

STATEMENT  
OF  
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ASSISTANT COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS  
BEFORE THE  
SENATE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS  
ON  
MARINE CORPS READINESS  
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RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING

## **Introduction**

Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Kaine, and distinguished members of the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness, I appreciate the opportunity to testify on the current state of Marine Corps readiness. As set forth by the 82nd Congress and reaffirmed by the 114th Congress, the United States Marine Corps is our Nation's maritime combined arms air-ground "force in readiness." As outlined in the National Defense Strategy (NDS), our forward deployed Marines, as part of the Navy-Marine Corps team, operate within the contact and blunt layer to deter our adversaries and prevent conflict from escalating into wars that require larger Joint Force intervention. As part of the blunt layer, our forward stationed Marine forces must stand ready to delay, degrade or deny enemy aggression. Our Marines training and preparing for war from their home installations must be ready to rapidly aggregate with forward postured Marines to blunt adversary aggression or, if required, surge as part of a war-winning Joint Force.

Your Marines continue to support a high operational tempo. In the past year, they provided accurate and sustained artillery fire support to coalition-enabled Syrian Democratic Forces as they fought to clear the Islamic State from Raqqa, Syria. Marines aboard amphibious shipping projected power ashore with offensive strikes and air support. Our Marines continue to build partner capacity across the globe, to include in Iraq and Afghanistan. Land and sea-based Marines provided immediate disaster response in the aftermath of four hurricanes. They deterred provocations with forward postured 5th generation aircraft in the Pacific, and your Marines enabled full spectrum cyberspace operations supporting Joint and Coalition Forces.

These sustained operations and requirements continue to consume much of the useful life of many of our legacy systems. The NDS directs us to modernize our capabilities to achieve increased lethality and resilience. The Marine Corps must adapt its organization, training, equipping and posture to meet the challenges of today's environment of strategic inter-state competition. We must prioritize our readiness for war and gain the competitive advantage required to deter and defeat the pacing threats that face our Nation.

The support of Congress in passing the Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) Request for Additional Appropriations (RAA) provided a welcomed step toward correcting our readiness challenges. Your Marine Corps requires continued support from Congress with predictable budgets over a sustained period to fully mitigate the readiness challenges we face. Fiscal instability, resulting from persistent continuing resolutions (CRs) and looming and actual government shutdowns,

produce the most significant risk to our readiness. We are concerned that the instability that CRs cause are shrinking our industrial base, negatively affecting the lines that produce our spare parts and the new modern capabilities we require. We require continued near-term actions to improve warfighting readiness and achieve program balance as well as longer term efforts in the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) to modernize the force through increased lethality and resilience. With the support of the 115th Congress, we can continue to improve our readiness to meet the requirements outlined in the NDS and deter and defeat the growing threats we face.

### **Modernization and Readiness**

Readiness is essential to our ethos. The Congress expects the Marine Corps to be forward deployed and forward postured, ready and capable of rapid action to win our Nation's battles. Those surge layer units not forward postured need to be prepared to rapidly aggregate and project power from home stations and bases to the point of crisis. We should be resourced accordingly to honor this commitment. We cannot afford to build readiness after a crisis occurs. We must be ready to respond immediately.

Previous strategies focused our investment on readiness to defeat violent extremist organizations and meet steady-state geographic combatant commander (GCC) requirements. After years of prioritizing readiness to meet steady-state requirements, our strategy now defines readiness as our ability to compete, deter and win against the rising peer threats we face. We define readiness by whether we possess the required capabilities and capacity we need to face the threats outlined in the NDS.

Modernization is a vital component of our readiness – our ability to deter and counter growing threats. Investing in relevant modernization and innovation directly correlates to improved readiness. Previous decrements to our modernization efforts deferred our critical future capabilities and infrastructure, forcing us to continue investing in aging legacy systems that lack the capabilities required for the 21st century. Over time, legacy systems continue to cost more to repair and sustain. Simultaneously, delayed modernization incurs the opportunity costs associated with the delayed fielding of replacement systems and the increased capabilities they will provide. Prioritizing modernization can reduce average unit procurement costs, achieve efficiencies and save taxpayer money. As the operating environment changes, our investment approach will align with the NDS, increasing modernization investments and innovation in

capability areas required to counter modern threats, such as: information warfare (IW), long range precision fires, air defense, command and control in a degraded environment, and protected mobility/enhanced maneuver.

### ***Information Domain***

The current and Next Generation Marine Corps must dominate within the information domain. We must enable and protect our ability to command and control (C2) units distributed across an area of operations. This requires transforming Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) C2 capabilities through a unified network environment that is ready, responsive and resilient. Our Common Aviation Command & Control System (CAC2S) will provide the MAGTF with the capabilities required to effectively command, control and coordinate air operations integrated with the Naval and Joint Force. The Ground/Air Task Oriented Radar (G/ATOR) will replace five legacy systems with one expeditionary radar, providing the MAGTF the ability to monitor the battlespace and threats like never before. These modern capabilities will facilitate improved battlefield awareness to and from small, dispersed tactical units. As warfare evolves into a battle of signatures and detection, improvements such as these are vital to maximize our Marines' protection and effectiveness.

### ***Amphibious, Maritime, Expeditionary Capability and Capacity***

We require increased attention to and investment in our amphibious shipping capability and capacity. Resilient and lethal amphibious platforms provide the strategic mobility, logistical support, operational reach, and forcible entry capability required to deter and defeat our Nation's adversaries. Our amphibious capability is a centerpiece to the operational success of the Navy-Marine Corps team and remains the preferred and most effective method to deploy and employ Marine forces. The availability of amphibious shipping and modern ship-to-shore connectors remains paramount to our readiness, responsiveness and the execution of the NDS. In coordination with the Navy, we are looking at alternative maritime basing platforms as additional seabasing options. These ships may add depth and flexibility in support of lower threat contingencies. Ultimately, supporting the Navy's 30 year shipbuilding plan and accelerating the lethality and resiliency of our L-class ships can provide our Nation with the credible and decisive amphibious capabilities it requires.

### ***Aviation Modernization and Readiness***

Your support in the FY17 enacted budget funded critical aviation shortfalls. Your Navy-Marine Corps team received \$144M for aviation depot operations, which funded 35 additional airframe inductions for the Navy and Marine Corps. We received \$61M for aviation logistics funding that supported over 3,000 flight hours for the F-35 and MV-22. The appropriations enabled us to invest in spare parts required to support future F-35B deployments. Perhaps most notably, the average flight hours per crew per month increased by 1.9 hours compared to FY16 – an increase of 14 percent. Your investment produced direct, quantifiable readiness gains. While we are increasing flight hours for our aviators, they still need additional flight hours to reach the proficiency we require.

We ask for your continued support to sustain and build upon these improvements. CRs impact aviation readiness by inhibiting our ability to execute a year-long funding strategy, specifically investments in spares and repair parts. Without regular appropriations, costs are driven higher as we are unable to put contracts in place with primary suppliers, or are forced to purchase parts below the optimal quantities. Through predictable budgets and on-time appropriations, we can achieve our comprehensive aviation recovery plan.

Unpredictable funding and CRs have delayed the Marine Corps' aviation modernization plan and readiness recovery by preventing execution of a long-term investment strategy. Shallow acquisition ramps for the F-35B/C and CH-53K require us to continue sustaining and operating legacy aircraft that are rapidly approaching the end of their service lives. Every dollar spent on aviation modernization has a direct positive effect on current and future aviation readiness. The most effective means to meet our NDS responsibilities, improve aviation readiness and gain the competitive advantage required for combat against pacing threats, is through your support to complete procurement of our modern aviation platforms. Last year, our first operational F-35 squadron relocated to Iwakuni, Japan. This move enhanced the capabilities of the Navy-Marine Corps team, reassured our allies of our commitments in the Western Pacific, and improved overall Tactical Aircraft (TACAIR) readiness. This year we look forward to the first F-35B deployment as part of a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) in the Western Pacific. The CH-53K Heavy Lift Replacement remains critical to maintain and improve the battlefield mobility our amphibious force requires. The CH-53K will nearly triple the lift capacity of the CH-53E it will replace. The FY17 enacted appropriation funded a counter-unmanned aircraft systems (CUAS)

capability, and some of these systems are currently supporting our forward deployed forces. We must continue to refine and develop these capabilities to win on the battlefields of today and tomorrow. The Marine Corps requires your continued support to acquire modern capabilities that can widen our competitive advantage.

### ***Ground Modernization and Readiness***

Our ground equipment readiness continues to improve. Our depot production plants at Albany and Barstow remain an essential component to our ground equipment readiness strategy. The enacted FY17 appropriations provided additional funding that yielded near-term readiness gains. The increased funding addressed intermediate and organizational maintenance challenges, increased availability of secondary repairable parts, and focused on critical combat capabilities within specific units: engineer, communications, ordnance and motor transportation. It also funded additional munitions that mitigated risk in support of an emerging crisis. Our execution of these funds produced quantifiable ground readiness improvements; however, predictable, long-term budgets remain necessary to capitalize on and sustain these readiness recovery efforts.

While this is welcome news, our most important legacy capabilities continue to age as modernization efforts fail to keep pace with our requirements. CRs risk delaying contract award for the Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) 1.1, scheduled for June 2018, directly impacting our ability to invest in the critical lethality and protected mobility upgrades inherent in the ACV. To modernize our ground combat element and ensure success against increasingly capable 21st century threats, we need to accelerate investments in our ground systems.

### ***Logistics Modernization***

The Next Generation Logistics Combat Element will optimize tactical distribution with unmanned platforms, flatten the supply chain through additive manufacturing (AM), and enhance preventive and predictive supply and maintenance with sense and respond logistics. Further, state-of-the-art logistics command and control information technology, enabled by artificial intelligence, will extend the operational reach of the MAGTF. Our Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory (MCWL) and Next Generation Logistics (NexLog) organizations continue to stay at the cutting edge of military innovation.

### ***Installation Infrastructure***

Our installations serve as national defense assets that enable our forces to hone their combat readiness before they deploy and operate within the contact layer force our Nation requires to deter potential adversaries. Our bases and stations are strategic power projection platforms from which our blunt and surge layer forces fight and win. They are where we house and care for our Marines and their families. In past years, we took risk in our installation portfolio to support near-term operational readiness. Continued underfunding of our long-term infrastructure needs will create increasingly disproportionate long-term costs, inconsistent with disciplined fiscal principles and business reforms prioritized by the Secretary of Defense. As outlined in the NDS, our installations must prove resilient in the face of the threats we face. We must modernize our installations to protect our blunt and surge layer forces and reassure our partners and allies. Our operational capabilities are adapting to meet these changes, and we need to invest in a next generation installation infrastructure to match the growing MAGTF capability. Your support is crucial as we begin to develop installation infrastructure to support our Next Generation MAGTF.

### ***High Quality People***

Ultimately, our readiness and the success of our Marine Corps relies upon the high quality, character, and capabilities of our individual Marines and civilians; they are the foundation of our readiness. We successfully recruit and retain high caliber women and men; over 99% of our newest Marines and recruits are high school graduates. This speaks to the quality of the Marines that make up our force. We closely track our ability to recruit and retain our most talented and highly qualified and skilled Marines. As the Talent Management Officer of the Marine Corps, I am personally focused on these efforts. Now more than ever, we need Marines with the mental acuity and cognitive skills necessary to be effective in chaotic environments and complex terrain. We design our training and education continuum to produce men and women who are resilient, adaptive, innovative, and imbued with the creativity and moral values required to make sound tactical and ethical decisions. Our Marines remain the bedrock of our operational effectiveness.

## **Conclusion**

On behalf of all of our Marines, Sailors - many deployed and in harm's way today - and their families and the civilian Marines that support their service, we thank you for the opportunity to discuss the readiness challenges we face. Along with your authorizations as outlined in the 2018 NDAA, we require your support through the required appropriations to adapt your Marine Corps to compete, deter and win against the threats we face together. CRs and the looming threat of sequestration continue to disrupt our planning and directly threaten our readiness. Predictable and sustained budgets remain the essential requirement for the Marine Corps to meet our obligation as the Nation's "force in readiness." Our readiness relies upon modernization to provide increased lethality and resilience and to allow us to off ramp the continued funding for sustaining increasingly expensive legacy systems. Modernization will provide the competitive advantage required to deter and defeat the pacing threats we face today and into the future; this is the cornerstone of our National Defense Strategy. With the support of the 115th Congress, we will move forward with our responsibility to ensure your Marine Corps is organized, manned, trained, equipped and postured to protect our fellow Americans, assure our allies, and deter and, when necessary, defeat our adversaries.