with me today. They are a rare combination of grit,

1 compassion, and patriotism.

2 My wife, Tricia, and I will celebrate 36 years of
3 marriage this year, and her continued dedication to the
4 youngest of our Marines and their families remains a
5 benchmark for me to emulate. After 22 moves and years
6 apart due to deployments, she stands ready to continue to
7 serve, if I am confirmed.

8 I am prouder to be called Tricia's husband than I am
9 to be called General Smith. Our daughter Elise, who is
10 here with her husband Matt, was born while I was deployed
11 to Desert Storm. So, her time as a military child started
12 with sacrifice. Her willingness to place work on hold to
13 support me today shows that she remains willing to play
14 service before self.

15 And our son, Travis, a Marine Corps Captain, and his
16 wife, Hadley, are here. Travis is currently on recruiting
17 duty but took a few days leave to come support his old man.
18 He did not get any dispensation for missing his recruiting
19 mission.

20 Even though he is here, he has completed deployments
21 to the Pacific and the Middle East. Stands ready to fight,
22 if called. As a senior officer, I am often greeted warmly
23 by the public. They thank me for my service and ask about
24 my very duty assignments.

25 And while I remain grateful for these encounters, I

1 know that it is our youngest Marines who deserve this
2 recognition and I hope to adequately represent them today.
3 If confirmed, I commit to you that I will not fail our
4 Marines, their families, or the civilians who serve with
5 us.

6 And I look forward to your questions.

7 [The prepared statement of General Smith follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General Smith.
2 Before we entertain questions from the panel, there are a
3 series of standard questions which must be asked of every
4 nominee, and you may respond appropriately. Have you
5 adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing
6 conflicts of interest?

7 General Smith: Yes, sir.

8 Chairman Reed: Have you assumed any duties or taken
9 any actions that would appear to presume the outcome of the
10 confirmation process?

11 General Smith: No, sir.

12 Chairman Reed: Exercising our legislative and
13 oversight responsibilities makes it important that this
14 committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate
15 committees of Congress receive testimony, briefings,
16 reports, records, and other information from the Executive
17 Branch on a timely basis. Do you agree, if confirmed, to
18 appear and testify before this committee when requested?

19 General Smith: Yes, sir.

20 Chairman Reed: Do you agree, when asked before this
21 committee to give your personal views, even if your views
22 differ from the Administration?

23 General Smith: Yes, sir.

24 Chairman Reed: Do you agree to provide records,
25 documents, and electronic communications in a timely manner

1 when requested by this committee, its subcommittees, or
2 other appropriate committees of Congress and to consult
3 with the requester regarding the basis for any good faith,
4 delay, or denial in providing such records?

5 General Smith: Yes, sir.

6 Chairman Reed: Will you ensure that your staff
7 complies with deadlines established by this committee for
8 the production of -- records and other information,
9 including timely responding to hearing questions for the
10 record?

11 General Smith: Yes, sir.

12 Chairman Reed: Will you cooperate in providing
13 witnesses and briefers in response to Congressional
14 requests?

15 General Smith: Yes, sir.

16 Chairman Reed: Will those witnesses and briefers be
17 protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

18 General Smith: Yes, sir.

19 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General Smith.

20 And once again, you and your family, thank you for a
21 lifetime of service to the Marine Corps. One of the issues
22 that is concerning to all of us I believe is congested
23 logistics.

24 We understand that the Marine Corps Warfighting
25 Laboratory is currently conducting experimentation on new

1 technologies and future capabilities. If confirmed, how
2 would you sharpen the Marine Corps' focus on this critical
3 capability?

4 You know, it is -- if you don't have the ammo, it is
5 tough to fight, basically.

6 General Smith: Mr. Chairman, thank you. Contested
7 logistics in any theater is a significant challenge. I
8 believe that contested logistics is an all of the above
9 matter. What I mean by that, sir, is you have to conduct
10 pre-staging of certain resources.

11 And fortunately, we have a lot of allies and friends
12 around the regions of the world who will allow us to do so.
13 We have to be very innovative as our Warfighting Lab is
14 doing so. We have unmanned systems to deliver those
15 supplies that we so critically need.

16 And also, we have to do some very creative work to do
17 additive manufacturing and 3D printing forward. If
18 confirmed, I am committed to continuing that effort because
19 I do see one day we will be printing forward -- in forward
20 operating bases, we will be printing major end items,
21 aircraft engines, propellers.

22 We will be doing that forward as opposed to straining
23 the lines that come from the United States through
24 contested logistics areas.

25 Chairman Reed: I think your vision is accurate. That

1 implies that we have to have intellectual property rights
2 and many other things which we will work on while you
3 continue to develop your approach.

4 The other aspect of this is, this would be a joint
5 effort. So, what type of complementary approaches are you
6 taking with other services, the Navy, Army, Air Force,
7 Space Force?

8 General Smith: Mr. Chairman, the logistics piece is
9 in fact a joint fight. So as a current Vice Service Chief,
10 we work very hard through the Joint Requirements Oversight
11 Council, underneath the leadership of the Vice Chairman of
12 the Joint Chiefs Staff, Admiral Grady, to ensure that
13 everything we do is complementary to each other.

14 For example, sir, when the Navy Logistics Command
15 needs to move assets for the Marine Corps throughout the
16 Pacific, it is incumbent upon us to ensure that what we
17 need is exactly what we need.

18 We know what we call the Cuban square, the size, the
19 weight that we reduce that, and we have been on a
20 significant effort to reduce our fighting weight, which
21 quite honestly, over 15 years of fighting in Iraq and
22 Afghanistan had grown substantially. One of the first
23 things to logistics is need less where you can.

24 Chairman Reed: Thank you. One of your prime
25 responsibility is training and organizing the Corps in

1 order to operate in multiple combatant areas. If
2 confirmed, how would you ensure your efforts are such that
3 Marines can in fact operate from CENTCOM, to INDOPACOM, to
4 NORTHCOM, etcetera?

5 General Smith: Chairman, if confirmed, I will
6 continue to work with our Training and Education Command,
7 and if confirmed, would direct them to ensure that our
8 moniker of, in every clime and place, remains. We do that
9 now in the high North with Norway. We train there
10 repeatedly.

11 We still train in the desert at 29 Palms, and we are
12 clearly operating across the spectrum in the Pacific, and
13 we are operating in the European theater, as we recently
14 did with Task Force 612, in support of those operations
15 after the reprehensible attacks of Russia into Ukraine.

16 Chairman Reed: Thank you. And then one additional
17 responsibility is to manage the talent you have, and you
18 have impressive talent. Your assessment at this point of
19 the challenges you face in terms of retention, recruitment,
20 and basically just the morale and esprit de corps.

21 General Smith: Chairman, the Marine Corps met its
22 recruiting mission last year, and they will meet it again
23 this year. We have been fortunate because we have treated
24 our Marines well through Talent Management 2030, that our
25 retention goals, which we attempt to meet by October, were

1 met in March this year.

2 So, Marines will vote with their feet, and they are
3 choosing to stay. When we keep more -- and what we are
4 talking about, Chairman, is keeping them from between the 5
5 and the 10 year marks. Not every lance corporal becoming a
6 master gunnery sergeant. We are talking 5 to 10 years,
7 which is where gap historically is.

8 Because we are able to keep them, keep that experience
9 and that talent, it is hugely beneficial to service. And I
10 think the reason the Marine Corps has met its recruiting
11 objectives is we haven't changed. We haven't lowered our
12 standards and we won't. We are here to do warfighting and
13 lethality, and we will not change our standards, because
14 the combat that comes tomorrow demands those high
15 standards.

16 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General. Senator
17 Wicker, please.

18 Senator Wicker: Well, thank you very, very much. And
19 I appreciate that statement, because I think it is very
20 important for us to understand why the Marine Corps members
21 are voting with their feet, as you say, and what lessons we
22 might be able to learn to apply service wide.

23 General Smith, the '23 NDAA set a floor of 31
24 traditional L-class amphibious ships, LHS, LPDs, and gave
25 the Commandant of the Marine Corps explicit requirements

1 authority for amphibious ships.

2 Many of us are frustrated that the Secretary of
3 Defense has not set in motion processes to actually get
4 this done. General Smith, is it your understanding, based
5 on the statute, that you are -- you are going to be
6 explicitly required to have 31 traditional amphibious
7 ships?

8 General Smith: Senator, it is. 31 is the minimum.

9 Senator Wicker: Okay. And why -- is this a sound,
10 necessary requirement, in your opinion?

11 General Smith: Senator, it is.

12 Senator Wicker: Okay. And why is that? Why is that
13 a necessary requirement?

14 General Smith: Senator, we are, and remain, and must
15 remain America's global combined arms crisis response
16 force. When a crisis begins to erupt, that is not the time
17 to begin to move to appear, to begin to load a ship, and
18 more importantly, sir, to begin to train your pilots to
19 land on a pitching rolling deck at night.

20 31 at a minimum enables us to train and to deploy and
21 to stay deployed so we can tamp those crises down and alter
22 adversary trajectories on behalf of the Joint Force.

23 Senator Wicker: If we do everything necessary, from a
24 legislative standpoint right now, how soon can we see that
25 the 31st L-class amphibious ship?

1 General Smith: Sir, there are 31 ships in the
2 inventory today. And what we seek and have sought for some
3 time is to replace the aging LSDs who are approaching 40
4 years of service life, with LPDs, which currently is the
5 best performing ship in the production line. That is a one
6 for one swap, sir, so we want to --

7 Senator Wicker: Thank you for that clarification.
8 How soon can that one for one swap be accomplished, if we
9 start today?

10 General Smith: The normal production for a ship is
11 two years, Senator. So, from the time it is put on
12 contract until it is complete, it is a two year production
13 cycle.

14 Senator Wicker: All right. Let's look back at the
15 disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan. How were two
16 Marine Corps battalions able to deploy?

17 General Smith: Senator, we had two battalions, second
18 time, first Marines, first Battalion, and 8th Marines. One
19 was forward in the CENTCOM area of responsibility, and the
20 second was forward on a Marine Expeditionary Unit.

21 So, they were forward deployed already. That is what
22 we do. That is who we are. So, without that forward
23 deployment, you give up time, and time is the one thing
24 that an adversary will never allow you to have.

25 Senator Wicker: And the amphibious ships were

1 absolutely a central part of that, is that correct?

2 General Smith: Sir, they were, as they were in the
3 initial moves into Afghanistan after the attacks on 9/11.

4 Senator Wicker: If we could have responded to the
5 powerful earthquake in Turkey, resulting in 50,000 or more
6 deaths, would -- did we respond, and if not, why not?

7 General Smith: Senator, we had a small detachment.
8 Marines, in short, did not. We have Marine battalions. We
9 have Marine squadrons ready to go. But when there are no
10 amphibious ships to get on, to train with, then we are
11 unable to execute that mission that is lawfully tasked to
12 us as a crisis response force.

13 Senator Wicker: And one final thing. I anticipate
14 that this committee and also our partners in the House of
15 Representatives will direct increased attention and
16 increased numbers for the Marine Corps junior ROTC
17 detachments. If we direct that this be done in the NDAA,
18 will you commit to implementing this and increasing the
19 number of junior ROTC units around the country?

20 General Smith: Senator, yes. If anything is in the
21 NDAA, of course we will comply. I would say that while
22 Marine Corps JROTC is not a recruiting tool, my son is a
23 product of Marine Corps JROTC, we owe that leadership tool
24 back to the institutions.

25 We also owe the most updated training materials and

1 the best possible screened embedded staff to do that,
2 because again, I find them to be highly useful. I have
3 personal experience with them. But yes, sir, I do commit
4 to that, if confirmed.

5 Senator Wicker: Thank you very much. I hear what you
6 say about recruiting. I think overall, it is a citizenship
7 builder, and it is a subset of excellence in almost any
8 school that -- where we see it. Thank you very much,
9 General.

10 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Wicker. Senator
11 Shaheen, please.

12 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And
13 congratulations, General Smith, on your nomination. And
14 thank you to you and all of your family for your
15 willingness to continue to serve. Both the chairman and
16 ranking member mentioned Force Design 2030, which was
17 General Berger's plan to realign the Marine Corps to
18 address the challenges presented by the Pacific, Indo-
19 Pacific. Can you talk about what the State of play is for
20 Force Design 2030 and how the Marine Corps is continuing to
21 implement the plan?

22 General Smith: Thank you, Senator. Force Design 2030
23 was an effort to modernize -- is an effort to modernize the
24 Marine Corps after 15 years of being focused on
25 counterinsurgency operations. It focuses on State owned

1 State conflict and simultaneously retaining our global
2 crisis response force, combined arms, global expeditionary
3 capabilities. Force Design 2030 is in a good place.

4 We have stood up, as a couple of examples, ma'am,
5 mindful of your time, the third Marine Littoral Regiment,
6 the first of three, was stood up in Hawaii. That unit
7 recently exercised in Balikatan, the largest exercise we do
8 with our Philippine allies and several other allies and was
9 highly sought after and highly credited with some of the
10 really exquisite capabilities, long range fires, low
11 signature that we have heard the chairman referenced.

12 So those efforts are on pace and need to go faster,
13 because also as referenced from Ranking Member Wicker,
14 whether the year is '27, '26, '25, for the Marines, we are
15 the fight tonight force. We want to be even more ready
16 than we are every single day. That is our mission when we
17 wake up.

18 So, Force Design is on track. We need to accelerate
19 those areas where we can, and that will come with the
20 steady funding and the continued experimentation and quick
21 feedback that we get from our extremely -- excellent Marine
22 Corps Warfighting Lab.

23 Senator Shaheen: Thank you very much. You talked
24 with Senator Reed about the success that the Marines have
25 had with retention and with recruiting when for the rest of

1 our military those numbers are down over the last year.

2 Can you talk -- I mean, you suggested that it was
3 maintaining the standards in the Marine Corps that was
4 appealing to people. I don't -- I didn't think that meant
5 that you were suggesting that the Army, an Air Force, and
6 Navy had lowered their standards.

7 So what lessons are there that you think the Marine
8 Corps can share with the other branches of the military on
9 how we do a better job recruiting? Does everybody need to
10 have a show like NCIS that encourages people to think about
11 the Marines? Or what do you think would be helpful?

12 General Smith: Ma'am, you are absolutely correct. I
13 would never disparage my fellow services because we fight
14 as a Joint Force. And I have been to three different wars,
15 and they have all been with Joint Forces. I think one of
16 our keys to success is we do send our very best to
17 recruiting duty and we reward them when they go with
18 promotions, with prime duty assignments, when they leave
19 recruiting.

20 And we have the ethos that we are Marines, we will
21 accomplish the mission. And our objective, and our goal,
22 and our mandate is that everyone who seeks to become a U.S.
23 Marine has an opportunity to become one. You may join some
24 other organization, you become a U.S. Marine. It is a
25 transformational process and people want a challenge.

1 Senator Shaheen: So when we had a chance to meet in
2 my office, one of the stories that I told you was about
3 meeting with former members of the Afghan female tactical
4 platoon who are here in the United States and who a number
5 of whom expressed an interest in continuing to serve in our
6 military and who were very appreciative of the opportunity
7 to be an America but really wanted to become full-fledged
8 citizens and think about the ability to give back to this
9 country.

10 So, should we be doing more to recruit those patriotic
11 immigrants who want to serve this country? And do you have
12 thoughts about how we would do that?

13 General Smith: Ma'am, as a former recruiter, anything
14 that enables us to access the totality of talent from which
15 to draw so that we get the very best Marines, I am in favor
16 of. And if confirmed, I will continue that effort to make
17 sure we have opportunities and access for everyone who
18 wishes to compete to become a United States Marine.

19 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. And we have a little bit
20 of time left, but I did want to ask you about the war in
21 Ukraine and what lessons do you think the Chinese and
22 President Xi are looking at as they look at what is
23 happening in Ukraine?

24 General Smith: Ma'am, I can never say what is in
25 President Xi's head. I would say that the individuals'

1 fighting spirit of individual soldiers and Marines matters
2 most. And what I also say is the lesson that should be
3 taken is that those who have lots of partners, allies and
4 friends, are very difficult to defeat.

5 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

6 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Senator
7 Fischer, please.

8 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank
9 you, General. I certainly appreciate your service to this
10 country, the service and sacrifice by your family as well,
11 and look forward to this hearing and your answers to many
12 of our questions.

13 Congress has generally been very supportive of Force
14 Design 2030. Should we anticipate any shifts in the
15 concept, if you are confirmed?

16 General Smith: Senator, thank you for that. Force
17 Design 2030, which I have been a part since the beginning,
18 is on the right track. And if confirmed, I will continue
19 that. And what I would say, ma'am, is we have shifted it
20 since the beginning. We are Marines. We are innovators.

21 We have changed -- where we found that we shot long at
22 the target, so to speak, we will immediately modify when
23 the data represents that we need to make a change. We have
24 done that several times with significant things like rotary
25 wing assets.

1 Senator Fischer: When we met last week, you designed
2 that Force Design 2030 as the Marine Corps returning to
3 their normal State of being after 20 years of desert
4 warfare. Could you expand on that in this setting as well
5 for us, please?

6 General Smith: Yes, ma'am. I have served extensively
7 in Iraq and Afghanistan, and we were, all those of us who
8 did, were proud to do so. But that was a very, very
9 focused fight on counterinsurgency. It did not, as
10 previous commandants have said, prepare us for peer State
11 on State conflict.

12 So, as we got larger, heavier, with more equipment, it
13 becomes increasingly difficult to move that equipment in a
14 time frame that matters. When you don't have deep water
15 ports and weeks to move equipment, days to offload, you
16 have hours, or short days to make the entire move, you have
17 to modernize, become more agile, longer range, lower
18 signature.

19 This is peer on peer conflict that we have not
20 experienced at this level that is possible since 1945.

21 Senator Fischer: Chairman Reed touched on this, but
22 could you expand on it a little bit about how the Marine
23 Corps needs to change their logistic capabilities to be
24 more effective in a contested environment?

25 General Smith: Ma'am, when I worked for Dr. Carter as

1 Secretary of Defense, he had a master's degree in
2 theoretical -- or doctorate in theoretical physics, and you
3 can't change physics. Things that weigh 10 pounds, weigh
4 10 pounds.

5 So, what we seek to do is pre-stage, forward stage,
6 and as I said, do additive manufacturing and 3D printing
7 forward. We can also use certain technologies that make
8 things lighter, polymer ammunition, lighter weight body
9 armor.

10 Every pound matters when you are trying to move things
11 across the expanse of the Pacific. And our UAVs, or
12 unmanned aerial vehicles, surface and subsurface platforms
13 that can deliver supplies, key supplies at the critical
14 time. That is what we are investing in now. We are trying
15 to accelerate that as fast as we can.

16 Senator Fischer: You mentioned the technologies that
17 continue to be innovative when it comes to warfare. Do you
18 -- do you see emerging technologies that the Corps will be
19 able to access to be able to enhance your operations, your
20 abilities, and help you maintain a competitive edge?

21 And in this setting, can you talk about any of those
22 emerging technologies that you think that you will be able
23 to really take a hold of and be able to help your force?

24 General Smith: Senator, I think one of the keys, and
25 I usually hammer on this pretty hard, is 3D printing

1 forward. When we own, as was referenced by I believe the
2 chairman, the tech data rights to things we procure, I can
3 build and print aircraft engines forward.

4 When you can do that, ma'am, that is an entire supply
5 chain that is relieved of some stress and it gets the
6 engine into the hands of the warfighter today, not weeks
7 from now. That is key, and you can pre-staged those metals
8 and bring with you the 3D printer. That is in our future.
9 I am convinced of that, ma'am, if confirmed, and I am
10 focused on that.

11 Senator Fischer: And to keep you moving quickly as a
12 force.

13 General Smith: Ma'am absolutely. As we say, speed is
14 life.

15 Senator Fischer: You mentioned the Balikatan
16 exercises in the Philippines. Can you briefly tell us how
17 they help you inform the future force posture decisions
18 that you are going to be faced with?

19 General Smith: Ma'am, those assets that are forward
20 with very high end intelligence, surveillance, and
21 reconnaissance tools, in the broad, unclassified setting
22 that we are in, when they can sense what the adversary is
23 doing, and make sense of their intent and pass it to our
24 allies and partners, that gives you the time to move to
25 position and to be in position to thwart their efforts. It

1 is called first mover advantage.

2 And when we provide that to the joint and allied
3 force, it does, in fact, exponentially change the power of
4 the force that is in the air or on the ground, because you
5 have anticipatory moves that you can make vice respond to.

6 Senator Fischer: Thank you, sir.

7 General Smith: Thank you.

8 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Fischer. Senator
10 Gillibrand, please.

11 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General
12 Smith, congratulations. Welcome to your family. It is
13 wonderful to have them here. The Marine Innovation Unit is
14 headquartered in Newburgh, New York.

15 It is tasked with maintaining our technological
16 advantage and will have 270 reservists assigned this year
17 with significant expertise from those Marines' civilian
18 careers, whether it is in AI, whether it is in cyber,
19 whether it is in other tech careers. What value do you see
20 MIU bringing to the Marine Corps?

21 And how will the Marine Corps look to balance the
22 competing needs of developing these Marines professionally
23 through deployments and reassignments to other reserve
24 units and retaining valuable expertise in MIU?

25 General Smith: Thank you, Senator. That unit at

1 Newburgh is exactly where it must be, because that
2 innovation academia corridor is really like no other. That
3 is the purpose or the reason for its location. Location
4 matters. Lieutenant General Dave Bellon, head of Marine
5 Corps Forces Reserve, came up with that idea.

6 I have spoken to the MIU, Marine Innovation Unit, and
7 they are sergeants, three colonels. They are their own
8 business owners. They are already in these businesses.
9 They already have the connecting to files and tissue. So,
10 if confirmed, I will continue to give them tasks.

11 As the Assistant Commandant, I gave them the logistics
12 tasks. Figure out how to make us more logistically
13 sustainable. And I would commit to you, ma'am, if
14 confirmed, they will be a priority because they already
15 have the tools.

16 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. The Marine Corps
17 submitted a legislative proposal to increase the service
18 obligation of cyber officers to eight years after
19 completion of MOS training. Can you walk us through the
20 experience in Marine Corps that led to this request, and
21 how this change would impact the Marine Corps' ability to
22 provide cyber officers to units in the fleet and combatant
23 commanders? Do you have any concerns about
24 disincentivizing service in this MOS?

25 General Smith: Senator, your last first, I don't have

1 any concern. We have lots of contracts in 5, 6, 7, 8, even
2 10 years. The exquisite credentials that those cyber
3 operators will receive are highly valuable in the military
4 and outside.

5 So, we think it is a fair trade. And they think it is
6 a fair trade, too, because we are doing well in those
7 numbers. Lieutenant General Gerry Glavy, who used to be
8 the three at U.S. Cyber Command, is now our Director of
9 Information, Deputy Commandant for Information. He is one
10 of the driving factors behind that.

11 We look at our recruiting model. We did some
12 analysis, and we thought we can ask that of those
13 individuals to receive those exquisite credentials. And we
14 were correct, and we will continue to do that, ma'am.

15 Senator Gillibrand: The Marine Corps current plans
16 include incorporating intelligent robots and autonomous
17 system specialties throughout the total force. Do you
18 currently have enough Marines with expertise in this area
19 to extend these capabilities across the fleet? If not, how
20 do you anticipate developing this capacity?

21 General Smith: Senator, we don't. We I don't think
22 anyone has the level of robotics experts, AI experts they
23 would like to have.

24 So, while we are developing our own, we are closely
25 coordinating with others, to include Army Futures Command,

1 Office of Naval Research, and DARPA to make sure that the
2 Joint Force collectively focuses on those two highly
3 important areas that you just described, ma'am.

4 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. In 2021, several
5 Marine Corps flight students accused some of their
6 instructors of sexual harassment and immediately started to
7 receive substandard performance evaluations.

8 They were pulled out of flight training. They had to
9 wait nearly two years, and sometime after their allegations
10 had already been substantiated, before they were cleared to
11 return to the flight school. These were incredibly
12 accomplished and dedicated women who chose to serve their
13 country in the Marines.

14 And after being sexually harassed, they were placed in
15 limbo for years and told to expect separation. I am glad
16 that they are now back in the cockpit. But what lessons
17 has the Marine Corps learned about how to handle sexual
18 harassment retaliation claims in the future?

19 General Smith: Senator, sexual harassment -- sexual
20 assault is a crime, period, all stop. If confirmed, I am
21 committed to working with you and members of this committee
22 to make sure that the standard, which they should expect,
23 is that anyone who shows up to flight training, regardless
24 of who they are, receives the exact same syllabus and the
25 same opportunities to earn their wings and gold. I am

1 committed to that, ma'am.

2 Senator Gillibrand: One of the critical aspects of
3 Force Design 2030 is wargaming, and these exercises led you
4 to change the size and functionality of your infantry
5 battalions. As you continue to work out what does or what
6 does or does not work best, how can Congress help you and
7 the other Joint Chiefs rapidly modernize our force to
8 ensure that we are prepared to face our next military
9 challenge?

10 General Smith: Senator, our wargaming and analysis
11 team at Quantico did in fact -- in artillery terms, we
12 always shoot the first round long. You want it past the
13 target, so it illuminates the target. So, we did that.
14 After three different experiments from three different
15 battalions in three different divisions, we came back and
16 changed the number of the infantry battalion back higher.

17 We also made sure we manned that battalion in the 96,
18 97, 98 percentiles of manned rate. So, we will continue to
19 innovate with that and make sure that we stay up and ahead
20 of the patient threat. I think the authorities we have
21 been given in terms of personnel management from Congress
22 have been extraordinary, and I believe we have what we
23 need.

24 And if confirmed, ma'am, I am committed to maximizing
25 all those tools already provided to us by this committee

1 and by Congress.

2 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

3 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Gillibrand.
4 Senator Ernst, please.

5 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you
6 very much, General Smith, for being here today.
7 Congratulations on your nomination, and to your family as
8 well. Thank you for your service and support.

9 Truly takes an extraordinary family to get this far,
10 so thank you very much. I would like to dive back into the
11 amphibious ship requirement because there has been a lot of
12 debate. It has already been raised by a number of my
13 colleagues here today.

14 But, General, how does that requirement square, the
15 requirement of 31, how does that square with assumptions
16 about building the force for denied environments against
17 enemies sensor and strike capabilities? Because there is
18 some behind the scenes debate about the class of amphibs
19 and survivability in those denied environments. Can you
20 walk us through that, please, and what those requirements
21 mean?

22 General Smith: Senator, I can. First, survivability
23 is never binary. Things are made more survivable, if, more
24 survivable, when. As a quick example, no aircraft is
25 inherently survivable alone because the enemy makes anti-

1 aircraft missiles. No ship is inherently survivable alone
2 because there are torpedoes and strike missiles.
3 Infantrymen are not immune from machine gunfire.

4 So, the totality of the Joint Force moves an asset and
5 protects an asset. So, when those capabilities that we
6 have discussed in our various office calls, ma'am, our
7 ground air task oriented radar, our long range strike
8 capabilities, when those are asked for by combatant
9 commanders and sought out by operational commanders, they
10 must get to the fight. Those amphibious warships, get them
11 to the fight.

12 They are there initially. And they also assist us in
13 the logistics challenge. Because they carry 15 to 30 days
14 of sustainment, if you don't have that initial sustainment
15 upfront, then the logistics challenge gets harder.

16 And if a fleet commander, or Joint Force commander
17 more importantly, decides that those assets are key, that
18 Joint Force commander will protect those assets with the
19 plethora of tools that they have at their disposal.

20 Senator Ernst: Okay. I appreciate that, General,
21 because what I want to see, and what I want to make sure
22 that we are doing is authorizing what you need and so that
23 you have it when you need it. What we have seen in the
24 past, and I will give a very upfront example, the littoral
25 combat ship.

1 We commissioned a number of those a number of years
2 ago, and some of those have only been commissioned for five
3 to six years and they are already on a list to be
4 decommissioned.

5 So, what I want to make sure is that we are actually
6 procuring what you need, and that it will stay in our
7 inventory for years to come, and that we are not spending
8 millions and billions of dollars on something that we think
9 you need, and you are going to turn around and say, no, we
10 don't need that in two, three years.

11 Senator Ernst: Senator, thank you. And what we need
12 is what's been provided by Congress, which is a minimum of
13 31 L-class ships, 10 big decks, those are helicopter jet
14 carriers, and 21 LPDs at a minimum.

15 And those must be in a ready State because Marines are
16 in a ready State, and crises never wait for you to finish
17 repairs or finish training before you go. We need those 31
18 at a minimum.

19 Senator Ernst: Thank you. I appreciate that,
20 General. And I am going to dive into our Special
21 Operations Command and your Marine Raiders. There is
22 -- and this, you know, falls a little bit outside maybe of
23 your day to day management. But Force Design 2030 calls
24 for a smaller footprint, better signature management and
25 maneuver deception and tempo on the battlefield. So,

1 General, how does the Marine Corps Special Operations
2 Command fit into your thinking about littoral operations?

3 General Smith: Senator, the some, just under 3,000
4 Marine special operators who are out there in MARSOC,
5 Marine Special Operations Command, led by Major General
6 Challenger, have been instrumental in assisting us with
7 experimentation. And when we talk about experimentation,
8 what we mean by that, Senator, is when they are already
9 forward deployed, they have been given asks and tasks by
10 Marine Corps Warfighting Lab while executing their mission.
11 Try this, test this -- they give us real world operational
12 feedback. They are doing that every time they deploy teams
13 around the world, and they have been extremely helpful.
14 And if I am confirmed, I am committed to continuing that
15 with MARSOC.

16 Senator Ernst: Very good. I appreciate it. I just
17 want to bring this up yet once again. As we are looking at
18 a constrained budgetary environment, as we are moving
19 forward, we may be asking our forces to downsize. And I
20 think it is incredibly important that we recognize the role
21 that our Marines play, that MARSOC plays, and that we are
22 very careful not to undercut the defense of our nation in
23 this constrained environment. And I know, Chairman, that
24 we will work and do all we can to support our warfighter.
25 So, thank you very much, General Smith, and

1 congratulations.

2 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Ernst. Senator
3 Manchin, please.

4 Senator Manchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And,
5 General, thank you so much for your service, and your son,
6 and your family's dedication to our country. I appreciate
7 it. I very much appreciated our conversation yesterday.
8 And we were talking, I think, and I think I told you that
9 in my lifetime, going clear back to the Vietnam War,
10 watching, being involved very carefully, this is the only
11 just war I have seen us involved with for the right purpose
12 is Ukraine, supporting a country that is willing to fight
13 and die for their freedom, if you will, and democracy that
14 they cherish. Can you tell me what you have observed and
15 learned basically from your people out front, and that war
16 has changed our perception of how we would conduct
17 ourselves?

18 General Smith: Thank you, Senator. The war in
19 Ukraine has taught us a few things, although I think the
20 final lessons learned are yet to be learned. But here is
21 what we have assessed thus far. As I said earlier, the
22 individual fighting spirit and willingness of an individual
23 soldier, or in our case Marine, is paramount on the
24 battlefield. Always has been, always will be. If you
25 train and prepare a resilient, tough warrior, they are very

1 hard to kill. We have found that over and over through
2 history. Low signatures matter. If you are observed on a
3 modern battlefield, you will be targeted. You have to have
4 mobility and low signature. What has changed over the last
5 15 or 20 years is that the ability of an adversary to
6 detect you has become almost off the shelf technology that
7 anybody can procure, even your lesser adversaries. Long
8 range fires absolutely matter. If you don't have the range
9 to reach an adversary, then you are of no real consequence
10 on the battlefield.

11 Senator Manchin: Are we restricting any of the
12 concerns that they have and the type of equipment they have
13 asked for and support?

14 General Smith: Senator, there is a very rigorous
15 process. the Presidential drawdown authority, which we are
16 on number 41, the Marine Corps is a part of that. So, we
17 get an assessment of what those tools asked for and then
18 authorized, would do is provided -- would they change our
19 Marine Corps readiness. And so, we are part of that
20 process and always have a --

21 Senator Manchin: Do you think we are supplying -- I
22 mean, we are supplying them what they need? I know the F-
23 16, they keep asking for. The fighters, they want long
24 range missiles. They are asking for those types of things.
25 They think that would help them in defending themselves but

1 turning the war.

2 General Smith: Senator, I would not -- as a nominee,
3 I wouldn't speculate on what should or should not be
4 provided under Presidential drawdown authority. But I can
5 commit to you, sir, that if confirmed, any request that is
6 made, we will give that a thorough vetting on part of the
7 Marine Corps to ensure that those resources that are
8 required are provided.

9 Senator Manchin: Also, we talked a little bit about
10 basically how we treat our soldiers, and we leave no one
11 behind, and the families. Compared to the Russians, what
12 they have done, what we have heard, the atrocities going on
13 and bodies not even being returned so there can be
14 reparation, or basically any payments or any support to the
15 families. Have you found that to be accurate?

16 General Smith: Senator, the -- what I can say is,
17 what we provide, as we always take everyone off the
18 battlefield or continue looking until we do, we treat our
19 families well. And for those who have sacrificed
20 everything, we care for those families. That is not true
21 of the Russians. And I would not want to be -- I would not
22 want anyone to compare them to us because we are not in the
23 same zip code.

24 Senator Manchin: Can you also just speak briefly on
25 what cost savings would be to the branches of military, and

1 of course, what you oversee is our Marines, if we did our
2 -- and got our work done on time and got our budget done by
3 September 30th, and you had a guaranteed budget, number to
4 work with, versus a C.R. Can you tell us the cost savings
5 there?

6 General Smith: Senator, I think our rough math is
7 approximately 4 of the last 10 years total time has been
8 spent in a continuing resolution status. Whether that
9 savings is 5 or 10 percent, I don't have an exact number,
10 but I can tell you that when all your funding comes in four
11 or five months out of a year, it is impossible to spend it
12 smoothly, correctly. Manufacturers can't absorb that. The
13 defense industrial base struggles, and I think that is
14 actually where most of our waste will come from.

15 Senator Manchin: I thought you had it figured out.
16 The American Enterprise Institute threw out a rough
17 estimate of \$200 million per day, per day under the latest
18 continuing resolution that covered the start of the Fiscal
19 Year 2023. That is a total of \$18 billion. That is real
20 money.

21 General Smith: Sir, that is real money.

22 Senator Manchin: We better do your job, guys. Thank
23 you. Thank you, Chairman.

24 Senator Kaine: Next up, Senator Sullivan.

25 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General,

1 good to see you. I appreciated the office call. I want to
2 thank your family sitting behind you. I appreciated your
3 comments about your family's sacrifice. It is really
4 important to remember that. I heard you had to straighten
5 out Captain Smith's tie this morning.

6 So, I know as a father and Commandant, you had a duty
7 to do that. More seriously, you have not only served your
8 country with distinction, you have bled for your country.
9 Not many four star generals in the U.S. military can say
10 that, so very much appreciate that.

11 General, on April 18th, the Commandant, along with
12 Secretary of the Navy, the CNO, appeared before this
13 committee, and yet this committee is still waiting for
14 responses to questions for the record. I had 75 QFRs on
15 many of the issues today. These would have better informed
16 our questions for you today.

17 I understand OSD is still reviewing this, but it is
18 disappointing for anyone watching from OSD that it takes
19 two months to get responses to this committee on critical
20 issues, particularly as they are going through the
21 nomination period of members of the Joint Chiefs. That is
22 not your area, but it is something they need to do a better
23 job on.

24 This morning, I sent a letter to the Secretary of the
25 Navy, a bipartisan letter. Mr. Chairman, I would like to

1 submit this for the record.

2 Senator Kaine: Without objection.

3 [The information referred to follows:]

4 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Sullivan: 14 U.S. Senators on this committee
2 is about two-thirds of the committee. Many of the ranking
3 members and chairman of the subcommittees on Seapower and
4 Readiness.

5 That gives the Secretary of the Navy and the
6 Department of Navy a clear indication of how this committee
7 feels about the department's failure to meet the 31 amphibs
8 ship requirement. You have already spoken about this a
9 lot. You can see the committee cares about it. I commend
10 General Berger for sitting next to the SECNAV two months
11 ago saying 31 amphibs is the requirement.

12 So, can you expound again, General, because this is
13 really important, how critical to the Marine Corps mission
14 is having a minimum of 31 amphibs? There has been a couple
15 of stories in the press the last couple of months on the
16 31st MIU having the Marines, but not the ships, to deploy.

17 Maybe you can talk about some real world examples like
18 Sudan, where we had Marines but not ships to potentially
19 save Americans. How critical is it to that mission? And
20 do you fully support, in your personal opinion, the need
21 for 31 amphibs as a minimum?

22 General Smith: Senator, thank you. Yes, sir, 31 is
23 the minimum, and that 31 is ready ships, able to deploy.
24 The key --

25 Senator Sullivan: By the way, on that point, the

1 Commandant in testimony last year, I believe, talked about
2 amphibs, have a 33 percent readiness rate in terms of
3 maintenance in the fleet. So, if you have 31, you divide
4 that by two-thirds and you get the number of ships
5 available. Can you comment on that as well?

6 General Smith: Senator, again, ready ships. I mean,
7 a ship that is ready to receive and train with Marines. As
8 you know, sir, you don't simply deploy. You prepare to
9 deploy for months.

10 As I said earlier, a young lance corporal who is
11 operating their amphibious combat vehicle in an a wet well
12 at night in three foot seas, they shouldn't do that the
13 first time on their way to a fight.

14 We have to have those amphibious warships to train
15 with and to not just deploy, but to remain deployed.

16 Senator Sullivan: So, can the Marine Corps do its
17 global response mission without 31 amphibs, in your
18 personal opinion?

19 General Smith: No, sir, we cannot.

20 Senator Sullivan: Will Marine Corps Force Design be a
21 success or failure without 31 amphibs at a minimum, in your
22 personal opinion?

23 General Smith: So, yes, sir. Force Design will
24 continue because it will make us more ready to deal with
25 peer threats. But, sir, those 31 amphibious warships are a

1 part of it, an absolutely vital part. Just as long range
2 fire and signature communications are. But those 31
3 amphibious warships, sir, are vital for the Marine Corps,
4 and more importantly, sir, for the nation. They are a
5 national asset.

6 Senator Sullivan: Just for the record, Mr. Chairman,
7 both chairmen, the letter that we submitted, as you know,
8 Chairman Kaine, makes it so the Secretary of the Navy two
9 months ago committed to come back to this committee with a
10 plan to get to 31 amphibs and follow the law. That is what
11 this letter is asking him to do soon.

12 But I think, General, your testimony is helpful in
13 terms of just how important that is to the Marine Corps'
14 overall mission. But to your point, the National Security
15 of our nation. Do you believe it is broader than just the
16 Marine Corps' mission?

17 General Smith: Sir. It is my personal and
18 professional opinion, it is broader than the Marine Corps.
19 It is a national asset that is the true Swiss Army knife of
20 the nation, and it must be kept forward. It is a national
21 asset. Yes, sir.

22 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. Senator
24 Blumenthal, please.

25 Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you,

1 General, for being here today. Thank you to your family.
2 And I want to join you in thanking General Berger for his
3 service, which has been extraordinary in a difficult and
4 challenging time.

5 And you will meet the same kinds of challenges and
6 difficulties. One of them, no doubt will be recruitment.
7 The Marine Corps has been an exception in meeting its
8 recruiting goals. You and I discussed this issue when we
9 met, and I know how focused you are on female recruitment.
10 I wonder if you could talk a little bit about female
11 recruitment as a priority for you.

12 General Smith: Senator, if confirmed, what I can tell
13 you is I am committed to any individual who is qualified
14 and who wants to attempt to be a marine, we want you to do
15 that. We need access to 100 percent of American talent.

16 We have to have access to everyone. As Marines, we
17 don't care who -- where you come from. What we care about
18 is you, the individual. We care deeply about each
19 individual having the same exact opportunity, male or
20 female.

21 And I am committed to making sure, if confirmed, that
22 we continue to offer that opportunity, to offer young
23 people the chance to challenge themselves, to see if they
24 have the metal to be a Marine.

25 Senator Blumenthal: Female or male.

1 General Smith: Female or male, sir.

2 Senator Blumenthal: I was impressed as well by your
3 conversation about the feedback loop, so to speak, and in
4 particular about how we all, you and I in particular, can
5 learn from our children. I am not going to reveal the
6 contents of our conversation in the presence of your
7 children, but I know how proud you are of them and how
8 closely you listen to others.

9 And I know that one of the aspects of the force design
10 that is most important has been the campaign, the campaign
11 of learning, COL, which provides the kind of analytic
12 underpinning so that the Marine Corps learns as it
13 implements and adjusts to the feedback that it receives
14 from the folks on the ground, the Marines who are actually
15 affected in real time.

16 And I think that listening is tremendously important.
17 I wonder if you could talk a little bit about that approach
18 to leadership, because I think it informs much of your
19 future leadership as commandant.

20 General Smith: Senator, thank you. And if confirmed,
21 I am committed to that campaign of learning because it is
22 vital. And the way we do it is, in fact, just basic
23 leadership. It is kneecap to kneecap, face to face
24 leadership so that a young lance corporal feels comfortable
25 saying, hey, sir, ma'am, this didn't work. I have a better

1 idea.

2 And you see this in a well-oiled CH-53 crew, for
3 example. The pilot may be flying, but the crew chief is in
4 charge in the back, and they will often offer harsh
5 feedback. We do that in the ready rooms. We do that
6 around terrain models before and after an exercise. We
7 have that going at the lowest level, lance corporal through
8 sergeants, lieutenant colonels, all the way up to the
9 Marines.

10 As you know, sir, they are not shy about providing
11 harsh feedback. And thanks for not revealing the
12 conversation, because one of my harshest critics is sitting
13 over my left shoulder, I think, and I get a lot of straight
14 feedback on many things.

15 Senator Blumenthal: That is a good thing.

16 General Smith: Yes, sir.

17 Senator Blumenthal: Let me ask you, I know how
18 sensitive you are to the quality of life of your Marines.
19 What are the needs to improve housing, day care, health
20 care? Is that an area where you intend to focus?

21 General Smith: If confirmed, I will focus on that.
22 And I will tell you, sir, the saying is you recruit the
23 Marine, but you retain the family.

24 And if you don't take care of Marines, and that is a
25 warfighting function, take care of their families, they

1 can't focus on the mission at hand. So, barracks, chow
2 halls, gyms to stay fit to be ready to fight, housing,
3 spousal employment.

4 Those are key to keeping Marines. And I would argue
5 that those are truly warfighting needs, because if an
6 individual leaves because of the family needs not being
7 met, you will have to recruit a new Marine and you can't
8 replace 12 years. I always say time is a gift you cannot
9 give the adversary. They are vital to warfighting.

10 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you. I agree with the
11 chairman that you are eminently qualified, and you have my
12 support. And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.
14 Senator Tuberville, please.

15 Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks,
16 General, for being here. Thanks for your service. Thanks
17 for your family. I am going to brag about you a little
18 bit, being a Texas A&M Aggie. I was there for a short
19 period of time. I know some of your family are Aggie fans,
20 some are Longhorn fans. We won't bring that up.

21 But I don't think many people here know that and
22 understand the importance of school like Texas A&M. Being
23 there for only a year just brings back patriotism. And
24 many mornings I was at 5:00 a.m. watching these cadets work
25 out and watching the band work out, which actually went

1 through a tougher workout than our football team did. But
2 it really is patriotism at its best.

3 So, congratulations on your nomination and look
4 forward to supporting you. You know, you said something as
5 we talked yesterday that resonated with me and it is the
6 proper mentality for a military leader. You said, the
7 focus of the Marines is warfighting and lethality, as it
8 should be. That focus is what we need in our military
9 right now more than anything else.

10 We live in a dangerous world, dangerous world, and I
11 would hope that some of your colleagues in the Pentagon
12 would catch on a little bit of that and get politics out of
13 this. I mean, politics is detrimental to a lot of things.
14 It is good for something, somethings it is not. Military,
15 it is not. A military focused on political agenda loses
16 its effectiveness.

17 So, I was glad to hear you talk about, you know, the
18 enlisted men and women that do a great job, that are doing
19 it for the right reasons. You also discussed the Marine
20 Corps had changed its standards -- hasn't changed the
21 standards, and it is a privilege to serve.

22 You said Marines don't make a good product. They
23 attract a good product. What a statement. I mean, that is
24 awesome, and I can remember all the scenes back in the
25 years growing up on TV advertising about the Marines

1 -- awesome.

2 But you foresee any challenges now that you are
3 getting ready to take over the reins as the head coach, or
4 run this organization which America is so proud of? Do you
5 see any changes that you would make in terms of recruiting
6 the best young men and women in this country?

7 General Smith: Senator, thank you for that. If
8 confirmed, I am committed to continuing that ethos, that
9 legacy of warfighting excellence, because as you mentioned,
10 sir, we attract people who want to be better. They want to
11 return to society as better citizens than they come in as.

12 So, I am committed to maintaining our high standards
13 of warfighting, lethality, global deployment, and making
14 sure that -- our Marines hymn says, we are first to fight
15 for right and honor, and to keep our honor clean. We keep
16 our honor clean. And that ethos and that moral integrity
17 matters.

18 And I think people understand that. And if they send
19 their children to attempt to become U.S. Marines, you know,
20 those words have to ring true, and we will hold them true.
21 I am committed to that, sir.

22 Senator Tuberville: Thank you for that. I had the
23 opportunity to be on the USS Nassau back during the Iraq
24 war as coach. They put a couple of us on there to really
25 see what life was about -- amazing. We were on the USS

1 Nassau, and we had, I think, 1,500 Marines on that troop
2 carrier.

3 And I had the opportunity to walk around and talk to
4 these young men and women because they were getting ready
5 to be deployed that night at 3:00 a.m. on shore. I have
6 never seen like the organization, and I tell people,
7 organization -- I learned this from some people worked
8 with, organization is the key to winning. I have never
9 seen the evacuation of 1,500 troops in such quick time.

10 Obviously it is dangerous, but it was awesome to see
11 it. And awesome to see men at work, the Navy personnel on
12 the ship, and of course, the Marines going on shore. You
13 know, we make up a boat or a ship, you would call it -- in
14 Mobile, it is called the TEFP transport.

15 Can you talk about its strengths, and what you think
16 about that, you know, in general? Tell me the truth. We
17 make it in Alabama. Tell me what you think about that as a
18 Marine.

19 General Smith: Senator, the TEPF, the fast transport,
20 I have used it when I was the Commander of Marine forces in
21 Japan. It is just that, is a fast transport. Can move in
22 the 25, 30 knot range.

23 Senator Tuberville: How many people is that?

24 General Smith: Several hundred depending on how it is
25 configured because it is configurable. It has got a well

1 deck -- and not a well deck, pardon me. It has got a deck
2 underneath where you can haul significant amounts of
3 equipment. It has got a ramp so you can put long range
4 fires, you can put personnel, and you can move it really
5 fast and really far.

6 Senator, if I can. I know it is your time, but
7 because my sergeant major would chastise me, sitting in
8 front of this committee can be a little intimidating. I
9 think I said honor twice, in our Marine hymn, first to
10 fight for right and freedom, and to keep our honor clean.
11 I might have said honor twice, but that is never bad to say
12 honor twice.

13 Senator Tuberville: Exactly. Thank you very much.
14 Thank you, General.

15 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Tuberville.
16 Senator Kaine, please.

17 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair. General Smith,
18 to you and your family, congratulations. I note that the
19 Marines are doing relatively well in recruiting, and you
20 have a son who is a Marine recruiter.

21 I don't suggest causation, but there is a positive
22 correlation there that I just want to bring up. I want to
23 extend my thanks to General Berger, Commandant Berger, for
24 his long service. Let me associate my comments with those
25 of others about the anthem situation.

1 The committee has been puzzled because when we have
2 had commandants, CNOs, and SECNAV before us, there is sort
3 of an unequivocal 31 amphips and they need to be ready, and
4 yet we often get budgetary documents or shipbuilding plans
5 that suggest, wait a minute, is this the policy or not?

6 I was proud to be on this letter with Senator
7 Sullivan, along with many of my colleagues. I have come to
8 believe that the issue is not lack of unanimity within the
9 SECNAV, CNO, or commandant. I think it is more within the
10 OSD or White House, and we need to kind of get to the
11 bottom of that. But I appreciate your unequivocal
12 testimony on this. I want to ask about Pacific posture.

13 One critique that I hear some raise about the Marine
14 current focus is that the Marines are becoming so focused
15 on Pacific challenges, winning the Pacific fight, that in
16 doing so, it may be losing ability or degrading ability to
17 be lethal in CENTCOM and EUCOM. How would you respond to
18 that concern, General?

19 General Smith: Senator, thanks. I will give a quick
20 anecdote. Trying to be mindful of your time, sir. When I
21 was a lieutenant, I trained to fight against the Soviet
22 motorized rifle regiment. We continue to train even after
23 the wall came down, because that was the most stressing
24 challenge, a peer competitor.

25 When I went to Liberia and conducted a noncombatant

1 evacuation operation, and then later when I went in to
2 conduct counterinsurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, I felt
3 pretty well trained because I had paced myself against the
4 fastest runner.

5 Our commitment to the Pacific is driven by the
6 National Defense Strategy, but we are retaining those same
7 capabilities globally. And the things, the long range
8 fires, low signature, those are applicable in any
9 battlefield, just as our Task Force 612 did in support of
10 operations in EUCOM.

11 Senator Kaine: Thank you for that. If confirmed,
12 what changes or adjustments would you want to see in terms
13 of mobility and logistics support in the Pacific theater?

14 General Smith: Senator, if confirmed, the focus, the
15 pacing -- we talk about China as the pacing challenge. We
16 talk about logistics as the pacing function. It is simply
17 a matter of time and resources. One must invest in the
18 technology, the innovation to be able to move assets, to
19 pre-stage assets.

20 So, I am committed, if confirmed, to continuing that.
21 And there are some promising technologies which will take a
22 little bit of a burden off the joint logistics chain. One
23 small thing, Senator, when allies and partners are shooting
24 the same munitions, because we are truly interoperable,
25 that takes a significant load off. And I think that is

1 where we are headed, because we have a lot of partners, a
2 lot of friends, a lot of allies in the Pacific and
3 globally.

4 Senator Kaine: And I do think that is the strategic
5 value we have that is unmatched and is not likely to be
6 matched by any of our adversaries. We have got people. We
7 have got platforms, second to none. But our ability to
8 link arms with allies is something that others can aspire
9 to, but they are not likely to reach.

10 On that topic, let me ask you about AUKUS. We are
11 grappling with this both on the Armed Services committee,
12 but also in the Foreign Relations committee because it
13 deals with foreign military sales. Much of the focus right
14 now is on pillar one, the ability to transfer Virginia
15 class submarines and related technology to Australia.

16 But this is just a precursor to a broader increased
17 presence in the forward deployment of both UK and U.S.
18 submarines to build stewardship in the region. If
19 confirmed, how do you see the Corps fitting in to the
20 integrated deterrence strategy that AUKUS is meant to
21 advance?

22 General Smith: Senator, as you know, we keep, for
23 about six months out of the year we keep a Marine Air
24 Ground Task Force in Darwin. The Australians are
25 phenomenal partners. So that force that is down there at

1 the Southern end of the first island chain is absolutely
2 vital to security and to being prepared to deter conflict
3 and win, if required.

4 Recently, Marine F-35s and Marine CH-53s have
5 communicated with and resupplied U.S. submarines. When the
6 transfer of submarine technology happens and those
7 Australian submarines are out there, we will be able to do
8 the same with them.

9 We are committed to being able to do the same with
10 them. And that is absolutely vital. And our contribution
11 to AUKUS is ensuring that those 2,500 Marines continue to
12 be good ambassadors, good warfighters to enhance that
13 already exceptional relationship with the Australians.
14 That is all part and parcel.

15 Senator Kaine: I appreciate it. I yield back, Mr.
16 Chair.

17 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kaine. Senator
18 Budd, please.

19 Senator Budd: Thank you, Chairman. General, thanks
20 for being here. I enjoyed our conversation office last
21 week, and I also want to thank your family for being here,
22 and for your time in North Carolina as well.

23 You know, in our discussion, we talked about an issue
24 that is top of mind, I am sure for you, and for many of us
25 as Americans, and that is the rising threat of China. So,

1 if confirmed, how do you see the Marine Corps contributing
2 to the Joint Force in competition and potential conflict in
3 the Indo-Pacific?

4 General Smith: Senator, I concur with you, and of
5 course, as does our National Defense Strategy, that China
6 is the pacing challenge. The Marine Corps keeps a Marine
7 expeditionary force forward in the Pacific. On any given
8 day, there is 27,000 Marines, roughly West of the
9 International Dateline, several thousand more in Hawaii
10 ready to go.

11 And, of course, our forces in California are poised
12 and focused on the Indo-Pacific, as is required. The
13 Marine Corps as an expeditionary crisis response force is
14 first to fight, and we must stay forward. We call it
15 standing forces. But those Marines are already forward.

16 We just have to ensure that they are best armed, best
17 equipped, best trained and organized to be able to deter
18 and change the trajectory of an adversary action before it
19 becomes a full blown crisis. That is who we are, what we
20 do, and being forward with our allies and partners has
21 immeasurable value. My time in the Pacific, and I assume
22 my son's time in the Pacific for him, taught me that.

23 Senator Budd: Thank you. Now, there is no doubt that
24 the Marine Corps will play a critical role for the Joint
25 Force, but can you talk specifically about how force design

1 is both threat informed and budget conscious?

2 General Smith: So, sir, I would say on the first
3 part, it is threat informed in that the deep analysis that
4 has gone into what our adversaries globally can do. China
5 is the pacing challenge. Russia is the acute threat. And
6 then, of course, violent extremism in Iran and North Korea.
7 What capabilities do they have and how do we need to thwart
8 them? It is completely threat informed and it moves daily
9 through our intelligence estimates.

10 And then as far as the budgets, sir, you know, if
11 confirmed, I am responsible or would be responsible for
12 balancing the Marine air ground task force, families,
13 munitions, housing, training, all of that. But force
14 design was not a budgetary driven process. It was what do
15 we need and what things are less important in the fight
16 that we think is coming. So, let's focus on the things
17 that are most important.

18 And as you know, sir, we have done some self-funding
19 to be good stewards of the tax money, but that funding,
20 self-funding, we have maxed that out, if you will, and we
21 will seek support. And if confirmed, I will seek support
22 where required, and I will never be shy about telling you
23 what our young Marines need to have an unfair fight in the
24 Pacific or globally.

25 Senator Budd: Thank you for that. Since both of us

1 have family members serving as Marines, I was glad to hear
2 you say that you don't ever want them in a fair fight. It
3 seems like force design is intended to make sure any future
4 fight is definitely in our favor. That being said, there
5 is still considerable criticism of the Marine Corps'
6 modernization efforts.

7 One of the things that stuck from our conversations
8 that you said, it is not about being right, it is about
9 winning. So, I agree with you, and I am hoping you will
10 commit to continue rapid and smart, intelligent
11 experimentation, and reversing course when something
12 doesn't work. General, will you commit to that?

13 General Smith: Senator, absolutely. When that data
14 becomes available, as we have done and made modifications,
15 because as I said, sir, I am committed to that because I
16 want to win.

17 Senator Budd: Some of the other issues that would be
18 critical to any future fight in the Indo-Pacific is the
19 need to work with our allies and with our partners. And
20 you alluded to that earlier, but how is the Marine Corps
21 currently partnering and training with allies in the
22 region? Where and how can we be doing more or better as a
23 partner?

24 General Smith: Senator, your Marines -- in the
25 Pacific and globally. We are in Honduras. We are working

1 in parts of Africa. We are in Djibouti. We are up in the
2 high North with Norway. We are also in the Pacific, in
3 Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore, Japan, Korea,
4 Australia. We are globally present.

5 And the way that we maintain that global presence in
6 many cases is to be forward with our amphibious warships,
7 because those warships bring with them helicopters, jets,
8 long range fires, all in one package. And often when those
9 exercises begin and end on certain days, you can't afford
10 to have seven different methods to have pieces arrive piece
11 parts.

12 We have to show up as a Marine air ground task force.
13 So, I think your support for those amphibious warships is
14 vital. And if confirmed, I will continue to work to earn
15 that support.

16 Senator Budd: Thank you, General, and thank your
17 family as well. I yield back, Chairman.

18 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Budd. Senator
19 King, please.

20 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General,
21 welcome to the committee and congratulations on your
22 nomination. A couple of quick questions. First, you are
23 the first general officer I have seen before the committee
24 who has grasped aggressively the potential of 3D printing,
25 which basically can shorten the supply chain from a

1 thousand miles to about ten feet.

2 I hope what you will do to make that a reality is to
3 insist that the people in procurement procure the
4 intellectual property as well as the hardware. Is that
5 something that you are going to be attending to?

6 General Smith: Senator, if confirmed, I am 100
7 percent committed to intellectual property and technical
8 data rights. They are vital.

9 Senator King: Good. Because without it, you can't
10 print the part that you need that will hold the whole
11 operation up.

12 General Smith: Senator, correct.

13 Senator King: Another brief question. You are not
14 only being confirmed as Commandant of the Marine Corps, you
15 will be a Member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and giving
16 advice to the President of United States, best military
17 advice.

18 Will you commit to us that you will indeed stare the
19 President of the eye when necessary and give that best
20 military advice, even though it may be contrary to the
21 wishes or the policy direction of the President?

22 That is a tough position in the Oval Office, when the
23 President says, come on, General, get on the team. Are you
24 willing to be straight forward with your best military
25 advice regardless of the circumstances?

1 General Smith: Senator, I am. Always have been.

2 Senator King: Thank you. As you know, there has been
3 an effort or there is an effort to hold up to the approval,
4 the confirmation of all general officers. Is that having
5 an effect not only on the general officers, but down the
6 line on other people who are waiting in line for promotion
7 and filling in of vacant seats?

8 General Smith: Senator, it will have an effect. I
9 have put my focus on our most junior Marines first. We are
10 taught leaders eat last. And so, when a general isn't a
11 colonel who has been selected for general, for example, he
12 is not confirmed -- I am also capped at the number of
13 colonels I can have.

14 So, there is a lieutenant colonel out there who cannot
15 be promoted. And while those numbers may be small, word
16 will get out, and that is detrimental for those young
17 lieutenant colonels, because that is about how far down it
18 will eventually ripple, sir.

19 Senator King: Would you say that this consistent
20 blocking of these nominations is compromising National
21 Security?

22 General Smith: Sir, I think it certainly compromises
23 our ability to be most ready. And I will give you one
24 short example, sir. Marine Expeditionary Force, our
25 largest one, has about 48,000 Marines in it. There are

1 supposed to be a three star and a one star in charge of
2 that formation.

3 The ones star are focused on the Marine Expeditionary
4 Units, which remain our crown jewel. When the three star
5 soon retires, and he will of for a variety of reasons, he
6 has served honorably and well and has endured some family
7 tragedy, he will retire. When he does so, there will be a
8 one star, fairly new one, in charge of that 48,000 person
9 Marine expeditionary force.

10 Senator King: And that compromises readiness and
11 decision making and the effectiveness of that division.

12 General Smith: Sir, it does.

13 Senator King: Thank you. I think you have answered
14 this several times. But as you know, there is criticism of
15 FD 2030. And one of the fundamental criticisms is that it
16 converts the Marines from essentially an offensive capable
17 force to a defensive force. How do you respond to that
18 criticism?

19 General Smith: Yes, sir. Our ethos is offensive. We
20 are first to fight. There is a saying that nobody likes to
21 fight, but somebody has to know how. It is actually not
22 true of your Marines. We are an offensively minded force.
23 Defense is a part -- conduct that as well, but our systems
24 are joined, are designed to enable the Marine Corps and the
25 Joint and Allied Force.

1 We are Marines, we want to win. I am less concerned
2 about who puts the warhead downrange than that the warhead
3 goes downrange. That is an offensive mindset. And we
4 teach that from boot camp on. We are still teaching knife
5 fighting and bayonet fighting. We haven't changed that
6 ethos.

7 Senator King: There have been some examples, though,
8 recently. In February, my understanding is the Marines
9 were unable to meet a European Command request to surge an
10 MEU to the Mediterranean. It took a month before the
11 Marines left North Carolina. That is one example.

12 Turkey again embarked Marines weren't there at the
13 time of the emergency. Two months later, Special Forces
14 were evacuating citizens from Sudan, not the Marines. Are
15 those indications of limitations in the FD 2030 and the
16 philosophy, or are they just sui generis, not typical of
17 Marine Corps readiness to respond?

18 General Smith: Sir, in instances you describe, we had
19 Marines ready to go. We do not have the amphibious
20 warships to be forward. Those warships are vital. That is
21 who we are. We are a naval force as well as a Joint Force.
22 But we have Marines, but we must have the ships to be
23 forward deployed for those instances that you describe,
24 Senator.

25 Senator King: I wasn't intending to ask about amphibs

1 because everybody else has. But you just made the point
2 that without that capability, you can have the Marines, but
3 you don't have the ability to get them there.

4 And I guess finally, and I think you have touched upon
5 this, FD 2030 is a big vision and a big change, and I hope
6 that you are willing to continuously review the
7 effectiveness and the impact upon readiness and the mission
8 of the Marines so that if there are course corrections
9 necessary, you will step up and make them.

10 General Smith: Senator, I am 100 percent committed to
11 that. Any time there is data that says we need to change
12 to be more modern, more lethal, more ready, I am in favor
13 of that, and I am committed to change wherever change is
14 required.

15 Senator King: Thank you, General. Appreciate your
16 service.

17 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator King. Senator
18 Scott, please.

19 Senator Scott: General, first off, thanks for
20 -- thanks for your service. Thanks for -- and I want to
21 thank you for your sacrifice, you and your family. You did
22 a great job, by the way. Can you just talk about the
23 importance of Force Design 2030 and what challenges you are
24 having to implement it?

25 General Smith: Senator, Force Design 2030 is our

1 modernization effort to move from 15 or so years of being
2 focused on counterinsurgencies, to being ready for the next
3 fight before the next fight happens, as opposed to waiting
4 for the fight and then modernizing on the fly.

5 Where we are currently is making rapid progress, but
6 we are never satisfied. Senator, we are Marines. We want
7 to go faster. As the fight tonight force, I am ready, but
8 I want to be more ready. I want to be more ready every
9 single day that I can. That is our mission.

10 So, force design will make us more lethal, more agile,
11 and more able to be first to fight, getting down to our
12 fighting weight, as we say, because over 15 years we have
13 gotten a little bit heavy and reliant on logistics, which
14 were very stable. That will not be the case in a State on
15 State conflict, Senator.

16 Senator Scott: What challenges do you have to get
17 there?

18 General Smith: Senator, I think the challenges that
19 we have will involve steady funding. We have to make sure
20 that we stay on track. And the other piece that is
21 important to us and will be a challenge is ensuring, which
22 if confirmed I am committed to, that we retain our fight
23 tonight global crisis response force while simultaneously
24 modernizing. That is a wicked hard task, as I say,
25 Senator. But if confirmed, I am committed to doing both

1 because I think the American people require and demand us
2 to do both.

3 Senator Scott: So, can you talk about your
4 recruiting? You -- as you know, the military has had some
5 struggles on recruiting, but you haven't. The Marine Corps
6 is doing a good job. So, what are you doing this working
7 and what can you do better? And you probably don't want to
8 give advice to other branches, so I won't ask you to do
9 that. So why don't you just talk about what you are doing
10 and why it is working.

11 General Smith: Well, Senator, on that last point, we
12 actually -- I think we are all part of a Joint Force. I
13 was, "birthed under Goldwater-Nichols '86." I started in
14 '87, so I don't know anything else but joint.

15 If you were to go to one of the local recruiting
16 stations where the joint service was all there, if an
17 applicant comes in and wants to do something that maybe
18 can't meet that qualification, that recruiter will take him
19 or her to another service. They do it all the time. It is
20 a joint fight.

21 What we are doing, sir, is it starts with, in my
22 opinion and professional assessment, you must put your best
23 and most fully qualified out there as recruiters. Almost
24 70 percent of our contracts come from face to face contact.

25 A young person, seasoned Marine says, I want to be

1 that. You have to make sure that that person who they wish
2 to emulate is the best you have to offer, and that you
3 reward that individual with a duty station preference or a
4 promotion, and then you hold the standard and make sure
5 everybody knows that, as we often say, we didn't join you,
6 you joined us. These are our standards.

7 If you wish to become a Marine, step up and take the
8 challenge. And there is lots of young people who want that
9 challenge. We are open to giving it to every single one of
10 them who wants to try.

11 Senator Scott: Thanks. So, you probably don't want
12 to say that the Biden budget is not sufficient. But if you
13 had additional resources, what would you want them for, on
14 top of what was requested?

15 General Smith: Senator, any additional funding that
16 we would theoretically receive from Congress, if confirmed,
17 I am committed to putting that to things that we are
18 already doing, accelerating being more lethal, accelerating
19 being even more ready, and obviously toward ensuring that
20 our organic mobility, naval amphibious warships, CH-53K
21 helicopters, that our platforms are even more ready than
22 they are.

23 But mostly toward accelerating what we are doing
24 because we don't know when the fight starts, so we must
25 assume it starts when the sun goes down tonight.

1 Senator Scott: So how important is it that, take
2 Taiwan as an example, and they get all the military
3 equipment that they have ordered and not received. How
4 important is that to you and your ultimate ability to make
5 sure you can help make sure China doesn't take over Taiwan?

6 General Smith: Senator, what I can say is that I have
7 dealt quite a bit with foreign military sales during my
8 time. And any time one of your friends, allies, or partner
9 is better armed and better prepared, as we see in the
10 Ukraine, that is a good thing for us because that is a more
11 ready partner, is a more able partner.

12 And when crisis comes, you don't have time to begin to
13 interoperate. You must be interoperable before the crisis
14 starts. If confirmed, I am committed to doing all I can to
15 make sure that foreign military sales process is smooth.

16 Senator Scott: Thank you. Thank you for what you do.

17 General Smith: Thank you, sir.

18 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Scott. Senator
19 Hirono, please.

20 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To ensure
21 the fitness of all of the nominees who come before any of
22 the committee's, I ask the following two foundational
23 questions. Since you became a legal adult, have you ever
24 made unwanted requests for sexual favors or committed any
25 verbal or physical harassment or assault of a sexual

1 nature?

2 General Smith: No, ma'am.

3 Senator Hirono: Have you ever faced discipline or
4 entered into a treatment -- settlement, rather, related to
5 this kind of conduct?

6 General Smith: No, ma'am.

7 Senator Hirono: Congratulations, General, on your
8 nomination. And of course, I join my colleagues in
9 thanking General Berger for his years of outstanding
10 service and leadership. I want to ask you about -- well, I
11 also join my colleagues in expressing our support for 31
12 amphib ships for you, and we don't -- we do need to get to
13 why, after everyone agrees that this is a good idea, and
14 Senator Sullivan there led the charge in the latest effort
15 to focus our attention on that need for 31 amphibs, so you
16 will continue to pursue that, in terms of your readiness.

17 The transition of Marines off Okinawa and to more
18 dispersed locations, including to Hawaii -- we already have
19 some of our Marines in Hawaii, but has been ongoing for a
20 long time. And to basically move people out of -- our
21 Marines out of -- and they -- I don't quite know how we are
22 proceeding with building up in Kaneohe, but I hope that is
23 proceeding after such a long time. In the meantime, our
24 alliance with Japan has gotten stronger and a new Marine
25 Toro regiment like the one already in Hawaii will be stood

1 up in Okinawa.

2 General, how has the posture's change planned under
3 the Defense Policy Review Initiative made the Marine Corps
4 stronger in the Pacific?

5 General Smith: Thank you, ma'am. That DPRI, as it is
6 known, the relocation ensures that we have strategic depth
7 across the Pacific, from Japan, specifically the Southern
8 Ryukyus. And then, of course, Iwakuni in the home islands,
9 down through Guam and back to Hawaii. That gives us some
10 depth and reach across the first island chain.

11 And that 12th Marine Littoral Regiment that you
12 described, that was a very significant move. We are very
13 grateful for our own State Department and the Government of
14 Japan for allowing that to stay when it was designed to go
15 somewhere else. That is very significant. And I think it
16 speaks to the need for those kind of rapidly deployable
17 long range fires units.

18 Senator Hirono: So, the ability for the Marine Corps
19 to do its mission in the Pacific, in my view, is predicated
20 on something as basic as a strong infrastructure at our
21 major installations like those in Hawaii and Guam, as well
22 as smaller, dispersed locations throughout the region.

23 Yet, as you have testified previously, our
24 infrastructure is not where it needs to be. If confirmed,
25 how will you prioritize the foundational elements of

1 readiness like water and electricity at our installations?

2 General Smith: Senator, if confirmed, a priority, and
3 a deep priority, is that infrastructure. Those bases and
4 stations are power projection platforms in a modern fight.
5 They are not simply bases where we live. It is a power
6 projection platform, and the power they are projecting is
7 the people who live on them and their families.

8 They must be cared for and retained. You only do that
9 through quality housing. You do that through child
10 development centers. You do that through water treatment
11 facilities. I am committed to those, if confirmed.

12 Senator Hirono: Well, the thing is that those are
13 priorities that have been articulated, and yet when we look
14 at the requests, those priorities are not particularly
15 reflected.

16 So, one of the areas that I am very much focusing on,
17 and the Readiness committee is our infrastructure, and I
18 will look to you for articulation and actual funding that
19 will be reflected, because we can't have our water pipes
20 leaking and the electricity going off and our major
21 hospitals in the Pacific.

22 All of that, and I am sure you too are familiar with
23 what is going on at Red Hill and the need for billions of
24 dollars to safely remove the 100 million gallons of fuel
25 that is there. So, I am really looking for a plan,

1 particularly for the Indo-Pacific AOR that will reflect a
2 commitment to strong infrastructure and not constantly wait
3 until things break down for us to pay attention. Thank
4 you, Mr. Chairman.

5 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Hirono. Senator
6 Schmitt, please.

7 Senator Schmitt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good to
8 see you, General Smith. Appreciate our conversations.
9 Nice to see your family here. Should be very proud and
10 thank you for your service. As you know, as we talked
11 about, your nomination comes at a time where Communist
12 China means business, and I think that threat has reached
13 critical levels.

14 Also comes at a time where the Marine Corps is at a
15 crossroads as far as the force design 2030 priorities. And
16 you have been asked a lot of these -- I am not going to
17 repeat because Senator Scott must have stolen my notes
18 because he asked almost the exact questions I wanted to ask
19 you.

20 But as far as, you know, platforms that are most
21 critical for that force design 2030, where do you feel like
22 we are at? You know, how can we be most helpful in making
23 sure the Marine Corps is positioned?

24 Because I think that obviously as our attention, more
25 and more focus to the West and the Indo-Pacific theater,

1 the Marine Corps has to play a very important role. So,
2 what is it that you need by way of weapons systems?

3 General Smith: Sir, in terms of weapon systems, it is
4 our long range strike, and that is things such as, Senator,
5 naval strike missile. It is our aviation ordnance that is
6 being delivered from F-35 platforms and currently F-18s.
7 Those munitions and those systems are absolutely vital.
8 Our Marine air defense systems. We call it MRIC, medium
9 range intercept capability. Absolutely vital, sir.

10 And if confirmed, I am committed to continuing those
11 programs. And to your point, sir, mobility, organic.
12 Meaning things, the Marine Corps has direct control over.
13 That mobility, be it KC-130 transport refueler aircraft,
14 CH-53K heavy haul helicopters, and, most importantly,
15 amphibious warships.

16 Those are all part of the spectrum of organic mobility
17 that enables Marines to be first to fight. We absolutely
18 must have that to best support the Joint Force and the
19 nation.

20 Senator Schmitt: And I know that, again Senator Scott
21 asked us a similar question, how do you feel like we are
22 -- where are we at with this? Your honest assessment of
23 where we are at and opportunities and challenges moving
24 forward to reach the goal.

25 General Smith: Sir, we are in a good place, but we

1 are never satisfied. I mean, that is our goal as Marines.
2 As a short example, sir, our CH-53K. It reached initial
3 operating capability. Just did its first full list of
4 36,000 pounds and had 22 percent power left. That is
5 unheard of. That has happened. We have demonstrated naval
6 strike missile repeatedly in the Pacific. That is there.
7 The 3d Littoral Regiment stood up there.

8 Our MQ9 Alpha extended range ISR platform that is an
9 aerial gateway to close kill chains for us and the Joint
10 Force, it is there. We have been using it in Central
11 Command, moving into the Pacific. Those things are there.

12 We need to accelerate them to make us most lethal,
13 because we are never satisfied, sir, that we move fast
14 enough. There is always -- just like on a three mile run
15 that we do, sir, you can always squeak out another 5 or 10
16 seconds on your physical fitness test if you really want
17 it.

18 Senator Schmitt: Well, that kind of leads, it is a
19 great Segway, to your success on recruiting. And I know
20 you mentioned having, you know, you best advocates and
21 recruiters out in front, and those are how those
22 connections are made. You know, what else would you
23 attribute that to?

24 Because I think that we have had this discussion in
25 this committee among ourselves and with other folks who sit

1 before us. And this is a big challenge, right? We see
2 sort of a declining pool. Is it just that? Is it the
3 expectation that you are creating that we have a very, very
4 high standard and we want you to, you know, join us but we
5 have great expectations? I mean, what else is it other
6 than having those, you know, sort of the best and the
7 brightest in front of the recruits?

8 General Smith: Senator, it is incredibly hard work on
9 behalf of our recruiting command. And it doesn't come
10 without the resources to advertise, to offer the
11 opportunity to become a U.S. Marine to those young people
12 that are out there, high schools, college graduates.

13 So, it is not without the basics of best facilities,
14 best recruiting literature, best advertising. That is
15 important. But it starts and ends with people, sir. And
16 it really is an ethos that we can't fail. Marines don't
17 fail. We -- and we tend to not attract people who are sort
18 of interested in the service. They are going to be
19 committed and we are going to make them better if they show
20 up.

21 We are committed and we expect you to be committed,
22 and we are not going to change that, sir. Our recruiters
23 don't fail. They are working incredibly hard out there
24 Senator, and they deserve our gratitude.

25 One thing, if I may, Senator, the ability to -- if

1 confirmed, I would seek additional help with this committee
2 to ensure that we do have access to all the high schools to
3 simply offer an opportunity. If students don't want it,
4 that is fine, but we want to make sure we offer that
5 because we offer some of the best opportunities this
6 country has.

7 Senator Schmitt: Thank you. Thanks for your service.

8 General Smith: Thank you, sir.

9 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Schmitt. Senator
10 Warren, please.

11 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
12 Congratulations, General Smith. It is nice to see you here
13 and have your family here. So, our greatest strength as a
14 nation is our people. And it is clear that you have a
15 strong record of making sure that Marines have the support
16 they need. You made that very clear in our conversations,
17 but it's clear in your record. And one of the ways we
18 communicate our priorities as a nation is through our
19 budget.

20 So, General Smith, do you agree that your priority
21 should be reflected in the budget you submit to Congress?

22 General Smith: Senator, absolutely.

23 Senator Warren: Good. Other parts of the Federal
24 Government -- unlike other parts of the Federal Government,
25 the military services and combatant commands lobbied

1 Congress by sending a second request for billions of
2 dollars on top of their annual budgets. They call them
3 unfunded priorities.

4 I call them wish lists. Under the recent budget
5 agreement, every other part of Government is being asked to
6 do more with less. As we discussed in our visit to my
7 office, these wish lists are used to game the process and
8 have included essential items like spare parts that clearly
9 should have been in the base budget request.

10 Last year, the Army included funding for military
11 housing in its wish list instead of its base budget. Now
12 people are our strength, then programs that support them
13 should not be relegated to the wish list. General Smith,
14 if you are confirmed, it will be your job to advocate for
15 your budget priorities and decide what is going to make it
16 onto your wish list.

17 Will you commit to not including funding for programs
18 that support service members and their families in your
19 unfunded priorities list, and instead to put those costs
20 into your base budget?

21 General Smith: Senator, I am committed to making
22 sure, if confirmed, that our priorities of people are in
23 fact reflected in our budget. And what I would offer,
24 ma'am, is in rare circumstances, for example, a hurricane
25 just hit Guam -- that was certainly not something we

1 anticipated months ago when the budget was submitted.

2 To simply seeking counsel and guidance from this
3 committee and our civilian oversight to ensure those
4 families are still taken care of, irrespective of the exact
5 timeline.

6 Senator Warren: As you know, we have procedures for
7 dealing with emergencies that have come up since the time
8 the budget has been submitted. But I think it is really
9 important that we back away from this very damaging
10 practice.

11 I have a bipartisan bill with Senator King, Senator
12 Lee, and Senator Braun in which the Department of Defense
13 supports to eliminate the statutory requirement to produce
14 these annual wish lists. We can't expect the American
15 people to continue to support huge budgets if we can't even
16 implement this kind of basic reform and discipline into the
17 system. So, that is one issue I wanted to raise, but I
18 want to raise one more.

19 I don't have a lot of time left, but I want to touch
20 on the impact the across the board holds on military
21 nominations have on our National Security. Secretary
22 Austin sent me a letter that said, "the longer that this
23 hold persists, the greater the risk the U.S. military runs
24 in every theater, every domain, and every service."

25 But you touched on another part of this in your

1 testimony last month, noting that 45,000 Marines are going
2 to be without a three star commander. Those who support
3 these holds say that all we are talking about is holds on
4 something that impacts senior officers and only senior
5 officers will be affected, and so that is all right.

6 General Smith, can you just speak for a minute about
7 what the downstream effects that you see are, and what it
8 means if these holds continue?

9 General Smith: Yes, ma'am. To your point, as I
10 referenced a little bit earlier, the 1st Marine
11 Expeditionary Force, 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force, 2nd
12 Marine Expeditionary Force, our warfighters forward should
13 have a three star and a one star.

14 In the cases where those commanders will retire after
15 almost 40 years of service, that will leave a one star in
16 charge. And it is not that those one stars are not
17 capable. But I have been doing this for 36 years. So, as
18 I walk a flight line or as I walk a firing range or as I
19 walk through a barracks, there is a high likelihood there
20 is not much I haven't seen, and I can fix things before
21 they get started.

22 That experience, that leadership that comes only with
23 experience is vital because it is about not getting
24 yourself into a bad position, not making the decision that
25 a more junior officer might make, that then has subsequent

1 second and third order effects, which do in fact lead to
2 readiness, which our readiness is National Security.

3 Senator Warren: In other words, I am hearing you say
4 that these holes affect not just those people who are
5 identified as having their promotions held up, but they
6 affect the entire operation. Is that right?

7 General Smith: Yes, ma'am.

8 Senator Warren: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Warren. Senator
10 Cotton, please.

11 Senator Cotton: General Smith, welcome and thank you
12 for your lifetime of service and your families' service and
13 sacrifice as well. Congratulations on your nomination. On
14 force design 2030, I feel that we have reached the point
15 that the former chairman of the committee, John McCain,
16 used to say, the Senate often reaches where everything has
17 been said, but not everyone has said it.

18 However, I won't repeat everything I have said. I
19 will raise one aspect of it, though. General Berger's
20 force design has stirred up quite a hornet's nest among a
21 lot of your retired flag officer counterparts, some of whom
22 I know served with you and were your mentors.

23 Could you explain a little bit why you think some of
24 these retired general officers are so opposed to what
25 General Berger has proposed and what he has done, and what

1 steps you might take, if confirmed, to help mend fences?

2 General Smith: Senator, I would never want to speak
3 for anyone else. I am not a believer in proxy votes, if
4 you will, so I would never speak for another. What I can
5 tell you, sir, is, if confirmed, I would do what I have
6 already done, which is to continue to speak and listen to
7 our former leaders.

8 I have, in the last two weeks, spoken to every living
9 former commandant, and if confirmed, I am committed to
10 continuing to listen to them and all of our veteran Marines
11 who have experience that matters, and make adjustments as
12 need to be made that are based on data. But I am always
13 ears open, sir, and always open to being better.

14 Senator Cotton: I appreciate you don't want to speak
15 for anyone. I know that you have read the criticisms,
16 though, of retired flag officers, and others, about Force
17 Design 2030, many of which are well-meaning and come from
18 people who are generally well informed about these matters.
19 What do you think those criticisms might be missing?

20 General Smith: Senator, I think the criticisms of
21 force design are perhaps missing that we have to be first
22 to fight. We must, in fact be mobile. We must be there.
23 We must be light enough to get there. And I think also
24 what I would want everyone, this committee and others to
25 know is what has not changed.

1 What has not changed is we are a Marine air ground
2 task force. We are a globally responsive force, provided
3 the mobility is there. And our ethos of trained and lethal
4 elite warriors, that hasn't changed. So, it is a matter of
5 how do we improve and become more lethal, more mobile.
6 That is the intent.

7 Senator Cotton: Okay. Thank you. General, a second
8 topic on which almost everything has been said, but not
9 everyone has said it is amphibious ships. I am going to
10 ask a slightly different question from the need for that
11 extra ship, though.

12 The Marine Corps leadership often and correctly
13 reminds us of the need for amphibious lift capacity. Could
14 you explain why the Corps is pursuing a new class of ships,
15 the landing ship median? And my understanding of these
16 won't be filled in until 2030s.

17 So, could you also explain how you can fill the gap
18 for this capability in the near term until those ships are
19 fielded?

20 General Smith: Yes, sir. So, the landing ship medium
21 is a shore to shore transport. What that will enable our
22 littoral regiments to do is go anywhere in that first
23 island chain because that craft is beachable. That is a
24 key. We used to have the thing called an LST, a landing
25 ship tank, but that vessel gets onto any beach.

1 What that does is that spreads out an adversary's
2 calculus because they don't simply target ports, they would
3 have to target the entire coastline. Until that is fully
4 fielded, and we need 35 of them, approximately 9 per
5 littoral regiment, we are using stern landing vessels that
6 we are contracting, and we are open to using other
7 surrogates until such time as we get those landing ship
8 mediums such as the EPF, which was mentioned earlier by
9 Senator Tuberville, as an experiment and as a surrogate, as
10 a bridge to those platforms. But the beach ability,
11 Senator, that is the key.

12 Senator Cotton: Thank you. I would like to touch now
13 finally on a topic I don't think have been addressed yet on
14 the expeditionary advanced base operations concept of
15 operations. Since any forces operating in the Western
16 Pacific will face significant threats from Chinese
17 missiles, could you please describe what resources the
18 Corps needs to operate successfully under such conditions?
19 And do you have the right capabilities and training that
20 you need to execute the new EABO?

21 General Smith: Senator, we do have the training and
22 it is continuing to mature and be better. Things like a
23 marine air defense integrated system, MADIS, and things
24 like medium range intercept capability provide us with an
25 air defense capability that is mobile and expeditionary.

1 And then our capabilities that are long range fires
2 and are low signature, low probability of intercept, low
3 probability of detection and communications. That enables
4 you to shoot, move, and communicate in a manner that even
5 hypersonics cannot reach you. If you are on your game
6 plan, if your training remains, you can move faster than
7 you are targeted to.

8 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

9 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Cotton. Senator
10 Kelly, if you are ready.

11 Senator Kelly: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
12 General, thank you for being here. Good seeing you again.
13 I enjoyed our conversation. I think it was last week.
14 Thank you for taking the time and look forward to
15 continuing our work together. A high priority area of
16 interest for me is ensuring that our military has the
17 highest quality and most realistic training possible. It
18 is, I am convinced -- I mean, it is one of the things that
19 makes us stand out among other nations, is our high quality
20 of our training.

21 The Marine Corps Air Station in Yuma is home to the
22 largest F-35 command in the Marine Corps. They also host
23 the weapons and tactics instructor course that they do
24 every year. It delivers the most advanced fighter pilots
25 in the Marine Corps, which, as a Navy guy say, are pretty

1 good, those Marine fighter pilots. And they go on to train
2 the rest of the forces, aviators who are ready to take this
3 fight to the adversaries if necessary.

4 Across Arizona, Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Luke
5 Air Force Base Davis-Monthan, they have identified some
6 expanded air space as a priority for providing realistic
7 air to air training for fourth and fifth generation
8 fighters and for preparing our forces for competition with
9 our adversaries.

10 So, in your view, General, how important is it to have
11 expanded airspace that can support training demands for the
12 Marine Corps?

13 General Smith: Senator, absolutely vital. And I will
14 even do one better sir, it is not just the aviation rangers
15 that Yuma provides. When I took Regimental Combat Team 8
16 into Afghanistan, ground unit, I trained at Yuma to prepare
17 myself and my regiment to go into combat in Afghanistan.
18 It is a vital training range.

19 Senator Kelly: Yes, so we are looking at trying to
20 stitch together some of these -- some of this airspace
21 within Arizona in different ways. We are looking, you
22 know, at the -- and my staff and I will be talking more
23 about this. The FAA reauthorization bill is a critical
24 component of this. So, General, do I have your commitment
25 to work with also the Air Force, and the Army, and DOD to

1 move this effort forward?

2 General Smith: Senator, if confirmed, you have my
3 absolute commitment to do that.

4 Senator Kelly: Well, thank you. Another subject, on
5 mission readiness. General, I understand that last week
6 the Marine Corps published its annual update to the Force
7 Design 2030 plan. Can you highlight, you know, some of the
8 changes to this plan from the previous version, and
9 specifically address areas that will make for a more ready
10 and a more lethal Marine Corps as it relates to competition
11 in the Western Pacific?

12 General Smith: Senator, I can. That annual update is
13 one of many updates. So, if I may, sir, the changes that
14 have been made since our first marketing round went down
15 range. We have changed the number of B-20 squadrons, added
16 back to. We have changed the size of an infantry battalion
17 from 730 back to 811.

18 We have changed the number of cannon batteries, but
19 most importantly is that people, a very small thing, and I
20 will be quick, sir, mindful of your time. We have changed
21 our basic infantry training. It used to be 8 weeks, now it
22 is 16. That week -- pardon me, 14. That training is 70
23 straight days now and it is done as a squad.

24 Those same 13 Marines start and end training together,
25 trained by one sergeant or staff sergeant, and then they go

1 to their unit together. We haven't done that before. They
2 are, in my assessment, having observed it, they are better
3 trained to operate in a disaggregated, high threat
4 environment because they are focused on working as a team.
5 And as you know, sir, fighting as a team is key.

6 Senator Kelly: So, the young Marine goes from boot
7 camp to infantry school, and they train 13 squad members
8 together? They go to a unit together.

9 General Smith: That is correct, sir. And even though
10 at that unit, they may be broken into fire teams, but that
11 13 Marine unit, they stay together through training, go to
12 the same battalion. That is the thing we have always
13 sought. It is kind of the Holy Grail, sir, and now we are
14 doing it.

15 Senator Kelly: Yes, I wasn't aware of that. And it
16 does certainly make a ton of sense. Last question, in my
17 remaining time here, I only have 30 seconds or so. Water
18 treatment plant in Yuma. Water quality, you know, it is
19 really a quality of life issue for Marines and their
20 families there in Yuma.

21 Can you provide your views on why we should be
22 prioritizing the health and safety projects specifically,
23 like this water treatment plant, and can I get your
24 commitment to work with me to move this project forward
25 quickly?

1 General Smith: Senator, if confirmed, you absolutely
2 have my commitment to do that on that project. What is so
3 vital in Yuma -- it is the desert, and as I said, speed is
4 life, as you know, sir, as is water. Those families have
5 to be well taken care of. And those aircraft and other
6 assets that we prepare, they do require water and
7 maintenance.

8 And if we don't have that, it is a direct readiness
9 impactor. And obviously we can't afford to lose the
10 environmental piece of those ranges either. We have to
11 have those ranges to be able to be competitive.

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

13 General Smith: Thank you, sir.

14 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kelly. Senator
15 Peters, please.

16 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General
17 Smith, good to see you. I enjoyed our office call. I
18 recently appreciated the opportunity to sit down and talk
19 about a variety of issues. And once again, congratulations
20 on your nomination here today.

21 During that office call, we spoke of the importance of
22 electronic warfare and the urgency of the DOD to ramp up
23 requirements and locations that are best to replicate the
24 heavily congested EW operating environments that we are
25 going to be confronting -- confronted with.

1 Would you mind walking the committee through some of
2 the modernization efforts that the Marine Corps has
3 undertaken to advance testing and training for both aerial
4 and ground units who will face a heavily contested
5 electromagnetic spectrum in a conflict with either a peer
6 or near peer adversaries?

7 General Smith: Senator, I can. And after our office
8 call, I went back and tasked our Deputy Commandant for
9 Information to take a look at what is available, what
10 options, what opportunities at Selfridge.

11 Because those things are important to us. We are
12 always looking for our EW and cyber ranges. What we have
13 done, Senator, is a combination of assessments and
14 wargaming in a closed environment, meaning inside of a
15 SCIF, if you will, because that technology is so
16 classified. And we have been working in our places, such
17 as 29 Palms, to both reduce our signature of our forces
18 forward and then detect those signatures.

19 Those pieces of innovation are important. We recently
20 went up during Northern Edge, up in Alaska, and we sent our
21 Marine Warfighting Lab up there to experiment and confirm
22 some of our theories of long range communications that is
23 not detectable because that is pretty harsh training
24 environment up there. And we were happy to be rained and
25 snowed, and on and be cold.

1 Senator Peters: Well, you bring up 29 Palms as a
2 possibility, or your current training and possibilities for
3 other training as well. But when thinking of reserve
4 units, of Guard units, my question is, are you looking at
5 other installations as possibilities?

6 And I bring that up because as we spoke about in our
7 meeting, Camp Grayling in Northern Michigan, I think is the
8 right time -- right type of place that would offer a
9 mixture of capabilities. And it is certainly logistically
10 advantageous for many East Coast and Midwestern based
11 units. Is that something you are giving consideration to?

12 General Smith: Senator, it is. And again, if
13 confirmed, I will continue to look for those ranges, any
14 ranges that do -- that are for electronic warfare and cyber
15 capabilities because they are few and far between, as you
16 know, sir -- especially large expanses of space and places
17 where we can exercise the entire spectrum.

18 Senator Peters: Right. I certainly appreciate the
19 Marine Corps' interest in reconfiguring its forces to meet
20 the very rapidly changing demands of 21st century
21 battlefield. And during this process, the Marine Corps has
22 changed the table of organization and equipment, including
23 the divestiture of some tanks and artillery.

24 The force design 2030 recent annual update singled
25 some changes from light armored reconnaissance to multi-

1 domain reconnaissance, specifically the update costs for
2 maritime reconnaissance, waterborne companies, late mobile
3 companies, and light armored companies. All of these with
4 the intent to have greater reach as well as lethality.

5 So, given the attention that has been focused on Force
6 Design 2030, as you have gotten a lot of attention from it
7 here today of the questions of my colleagues, could you
8 describe for the committee your vision for mobile
9 reconnaissance battalions, and specifically, how do you
10 plan to equip them?

11 General Smith: Senator, those mobile reconnaissance
12 battalions, we have light armored reconnaissance battalions
13 now, we have reconnaissance battalions now more foot
14 mobile. Mobile reconnaissance means just that, any climb
15 and place. We have ground capabilities now and we are
16 looking at an advanced reconnaissance vehicle. It is
17 -- and I will be mindful here, sir, it is still in
18 competition between multiple vendors, so I will be mindful
19 not to tip my hat or tilt toward one or the other.

20 But those platforms enable us to both thicken and
21 close kill chains and kill webs, provide long range
22 intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, bring in cyber
23 fires, bring in space operations, which are all part of
24 combined operations, in addition to artillery and rifle
25 fire, naval gunfire, you pick it.

1 Those cyber fires matter on a future battlefield. So
2 that vehicle and ship borne or seaborne platforms such as
3 long range unmanned surface vessel, which we tested back in
4 2019 when I was in charge at Quantico, those will all
5 combine to give us the ability to truly fight in any clime
6 and place and enable the Joint Force no matter where it is
7 sent globally.

8 Senator Peters: Thank you, General. Thank you, Mr.
9 Chairman.

10 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Peters. For a
11 second round of questioning, Senator, Senator Sullivan is
12 recognized for five minutes.

13 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General,
14 I want to dig into the force design issues as well. As you
15 know, it is not without its critics. And by the way, it is
16 not just retired old Vietnam four stars. It is recently
17 retired three stars, four stars. Some of the best minds,
18 some of the best experienced Marines, at least in my
19 experience, and I think in your experience as well.

20 To Senator Cotton's question, I would sum up some of
21 the criticism in kind of a broad category like something
22 like this, the divest to invest strategy shed in a rapid
23 amount of time very significant, proven Marine Corps combat
24 capability. The numbers I have, and maybe they have
25 changed, close to 10,000 active duty Marines, 6,000

1 reservists. By the way, I think we need to be a little
2 humble here on the recruiting. You got a lot of
3 compliments, so I think you deserve them.

4 But it is easy to hit your recruiting targets when you
5 are getting rid of a lot of Marines. And a reduction of 21
6 percent of active duty infantry Marines, 16 percent of
7 Reserve Infantry Marines, 67 percent of canon artillery, 33
8 percent of AAVs, 100 percent tanks, 100 percent of bridging
9 three companies, along with breaching, clearing, proofing
10 equipment, 100 percent of law enforcement.

11 And I think one of the concerns has been and you have
12 heard it a little bit here, that these significant combat
13 divestments and the focus on enhancing lethality around
14 maritime choke points, particularly the PLA navy, have
15 raised questions about whether the Marine Corps is
16 designing a niche, light infantry, missile heavy, force
17 focused on one AOR at the expense of the Marine Corps'
18 traditional role as a lethal, robust, combined arms force
19 ready to respond to any global crisis.

20 As you know, General, one of the hallmarks of the
21 -- one of the hallmarks of the MAGTF is the ability to kick
22 the door in anywhere in the world and sustain itself for
23 weeks in heavy combat before follow on forces arrive. So
24 how do you respond to that criticism? And it is coming in
25 from a lot of very well-respected Marines, that we are

1 undermining our ability to be the nation's 9-1-1 combined
2 arms force.

3 General Smith: Senator, I would say that we are not
4 undermining that ability. The Marine Expeditionary Unit
5 remains coin of the realm. Those Marine expeditionary
6 units, we still retain seven headquarters and all the
7 battalions, the air combat elements, logistics combat
8 elements needed for them.

9 But as you know, sort of the amphibious warship piece
10 is key. The ability for us to deploy rapidly and globally
11 depends on us being light and lethal. And we had for a
12 good number of years developed platforms that simply
13 weren't movable, unless we pulled up to one of a handful of
14 ports in the Pacific for a really multiday offload.

15 Senator Sullivan: Let me ask, one of the other
16 elements of divestment, which has been confusing -- it was
17 in one of the QFRs that I sent to General Berger. We still
18 haven't gotten it back. Is on the Marine Corps divestments
19 in aviation, in the wing. Some have said, with the
20 management of these assets, it is up to 200 aircraft.

21 Others have said, no aircraft. Can you commit to this
22 committee, I am not going to ask you for the numbers now
23 -- I submitted a very detailed question, question number 44
24 in the QFR on what are the numbers, because that is also
25 very important.

1 Has nothing to do with heaviness in tanks. These are
2 F-35. These are CH-53s. These are Cobras. Can you commit
3 to this committee of giving us the correct number on that?
4 We are still waiting on the other QFR from two months ago.

5 General Smith: Senator, if confirmed, I will commit
6 to always keep you updated on the number of aircraft total
7 and per squadron, and how we utilize them.

8 Senator Sullivan: Let me ask two final questions, one
9 very quickly. Again, one of the criticisms when the Marine
10 Corps talks about force design, they talk about forces
11 focus on littoral amphibs ops. But what if the next fight
12 is not in the littoral?

13 What if it is back in the desert? What if it is a
14 mount operation in an urban setting? What if Marines need
15 to cross a river? Right now, I don't think we can cross a
16 river. Maybe I am wrong. What about that? And then I
17 have one final question.

18 General Smith: So, Senator, our primary training base
19 remains the desert of 29 Palms, and three battalions
20 continue to train there. So, we retain desert training
21 expertise. We have the largest mount military operations
22 and urban training facility in the Marine Corps at 29
23 Palms, and we use it. And we are currently working hard to
24 build expeditionary bridging, bridging that is built for
25 the vehicles which we have and the assets we have that need

1 to be moved across certain gaps. But that is key, and we
2 have to work on that and are doing so now.

3 Senator Sullivan: Let me ask one final question.
4 Four years ago, General, Alaska was a potential location
5 for a Marine Corps UDP program. It has year round,
6 exceptional training -- year round. Darwin doesn't right
7 now. It has the sea and airspace to conduct training for
8 stand in forces, EAOB ops.

9 It has the infrastructure in place to support
10 rotational and a permanent presence, including the world
11 class JPARC Air Training Range. I heard Senator Kelly talk
12 about Yuma, and JPARC is maybe ten times bigger than Yuma.
13 It is closer to Taiwan, Japan, and Korea than Marines
14 located in Hawaii, and I believe Darwin.

15 It has none of the ABO issues, our allied and partner
16 nations will likely have, in my view, whether it is in the
17 Philippines or Australia. Has better cold weather training
18 than Norway. Provides cost savings compared to other
19 locations where you can literally get to anywhere in the
20 world, not just the Indo-Pacific.

21 If confirmed, will you work with this committee to
22 once again, you were looking at it four years ago and then
23 it kind of got dropped, to consider Alaska for increased
24 training, best training in the world.

25 By the way, joint, combined, potential UDPs, and pre-

1 positioned storage and materials needed to fight in the
2 INDOPACOM or anywhere else in the world. You can get to
3 -- you can get anywhere in the Northern hemisphere within
4 78 hours if you are based in Alaska, including Ukraine,
5 Russia, China. Can I get your commitment on that, General,
6 if confirmed?

7 General Smith: Senator, if confirmed, 100 percent
8 commitment, because as you describe, sir, phenomenal
9 training, as I just experienced myself when I went up there
10 in April and this Northern Edge.

11 And F-35 pilots will tell you, they love going there,
12 because, as you said, sir, the massive airspace available
13 to them. So, you have my absolute commitment to look at
14 all aspects that enhance our lethality. And Alaska, I am
15 committed to it, sir, just as I went up there. 100 percent
16 committed to you, sir.

17 Senator Sullivan: Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
18 Chairman.

19 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. General
20 Smith, thank you for your service and your sacrifice, and
21 that of your family. You are eminently qualified to become
22 the Commandant of the United States Marine Corps, and we
23 will do our best to expedite the confirmation, and we look
24 forward to working with you. With that, I will adjourn the
25 hearing.

[Whereupon, at 11:39 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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