

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

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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This hearing is printed to include all available information
requested or required to be inserted for the record.

**THE NOMINATION OF GENERAL ERIC M.
SMITH, USMC FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO
THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE COM-
MANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS**

TUESDAY, JUNE 13, 2023

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m., in room G-50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Jack Reed (Chairman of the Committee) presiding. Committee Members Present: Senators Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters, Manchin, Rosen, Kelly, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Tuberville, Mullin, Budd, and Schmitt.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Chairman REED. Good morning. The Committee meets today to consider the nomination of General Eric Smith to be the 39th Commandant of the United States Marine Corps. General, I would like to welcome your wife, Trish, your daughter, Elise, son in law, Matthew, and your son, Travis, Captain Travis, and daughter in law, Hadley.

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

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

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

The Marine Corps is in the midst of a substantial transformation, focused on competition in the Indo-Pacific, but capable of global employment. The service is restructuring around two concepts, littoral operations in a contested environment and expedi-

tionary advanced base operations. The key element of these concepts is a more flexible amphibious force that can support a broader naval fight once ashore.

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

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

Further, I appreciate the marines' willingness to modify structural decisions such as increasing the number of cannon batteries or the size of fighter attack squadrons, when experimenting and wargaming demonstrated the need to do so. General, I would like to know your plans for continuing these modernization efforts and any concerns you have with the Marine Corps ability to operate as envisioned by Force Design 2030.

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

The Marine Corps has not experienced the same level of recruiting disruptions as the other services, but it is not immune from these challenges, particularly in its Reserve Forces. I would ask for your views on the marines' talent management strategies and opportunities to succeed in the current recruiting environment.

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

I am encouraged by the kind of work underway at the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory, where in particular technologies are being developed to help enable logistics in a contested environment. I hope you will share your views on service and joint experimentation, and how the Marine Corps can ensure that its capabilities are interoperable and complementary across the force.

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

General Smith, I would ask that you share how you plan to address this responsibility. I am confident that you have the requisite skills and experience to provide the Nation's marines, their fami-

lies, and Marine civilian employees with the leadership they deserve.

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

STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROGER F. WICKER

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

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

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

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

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

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

As Commandant Berger testified repeatedly before this Committee, the leading edge of our deterrence is the ability to transport marines and materiel across the vast distances in a maritime environment. Congress reflected this operational demand in the Marine Corps—in the Marine Corps' 31 amphibious ship force requirement. I am frustrated by President Biden's woefully inadequate defense budget proposal, which would slash funding for LPD-33, a critical platform in fulfilling a range of the Marine Corps submissions, including disaster response and alliance assurance.

I would appreciate your views, General, regarding the amphibious ship requirement LPD-33. If confirmed, you would be at the

tip of the American spear in observing the Chinese military and ensuring the Marine Corps remains trained, equipped, and organized to deter conflict in the Western Pacific. I look forward to the testimony, and thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Wicker, and before we call on General Smith, a quorum is now present, and I ask the Committee to consider a list of 4,194 pending military nominations. All of these nominations have been before the Committee for the required length of time. Is there a motion to table report this list of 4,194 pending military nominations?

Senator WICKER. So, moved.

Chairman REED. Is there a second?

Voice: Second.

Chairman REED. All in favor, aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

[The list of nominations considered and approved by the Committee follows:]

MILITARY NOMINATIONS PENDING WITH THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
WHICH ARE PROPOSED FOR THE COMMITTEE'S CONSIDERATION ON JUNE 13, 2023.

1. **MG Karl H. Gingrich, USA to be lieutenant general and Deputy Chief of Staff, G-8, US Army** (Reference No. 199)
2. **In the Navy Reserve there are 3 appointments to the grade of rear admiral (list begins with Kenneth R. Blackmon)** (Reference No. 390)
3. **In the Navy Reserve there are 6 appointments to the grade of rear admiral (lower half) (list begins with Jeffrey A. Jurgemeyer)** (Reference No. 391)
4. **Capt. John E. Byington, USNR to be rear admiral (lower half)** (Reference No. 392)
5. **Capt. John A. Robinson III, USNR to be rear admiral (lower half)** (Reference No. 393)
6. **Capt. David E. Ludwa, USNR to be rear admiral (lower half)** (Reference No. 394)
7. **Capt. Peter K. Muschinske, USNR to be rear admiral (lower half)** (Reference No. 395)
8. **Capt. Marc F. Williams, USNR to be rear admiral (lower half)** (Reference No. 396)
9. In the Army there are 90 appointment to the grade of colonel (list begins with Kyle D. Aemisegger) (Reference No. 472)
10. In the Army there are 19 appointments to the grade of colonel (list begins with Aileen R. Cabandalogan) (Reference No. 473)
11. In the Air Force there are 2 appointments to the grade of major (list begins with Andrew K. Berkey) (Reference No. 503)
12. In the Air Force there is 1 appointment to the grade of lieutenant colonel (Jacquelyn P. Smith) (Reference No. 504)
13. In the Army there are 136 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Harry T. Aubin) (Reference No. 515)
14. In the Army there are 29 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Joshua A. Akers) (Reference No. 516)
15. In the Army there are 301 appointments to the grade of major (list begins with Alexandra M. Adams) (Reference No. 517)
16. In the Army there are 61 appointments to the grade of major (list begins with Andrea C. Baeder) (Reference No. 518)
17. In the Navy there are 206 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Bryce D. Abbott) (Reference No. 559)
18. In the Navy there are 13 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Edward A. Carlton) (Reference No. 560)
19. In the Navy there are 6 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Andrea H. Cameron) (Reference No. 561)
20. In the Navy there are 14 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Mylene R. Arvizo) (Reference No. 562)

21. In the Navy there are 10 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Sarah E. Abbott) (Reference No. 563)
22. In the Navy there are 4 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Curtis Brown) (Reference No. 564)
23. In the Navy there are 3 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Mark K. Corbliss) (Reference No. 565)
24. In the Navy there are 18 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Hannah L. Bealon) (Reference No. 566)
25. In the Navy there are 14 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Cameron M. Balma) (Reference No. 567)
26. In the Navy there are 2 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Alan M. Brechbill) (Reference No. 568)
27. In the Navy there are 4 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Ross M. Anderson) (Reference No. 569)
28. In the Navy there are 4 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Homer F. Hensy) (Reference No. 570)
29. In the Navy there are 5 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Tommie G. Crawford) (Reference No. 571)
30. In the Navy there are 4 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with John E. Fage) (Reference No. 572)
31. In the Navy there are 10 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Gavin H. Clough) (Reference No. 573)
32. In the Navy there are 4 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Jennifer J. Landry) (Reference No. 574)
33. In the Navy there are 14 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Bradley H. Abramowitz) (Reference No. 575)
34. **LTG Andrew M. Rohling, USA to be lieutenant general and Deputy Chairman, North Atlantic Treaty Organization Military Committee** (Reference No. 593)
35. In the Air Force there are 16 appointments to the grade of colonel (list begins with David B. Barker) (Reference No. 596)
36. In the Army there are 76 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Heather R. Alsupmorton) (Reference No. 602)
37. In the Army there are 122 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Boma O. Afiesimama) (Reference No. 603)
38. In the Army there are 31 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Jamie D. Bell) (Reference No. 604)
39. In the Army there are 13 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Rachel A. Acciaccia) (Reference No. 605)
40. In the Army there are 33 appointments to the grade of colonel (list begins with Jamilia M. Adamshenderson) (Reference No. 606)
41. In the Army there are 44 appointments to the grade of colonel (list begins with Corebrians A. Abraham) (Reference No. 607)
42. In the Army there are 10 appointments to the grade of colonel (list begins with Aaron Crombie) (Reference No. 608)
43. In the Army there are 7 appointments to the grade of colonel (list begins with Charles E. Bane) (Reference No. 609)
44. In the Navy Reserve there are 63 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Eric J. Adler) (Reference No. 619)
45. In the Navy Reserve there are 22 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Lucas R. Argobright) (Reference No. 620)
46. In the Navy Reserve there is 1 appointment to the grade of captain (Patrick C. Lazzaretti) (Reference No. 621)
47. In the Navy Reserve there are 3 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Robert A. Paynter, Jr.) (Reference No. 622)
48. In the Navy Reserve there are 6 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Stanley J. Benes IV) (Reference No. 623)
49. In the Navy Reserve there are 3 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with James P. McDonnell) (Reference No. 624)
50. In the Navy Reserve there is 1 appointment to the grade of captain (Donna M. Chuba) (Reference No. 625)
51. In the Navy Reserve there is 1 appointment to the grade of captain (Anton B. Allen) (Reference No. 626)
52. In the Navy Reserve there are 5 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Adam M. Clampitt) (Reference No. 627)
53. In the Navy Reserve there are 3 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Christopher P. Cook) (Reference No. 628)

54. In the Navy Reserve there are 2 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Demetrio A. Camua III) (Reference No. 629)
55. In the Navy Reserve there is 1 appointment to the grade of captain (list begins with Loren C. Hoelscher) (Reference No. 630)
56. In the Navy Reserve there are 3 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Matthew T. Chatigny) (Reference No. 631)
57. In the Navy Reserve there are 3 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Joshua C. Gettle) (Reference No. 632)
58. In the Navy Reserve there are 8 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with John J. Bridges) (Reference No. 633)
59. In the Navy Reserve there is 1 appointment to the grade of captain (Ryan H. Metzler) (Reference No. 634)
60. In the Army there is 1 appointment to the grade of colonel (Thomas A. Summers) (Reference No. 643)
61. **MG John B. Richardson IV, USA to be lieutenant general and Commanding General, First United States Army** (Reference No. 650)
62. **VADM Jeffrey W. Hughes, USN to be vice admiral and Deputy Chief of Staff for Capability Development, Supreme Allied Command Transformation** (Reference No. 651)
63. In the Air Force Reserve there is 1 appointment to the grade of colonel (Daniel J. Wittmer) (Reference No. 653)
64. In the Air Force there is 1 appointment to the grade of major (Marina F. Perez) (Reference No. 654)
65. In the Army there is 1 appointment to the grade of lieutenant colonel (Nicholas J. Norton) (Reference No. 655)
66. In the Army there is 1 appointment to the grade of major (Arteese R. Adams) (Reference No. 656)
67. In the Army there is 1 appointment to the grade of major (Warren N. Washington) (Reference No. 657)
68. In the Army there is 1 appointment to the grade of major (Jacob W. Cavender) (Reference No. 658)
69. In the Army there is 1 appointment to the grade of major (Justin M. Fowler) (Reference No. 659)
70. In the Army there is 1 appointment to the grade of major (Jason P. Pancoe) (Reference No. 660)
71. In the Army there is 1 appointment to the grade of colonel (Benjamin F. Iverson) (Reference No. 661)
72. In the Marine Corps there is 1 appointment to the grade of lieutenant colonel (Dustin B. Kosar) (Reference No. 662)
73. In the Navy there are 20 appointments to the grade of lieutenant commander (list begins with Dennis L. Avery) (Reference No. 663)
74. In the Navy there are 10 appointments to the grade of commander (list begins with Khristiannoe C. Caindoy) (Reference No. 664)
75. In the Navy there are 3 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Matthew D. Gleason) (Reference No. 665)
76. In the Navy there is 1 appointment to the grade of lieutenant commander (Jacob S. Tharp) (Reference No. 666)
77. **LTG Timothy D. Haugh, USAF to be general and Director, National Security Agency/Chief, Central Security Service/Commander, US Cyber Command** (Reference No. 678)
78. **LTG Gregory M. Guillot, USAF to be general and Commander, US Northern Command/Commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command** (Reference No. 679)
79. **MG Heath A. Collins, USAF to be lieutenant general and Director, Missile Defense Agency** (Reference No. 680)
80. **LTG Jeffrey A. Kruse, USAF to be lieutenant general and Director, Defense Intelligence Agency** (Reference No. 681)
81. **MG Michael G. Koscheski, USAF to be lieutenant general and Deputy Commander, Air Combat Command** (Reference No. 682)
82. **LTG Donna D. Shipton, USAF to be lieutenant general and Commander, Air Force Life Cycle Management Center, Air Force Materiel Command** (Reference No. 683)
83. **MG Anthony R. Hale, USA to be lieutenant general and Deputy Chief of Staff, G-2, US Army** (Reference No. 684)
84. **LTG Laura A. Potter, USA to be lieutenant general and Director of Army Staff** (Reference No. 685)
85. **MG William J. Hartman, USA to be lieutenant general and Deputy Commander, US Cyber Command** (Reference No. 686)

86. **LTG John S. Kolasheski, USA to be lieutenant general and Deputy Commanding General, US Army Europe-Africa** (Reference No. 687)
87. **Col. Matthew N. Gebhard, USAR to be brigadier general** (Reference No. 689)
88. **Col. Katherine M. Braun, USAR to be brigadier general** (Reference No. 690)
89. In the Air Force there are 265 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Stephen David Albert) (Reference No. 692)
90. In the Air Force there are 135 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Robert D. Allen) (Reference No. 693)
91. In the Air Force there are 600 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Christopher K. Adams) (Reference No. 694)
92. In the Air Force there are 74 appointments to the grade of major (list begins with Nicholas F. Aliotta) (Reference No. 695)
93. In the Air Force there are 52 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Andrew D. Ahn) (Reference No. 697)
94. In the Air Force there are 14 appointments to the grade of colonel (list begins with Sarah E. Abel) (Reference No. 698)
95. In the Air Force there are 20 appointments to the grade of colonel (list begins with Michael J. Alfaro) (Reference No. 699)
96. In the Air Force there is 1 appointment to the grade of colonel (Candice L. Pipes) (Reference No. 700)
97. In the Air Force there are 2 appointments to the grade of colonel (list begins with Michael A. Growden) (Reference No. 701)
98. In the Army Reserve there is 1 appointment to the grade of colonel (Mark G. Kappelmann) (Reference No. 702)
99. In the Army there is 1 appointment to the grade of lieutenant colonel (Leah H. Georgieva) (Reference No. 703)
100. In the Army there is 1 appointment to the grade of lieutenant colonel (Nicholas R. Yetman) (Reference No. 704)
101. In the Army there is 1 appointment to the grade of lieutenant colonel (Kevin L. Montgomery, Jr.) (Reference No. 705)
102. In the Army Reserve there are 9 appointments to the grade of colonel (list begins with David J. Bedells) (Reference No. 706)
103. In the Army Reserve there are 3 appointments to the grade of colonel (list begins with Molly E. Keith) (Reference No. 707)
104. In the Marine Corps there is 1 appointment to the grade of major (Steven E. Anderson) (Reference No. 709)
105. In the Navy there are 30 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Christopher E. Barnes) (Reference No. 710)
106. In the Navy there are 65 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Kenric T. Aban) (Reference No. 711)
107. In the Navy there are 20 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Michael R. Andersen) (Reference No. 712)
108. In the Navy there are 11 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Dominic J. Antenucci) (Reference No. 713)
109. In the Navy there are 550 appointments to the grade of commander (list begins with William H. Abbitt) (Reference No. 714)
110. In the Navy there are 38 appointments to the grade of commander (list begins with Joshua M. Anderson) (Reference No. 715)
111. In the Navy there are 25 appointments to the grade of commander (list begins with David L. Aguilar) (Reference No. 716)
112. In the Navy there are 8 appointments to the grade of commander (list begins with Sean A. Brophy) (Reference No. 717)
113. In the Navy there are 16 appointments to the grade of commander (list begins with Francis G. Coyle) (Reference No. 718)
114. In the Navy there are 14 appointments to the grade of commander (list begins with Rebecca L. Anderson) (Reference No. 719)
115. In the Navy there are 23 appointments to the grade of commander (list begins with Nick Avila) (Reference No. 720)
116. In the Navy there are 11 appointments to the grade of commander (list begins with Michael K. Beall) (Reference No. 721)
117. In the Navy there are 2 appointments to the grade of commander (list begins with Forrest N. Bush) (Reference No. 722)
118. In the Navy there are 48 appointments to the grade of commander (list begins with Scott B. Aaron) (Reference No. 723)
119. In the Navy there are 32 appointments to the grade of commander (list begins with Jessica L. Alexander) (Reference No. 724)

120. In the Navy there are 46 appointments to the grade of commander (list begins with Suzanne T. Alford) (Reference No. 725)
121. In the Navy there are 14 appointments to the grade of commander (list begins with Nicholas D. Chiudioni) (Reference No. 726)
122. In the Navy there are 16 appointments to the grade of commander (list begins with Marvin E. Bartholomew) (Reference No. 727)
123. In the Navy there are 13 appointments to the grade of commander (list begins with Quentin Albea) (Reference No. 728)
124. In the Navy there are 15 appointments to the grade of commander (list begins with Paul M. Allen) (Reference No. 729)
125. In the Navy there are 9 appointments to the grade of commander (list begins with Scott P. Ader) (Reference No. 730)
126. In the Navy there is 1 appointment to the grade of lieutenant commander (list begins with Erika M. Meszaros) (Reference No. 731)
127. In the Navy there are 36 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Mary R. Anker) (Reference No. 732)
128. In the Navy there are 12 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with David W. Alexander) (Reference No. 733)
129. In the Navy there are 11 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Christopher S. Casne) (Reference No. 734)
130. In the Navy there are 28 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Kevin L. Borkert) (Reference No. 735)
131. In the Air Force there is 1 appointment to the grade of lieutenant colonel (Craig A. Ambrose) (Reference No. 745)
132. In the Air Force there is 1 appointment to the grade of major (Bibek Joshi) (Reference No. 746)
133. In the Air Force there is 1 appointment to the grade of major (Adrian K. Williford) (Reference No. 747)
134. In the Air Force there are 2 appointments to the grade of major (list begins with Daniel D. Cole) (Reference No. 748)
135. In the Army there are 14 appointments to the grade of colonel (list begins with Steven D. Bryant) (Reference No. 749)
136. In the Army there is 1 appointment to the grade of major (Joseph A. St Pierre II) (Reference No. 750)
137. In the Army there are 2 appointments to the grade of major (list begins with Jeffrey A. Banks) (Reference No. 751)
138. In the Army there is 1 appointment to the grade of major (Isaac A. Gutierrez) (Reference No. 752)
139. In the Army there is 1 appointment to the grade of major (Rick J. Mata) (Reference No. 753)
140. In the Army there is 1 appointment to the grade of major (D016094) (Reference No. 754)
141. In the Navy Reserve there are 11 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Theodore G. Cavoore, Jr.) (Reference No. 755)
142. In the Navy Reserve there are 7 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Andrew E. Carmichael) (Reference No. 756)
143. In the Navy Reserve there are 7 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Kirsten M. Betak) (Reference No. 757)
144. In the Navy Reserve there are 4 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Sarah E. Davis) (Reference No. 758)
145. In the Navy Reserve there are 28 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Bryan T. Alvarez) (Reference No. 759)
146. In the Navy Reserve there are 8 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Rodney M. Bonner) (Reference No. 760)
147. In the Navy Reserve there is 1 appointment to the grade of captain (Julie K. Moss) (Reference No. 761)
148. In the Navy Reserve there are 5 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Luis E. Alderman II) (Reference No. 762)
149. In the Navy Reserve there are 6 appointments to the grade of captain (list begins with Timothy W. Gleason) (Reference No. 763)
150. In the Space Force there is 1 appointment to the grade of major (Robin J. Glebes) (Reference No. 764)
151. In the Space Force there are 3 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel and below (list begins with Lisa T. Green) (Reference No. 765)
152. In the Space Force there are 36 appointments to the grade of colonel and below (list begins with Phoenix L. Hauser) (Reference No. 766)

TOTAL: 4,194

Chairman REED. The motion carries. General Smith, please.

**STATEMENT OF GENERAL ERIC M. SMITH, UNITED STATES
MARINE CORPS**

General SMITH. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker—

Chairman REED. Bring that closer, please, sir.

General SMITH. Yes, sir. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished Members of this Committee, it is a privilege to appear before you today. I am humbled to have been nominated as the 39th Commandant of the Marine Corps.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

While I remain grateful for these encounters, I know that it is our youngest marines who deserve this recognition and I hope to adequately represent them today. If confirmed, I commit to you that I will not fail our marines, their families, or the civilians who serve with us, and I look forward to your questions.

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

General SMITH. Yes, sir.

Chairman REED. Have you assumed any duties or taken any actions that would appear to presume the outcome of the confirmation process?

General SMITH. No, sir.

Chairman REED. Exercising our legislative and oversight responsibilities makes it important that this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress receive testimony, briefings, reports, records, and other information from the executive branch on a timely basis. Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify before this Committee when requested?

General SMITH. Yes, sir.

Chairman REED. Do you agree, when asked before this Committee to give your personal views, even if your views differ from the Administration?

General SMITH. Yes, sir.

Chairman REED. Do you agree to provide records, documents, and electronic communications in a timely manner when requested by this Committee, its subcommittees, or other appropriate committees of Congress and to consult with the requester regarding the basis for any good faith, delay, or denial in providing such records?

General SMITH. Yes, sir.

Chairman REED. Will you ensure that your staff complies with deadlines established by this Committee for the production of—records and other information, including timely responding to hearing questions for the record?

General SMITH. Yes, sir.

Chairman REED. Will you cooperate in providing witnesses and briefers in response to congressional requests?

General SMITH. Yes, sir.

Chairman REED. Will those witnesses and briefers be protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

General SMITH. Yes, sir.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, General Smith, and once again, you and your family, thank you for a lifetime of service to the Marine Corps. One of the issues that is concerning to all of us I believe is congested logistics.

We understand that the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory is currently conducting experimentation on new technologies and future capabilities. If confirmed, how would you sharpen the Marine Corps' focus on this critical capability?

You know, it is—if you do not have the ammo, it is tough to fight, basically.

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

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

Also, we have to do some very creative work to do additive manufacturing and 3D printing forward. If confirmed, I am committed to continuing that effort because I do see 1 day we will be printing

forward—in forward operating bases, we will be printing major end items, aircraft engines, propellers.

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

Chairman REED. I think your vision is accurate. That implies that we have to have intellectual property rights and many other things which we will work on while you continue to develop your approach.

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

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

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

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

Chairman REED. Thank you. One of your prime responsibility is training and organizing the Corps in order to operate in multiple combatant areas. If confirmed, how would you ensure your efforts are such that marines can in fact operate from CENTCOM, to INDOPACOM, to NORTHCOM, etcetera?

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

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

Chairman REED. Thank you, and then one additional responsibility is to manage the talent you have, and you have impressive talent. Your assessment at this point of the challenges you face in terms of retention, recruitment, and basically just the morale and esprit de corps.

General SMITH. Chairman, the Marine Corps met its recruiting mission last year, and they will meet it again this year. We have been fortunate because we have treated our marines well through Talent Management 2030, that our retention goals, which we attempt to meet by October, were met in March this year.

So, marines will vote with their feet, and they are choosing to stay. When we keep more—and what we are talking about, Chairman, is keeping them from between the 5 and the 10 year marks.

Not every lance corporal becoming a master gunnery sergeant. We are talking 5 to 10 years, which is where gap historically is.

Because we are able to keep them, keep that experience and that talent, it is hugely beneficial to service. I think the reason the Marine Corps has met its recruiting objectives is we have not changed. We have not lowered our standards and we will not. We are here to do warfighting and lethality, and we will not change our standards, because the combat that comes tomorrow demands those high standards.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, General. Senator Wicker, please.

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

General Smith, the 2023 NDAA set a floor of 31 traditional L-class amphibious ships, LHS, LPDs, and gave the Commandant of the Marine Corps explicit requirements authority for amphibious ships.

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

General SMITH. Senator, it is. Thirty one is the minimum.

Senator WICKER. Okay, and why—is this a sound, necessary requirement, in your opinion?

General SMITH. Senator, it is.

Senator WICKER. Okay, and why is that? Why is that a necessary requirement?

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

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

Senator WICKER. If we do everything necessary, from a legislative standpoint right now, how soon can we see that the 31st L-class amphibious ship?

General SMITH. Sir, there are 31 ships in the inventory today. What we seek and have sought for some time is to replace the aging LSDs who are approaching 40 years of service life, with LPDs, which currently is the best performing ship in the production line. That is a one for one swap, sir, so we want to—

Senator WICKER. Thank you for that clarification. How soon can that one for one swap be accomplished, if we start today?

General SMITH. The normal production for a ship is 2 years, Senator. So, from the time it is put on contract until it is complete, it is a 2-year production cycle.

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

General SMITH. Senator, we had two battalions, second time, first marines, first Battalion, and 8th Marines. One was forward in the CENTCOM area of responsibility, and the second was forward on a Marine Expeditionary Unit.

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

Senator WICKER. The amphibious ships were absolutely a central part of that, is that correct?

General SMITH. Sir, they were, as they were in the initial moves into Afghanistan after the attacks on 9/11.

Senator WICKER. If we could have responded to the powerful earthquake in Turkey, resulting in 50,000 or more deaths, would—did we respond, and if not, why not?

General SMITH. Senator, we had a small detachment. marines, in short, did not. We have marine battalions. We have marine squadrons ready to go. But when there are no amphibious ships to get on, to train with, then we are unable to execute that mission that is lawfully tasked to us as a crisis response force.

Senator WICKER. One final thing. I anticipate that this Committee and also our partners in the House of Representatives will direct increased attention and increased numbers for the Marine Corps junior ROTC detachments. If we direct that this be done in the NDAA, will you commit to implementing this and increasing the number of junior ROTC units around the country?

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

We also owe the most updated training materials and the best possible screened embedded staff to do that, because again, I find them to be highly useful. I have personal experience with them. But yes, sir, I do commit to that, if confirmed.

Senator WICKER. Thank you very much. I hear what you say about recruiting. I think overall, it is a citizenship builder, and it is a subset of excellence in almost any school that—where we see it. Thank you very much, General.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Wicker. Senator Shaheen, please.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations, General Smith, on your nomination. Thank you to you and all of your family for your willingness to continue to serve. Both the Chairman and Ranking Member mentioned Force Design 2030, which was General Berger's plan to realign the Marine Corps to address the challenges presented by the Pacific, Indo-Pacific. Can you talk about what the State of play is for Force Design 2030 and how the Marine Corps is continuing to implement the plan?

General SMITH. Thank you, Senator. Force Design 2030 was an effort to modernize—is an effort to modernize the Marine Corps after 15 years of being focused on counterinsurgency operations. It

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

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

So those efforts are on pace and need to go faster, because also as referenced from Ranking Member Wicker, whether the year is 2027, 2026, 2025, for the marines, we are the fight tonight force. We want to be even more ready than we are every single day. That is our mission when we wake up.

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

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much. You talked with Senator Reed about the success that the marines have had with retention and with recruiting when for the rest of our military those numbers are down over the last year.

Can you talk—I mean, you suggested that it was maintaining the standards in the Marine Corps that was appealing to people. I do not—I did not think that meant that you were suggesting that the Army, an Air Force, and Navy had lowered their standards.

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

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

We have the ethos that we are marines, we will accomplish the mission, and our objective, and our goal, and our mandate is that everyone who seeks to become a U.S. marine has an opportunity to become one. You may join some other organization, you become a U.S. marine. It is a transformational process and people want a challenge.

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

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

General SMITH. Ma'am, as a former recruiter, anything that enables us to access the totality of talent from which to draw so that we get the very best marines, I am in favor of. If confirmed, I will continue that effort to make sure we have opportunities and access for everyone who wishes to compete to become a United States Marine.

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

General SMITH. Ma'am, I can never say what is in President Xi's head. I would say that the individuals' fighting spirit of individual soldiers and marines matters most, and what I also say is the lesson that should be taken is that those who have lots of partners, allies and friends, are very difficult to defeat.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Senator Fischer, please.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, General. I certainly appreciate your service to this country, the service and sacrifice by your family as well, and look forward to this hearing and your answers to many of our questions.

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

General SMITH. Senator, thank you for that. Force Design 2030, which I have been a part since the beginning, is on the right track. If confirmed, I will continue that. What I would say, ma'am, is we have shifted it since the beginning. We are marines. We are innovators.

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

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

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

So, as we got larger, heavier, with more equipment, it becomes increasingly difficult to move that equipment in a timeframe that matters. When you do not have deep water ports and weeks to move equipment, days to offload, you have hours, or short days to make the entire move, you have to modernize, become more agile, longer range, lower signature.

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

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

General SMITH. Ma'am, when I worked for Dr. Carter as Secretary of Defense, he had a master's degree in theoretical—or doctorate in theoretical physics, and you can not change physics. Things that weigh 10 pounds, weigh 10 pounds.

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

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

Senator FISCHER. You mentioned the technologies that continue to be innovative when it comes to warfare. Do you—do you see emerging technologies that the Corps will be able to access to be able to enhance your operations, your abilities, and help you maintain a competitive edge?

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

General SMITH. Senator, I think one of the keys, and I usually hammer on this pretty hard, is 3D printing forward. When we own, as was referenced by I believe the chairman, the tech data rights to things we procure, I can build and print aircraft engines forward.

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

Senator FISCHER. To keep you moving quickly as a force.

General SMITH. Ma'am absolutely. As we say, speed is life.

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

General SMITH. Ma'am, those assets that are forward with very high end intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance tools, in the broad, unclassified setting that we are in, when they can sense what the adversary is doing, and make sense of their intent and pass it to our allies and partners, that gives you the time to move to position and to be in position to thwart their efforts. It is called first mover advantage.

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

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, sir.

General SMITH. Thank you.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Fischer. Senator Gillibrand, please.

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

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

How will the Marine Corps look to balance the competing needs of developing these marines professionally through deployments and reassignments to other Reserve units and retaining valuable expertise in MIU?

General SMITH. Thank you, Senator. That unit at Newburgh is exactly where it must be, because that innovation academia corridor is really like no other. That is the purpose or the reason for its location. Location matters. Lieutenant General Dave Bellon, head of Marine Corps Forces Reserve, came up with that idea.

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

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

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. The Marine Corps submitted a legislative proposal to increase the service obligation of cyber officers to 8 years after completion of MOS training. Can you walk us through the experience in Marine Corps that led to this request, and how this change would impact the Marine Corps' ability to provide cyber officers to units in the fleet and combatant commanders? Do you have any concerns about disincentivizing service in this MOS?

General SMITH. Senator, your last first, I do not have any concern. We have lots of contracts in 5, 6, 7, 8, even 10 years. The exquisite credentials that those cyber operators will receive are highly valuable in the military and outside.

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

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

Senator GILLIBRAND. The Marine Corps current plans include incorporating intelligent robots and autonomous system specialties throughout the total force. Do you currently have enough marines

with expertise in this area to extend these capabilities across the fleet? If not, how do you anticipate developing this capacity?

General SMITH. Senator, we do not. We I do not think anyone has the level of robotics experts, AI experts they would like to have.

So, while we are developing our own, we are closely coordinating with others, to include Army Futures Command, Office of Naval Research, and DARPA to make sure that the Joint Force collectively focuses on those two highly important areas that you just described, ma'am.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. In 2021, several Marine Corps flight students accused some of their instructors of sexual harassment and immediately started to receive substandard performance evaluations.

They were pulled out of flight training. They had to wait nearly 2 years, and sometime after their allegations had already been substantiated, before they were cleared to return to the flight school. These were incredibly accomplished and dedicated women who chose to serve their country in the marines.

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

General SMITH. Senator, sexual harassment—sexual assault is a crime, period, all stop. If confirmed, I am committed to working with you and members of this Committee to make sure that the standard, which they should expect, is that anyone who shows up to flight training, regardless of who they are, receives the exact same syllabus and the same opportunities to earn their wings and gold. I am committed to that, ma'am.

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

General SMITH. Senator, our wargaming and analysis team at Quantico did in fact—in artillery terms, we always shoot the first round long. You want it past the target, so it illuminates the target. So, we did that. After three different experiments from three different battalions in three different divisions, we came back and changed the number of the infantry battalion back higher.

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

If confirmed, ma'am, I am committed to maximizing all those tools already provided to us by this Committee and by Congress.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Gillibrand. Senator Ernst, please.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you very much, General Smith, for being here today. Congratulations on your nomination, and to your family as well. Thank you for your service and support.

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

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

General SMITH. Senator, I can. First, survivability is never binary. Things are made more survivable, if, more survivable, when. As a quick example, no aircraft is inherently survivable alone because the enemy makes anti-aircraft missiles. No ship is inherently survivable alone because there are torpedoes and strike missiles. Infantrymen are not immune from machine gunfire.

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

They are there initially, and they also assist us in the logistics challenge. Because they carry 15 to 30 days of sustainment, if you do not have that initial sustainment upfront, then the logistics challenge gets harder.

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

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

We commissioned a number of those a number of years ago, and some of those have only been commissioned for five to 6 years and they are already on a list to be decommissioned.

So, what I want to make sure is that we are actually procuring what you need, and that it will stay in our inventory for years to come, and that we are not spending millions and billions of dollars on something that we think you need, and you are going to turn around and say, no, we do not need that in two, 3 years.

Senator ERNST. Senator, thank you, and what we need is what's been provided by Congress, which is a minimum of 31 L-class

ships, 10 big decks, those are helicopter jet carriers, and 21 LPDs at a minimum.

Those must be in a ready State because marines are in a ready State, and crises never wait for you to finish repairs or finish training before you go. We need those 31 at a minimum.

Senator ERNST. Thank you. I appreciate that, General, and I am going to dive into our Special Operations Command and your Marine Raiders. There is—and this, you know, falls a little bit outside maybe of your day to day management. But Force Design 2030 calls for a smaller footprint, better signature management and maneuver deception and tempo on the battlefield. So, General, how does the Marine Corps Special Operations Command fit into your thinking about littoral operations?

General SMITH. Senator, the some, just under 3,000 Marine special operators who are out there in MARSOC, Marine Special Operations Command, led by Major General Challenger, have been instrumental in assisting us with experimentation. When we talk about experimentation, what we mean by that, Senator, is when they are already forward deployed, they have been given asks and tasks by Marine Corps Warfighting Lab while executing their mission. Try this, test this—they give us real world operational feedback. They are doing that every time they deploy teams around the world, and they have been extremely helpful. If I am confirmed, I am committed to continuing that with MARSOC.

Senator ERNST. Very good. I appreciate it. I just want to bring this up yet once again. As we are looking at a constrained budgetary environment, as we are moving forward, we may be asking our forces to downsize. I think it is incredibly important that we recognize the role that our marines play, that MARSOC plays, and that we are very careful not to undercut the defense of our Nation in this constrained environment. I know, Chairman, that we will work and do all we can to support our warfighter. So, thank you very much, General Smith, and congratulations.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Ernst. Senator Manchin, please.

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

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

found that over and over through history. Low signatures matter. If you are observed on a modern battlefield, you will be targeted. You have to have mobility and low signature. What has changed over the last 15 or 20 years is that the ability of an adversary to detect you has become almost off the shelf technology that anybody can procure, even your lesser adversaries. Long range fires absolutely matter. If you do not have the range to reach an adversary, then you are of no real consequence on the battlefield.

Senator MANCHIN. Are we restricting any of the concerns that they have and the type of equipment they have asked for and support?

General SMITH. Senator, there is a very rigorous process. the Presidential drawdown authority, which we are on number 41, the Marine Corps is a part of that. So, we get an assessment of what those tools asked for and then authorized, would do is provided—would they change our Marine Corps readiness. So, we are part of that process and always have a—

Senator MANCHIN. Do you think we are supplying—I mean, we are supplying them what they need? I know the F-16, they keep asking for. The fighters, they want long range missiles. They are asking for those types of things. They think that would help them in defending themselves but turning the war.

General SMITH. Senator, I would not—as a nominee, I would not speculate on what should or should not be provided under Presidential drawdown authority. But I can commit to you, sir, that if confirmed, any request that is made, we will give that a thorough vetting on part of the Marine Corps to ensure that those resources that are required are provided.

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

General SMITH. Senator, the—what I can say is, what we provide, as we always take everyone off the battlefield or continue looking until we do, we treat our families well, and for those who have sacrificed everything, we care for those families. That is not true of the Russians. I would not want anyone to compare them to us because we are not in the same zip code.

Senator MANCHIN. Can you also just speak briefly on what cost savings would be to the branches of military, and of course, what you oversee is our marines, if we did our—and got our work done on time and got our budget done by September 30th, and you had a guaranteed budget, number to work with, versus a C.R. Can you tell us the cost savings there?

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

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

General SMITH. Sir, that is real money.

Senator MANCHIN. We better do your job, guys. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman.

Senator KAINE. Next up, Senator Sullivan.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General, good to see you. I appreciated the office call. I want to thank your family sitting behind you. I appreciated your comments about your family's sacrifice. It is really important to remember that. I heard you had to straighten out Captain Smith's tie this morning.

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

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

I understand OSD is still reviewing this, but it is disappointing for anyone watching from OSD that it takes 2 months to get responses to this Committee on critical issues, particularly as they are going through the nomination period of members of the Joint Chiefs. That is not your area, but it is something they need to do a better job on.

This morning, I sent a letter to the Secretary of the Navy, a bipartisan letter. Mr. Chairman, I would like to submit this for the record.

Senator KAINE. Without objection.

[The information referred to follows:]

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 13, 2023

Honorable Carlos Del Toro
Secretary of the Navy
Department of the Navy
100 Navy Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20350-1000

Dear Secretary Del Toro:

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), signed into law on December 23, 2022, requires the Navy to maintain not less than 31 amphibious warfare ships, at least 10 of which must be amphibious assault ships (LHAs). The Navy's FY2024 budget and 30-year shipbuilding plan make it clear the Navy does not have a plan to meet this legal requirement, now or over the next 30 years. We note that the Senate Armed Services Committee received the most recent 30-year shipbuilding plan nearly four months after the FY2023 NDAA was signed into law, and less than 24-hours before the Department of the Navy's April 18, 2023 testimony, giving committee members and staff little time to review the plan and ask relevant oversight questions.

During your April 18, 2023 testimony before the Committee, a bipartisan group of Senators asked you about the Navy's failure to comply with the statutory requirement to maintain at least 31 amphibious warfare ships. You committed to come back to the Committee with a plan to adhere to the law. Specifically, you stated:

"Senator, you have my commitment that I will come back to you with a statement on how we can fix this."

At this time, you have not yet contacted the Committee to follow through on your commitment. As we reiterated during the hearing, the statutory requirement for the Navy to maintain 31 amphibious warfare ships is not a suggestion, but a requirement based on the assessed needs of the Navy and Marine Corps. The Navy's current plan not only violates the statutory requirement, but also jeopardizes the future effectiveness of the Joint Force, especially as we consider national security threats in the Indo-Pacific.

We request that you provide the Committee an updated shipbuilding plan no later than June 19, 2023. Alternatively, we request that you submit a plan to adhere to the statutory requirement before that date.

Sincerely,



Dan Sullivan
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator



Mazie Hirono
United States Senator



Tom Cotton
United States Senator



Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



Tommy Tuberville
United States Senator



Ted Budd
United States Senator



Eric Schmitt
United States Senator



M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator



Rick Scott
United States Senator



Markwayne Mullin
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



Deb Fischer
United States Senator

Senator SULLIVAN. Fourteen U.S. Senators on this Committee is about two-thirds of the Committee. Many of the Ranking Members and Chairman of the Subcommittees on Seapower and Readiness.

That gives the Secretary of the Navy and the Department of Navy a clear indication of how this Committee feels about the Department's failure to meet the 31 amphibs ship requirement. You have already spoken about this a lot. You can see the Committee cares about it. I commend General Berger for sitting next to the SECNAV 2 months ago saying 31 amphibs is the requirement.

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

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

General SMITH. Senator, thank you. Yes, sir, 31 is the minimum, and that 31 is ready ships, able to deploy. The key—

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

General SMITH. Senator, again, ready ships. I mean, a ship that is ready to receive and train with marines. As you know, sir, you do not simply deploy. You prepare to deploy for months.

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

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

Senator SULLIVAN. So, can the Marine Corps do its global response mission without 31 amphibis, in your personal opinion?

General SMITH. No, sir, we cannot.

Senator SULLIVAN. Will Marine Corps Force Design be a success or failure without 31 amphibis at a minimum, in your personal opinion?

General SMITH. So, yes, sir. Force Design will continue because it will make us more ready to deal with peer threats. But, sir, those 31 amphibious warships are a part of it, an absolutely vital part. Just as long range fire and signature communications are. But those 31 amphibious warships, sir, are vital for the Marine Corps, and more importantly, sir, for the Nation. They are a national asset.

Senator SULLIVAN. Just for the record, Mr. Chairman, both chairmen, the letter that we submitted, as you know, Chairman Kaine, makes it so the Secretary of the Navy 2 months ago committed to come back to this Committee with a plan to get to 31 amphibis and follow the law. That is what this letter is asking him to do soon.

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

General SMITH. Sir. It is my personal and professional opinion, it is broader than the Marine Corps. It is a national asset that is the true Swiss Army knife of the Nation, and it must be kept forward. It is a national asset. Yes, sir.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Sullivan. Senator Blumenthal, please.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, General, for being here today. Thank you to your family. I want to join you in thanking General Berger for his service, which has been extraordinary in a difficult and challenging time.

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

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

We have to have access to everyone. As marines, we do not care who—where you come from. What we care about is you, the individual. We care deeply about each individual having the same exact opportunity, male or female.

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

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Female or male.

General SMITH. Female or male, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I was impressed as well by your conversation about the feedback loop, so to speak, and in particular about

how we all, you and I in particular, can learn from our children. I am not going to reveal the contents of our conversation in the presence of your children, but I know how proud you are of them and how closely you listen to others.

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

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

General SMITH. Senator, thank you, and if confirmed, I am committed to that campaign of learning because it is vital. The way we do it is, in fact, just basic leadership. It is kneecap to kneecap, face to face leadership so that a young lance corporal feels comfortable saying, hey, sir, ma'am, this did not work. I have a better idea.

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

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

Senator BLUMENTHAL. That is a good thing.

General SMITH. Yes, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Let me ask you, I know how sensitive you are to the quality of life of your marines. What are the needs to improve housing, day care, health care? Is that an area where you intend to focus?

General SMITH. If confirmed, I will focus on that. I will tell you, sir, the saying is you recruit the marine, but you retain the family.

If you do not take care of marines, and that is a warfighting function, take care of their families, they can not focus on the mission at hand. So, barracks, chow halls, gyms to stay fit to be ready to fight, housing, spousal employment.

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

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you. I agree with the chairman that you are eminently qualified, and you have my support. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Blumenthal. Senator Tuberville, please.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks, General, for being here. Thanks for your service. Thanks for your family. I am going to brag about you a little bit, being a Texas A&M Aggie. I was there for a short period of time. I know some of your

family are Aggie fans, some are Longhorn fans. We will not bring that up.

But I do not think many people here know that and understand the importance of school like Texas A&M. Being there for only a year just brings back patriotism, and many mornings I was at 5 a.m. watching these cadets work out and watching the band work out, which actually went through a tougher workout than our football team did. But it really is patriotism at its best.

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

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

So, I was glad to hear you talk about, you know, the enlisted men and women that do a great job, that are doing it for the right reasons. You also discussed the Marine Corps had changed its standards—have not changed the standards, and it is a privilege to serve.

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

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

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

So, I am committed to maintaining our high standards of warfighting, lethality, global deployment, and making sure that—our marines hymn says, we are first to fight for right and honor, and to keep our honor clean. We keep our honor clean, and that ethos and that moral integrity matters.

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

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you for that. I had the opportunity to be on the USS *Nassau* back during the Iraq war as coach. They put a couple of us on there to really see what life was about—amazing. We were on the USS *Nassau*, and we had, I think, 1,500 marines on that troop carrier.

I had the opportunity to walk around and talk to these young men and women because they were getting ready to be deployed

that night at 3 a.m. on shore. I have never seen like the organization, and I tell people, organization—I learned this from some people worked with, organization is the key to winning. I have never seen the evacuation of 1,500 troops in such quick time.

Obviously it is dangerous, but it was awesome to see it, and awesome to see men at work, the Navy personnel on the ship, and of course, the marines going on shore. You know, we make up a boat or a ship, you would call it—in Mobile, it is called the TEPF transport.

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

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

Senator TUBERVILLE. How many people is that?

General SMITH. Several hundred depending on how it is configured because it is configurable. It has got a well deck—and not a well deck, pardon me. It has got a deck underneath where you can haul significant amounts of equipment. It has got a ramp so you can put long range fires, you can put personnel, and you can move it really fast and really far.

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

Senator TUBERVILLE. Exactly. Thank you very much. Thank you, General.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Tuberville. Senator Kaine, please.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair. General Smith, to you and your family, congratulations. I note that the marines are doing relatively well in recruiting, and you have a son who is a Marine recruiter.

I do not suggest causation, but there is a positive correlation there that I just want to bring up. I want to extend my thanks to General Berger, Commandant Berger, for his long service. Let me associate my comments with those of others about the anthem situation.

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

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

One critique that I hear some raise about the Marine current focus is that the marines are becoming so focused on Pacific chal-

allenges, winning the Pacific fight, that in doing so, it may be losing ability or degrading ability to be lethal in CENTCOM and EUCOM. How would you respond to that concern, General?

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

When I went to Liberia and conducted a noncombatant evacuation operation, and then later when I went in to conduct counterinsurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, I felt pretty well trained because I had paced myself against the fastest runner.

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

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

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

So, I am committed, if confirmed, to continuing that, and there are some promising technologies which will take a little bit of a burden off the joint logistics chain. One small thing, Senator, when allies and partners are shooting the same munitions, because we are truly interoperable, that takes a significant load off. I think that is where we are headed, because we have a lot of partners, a lot of friends, a lot of allies in the Pacific and globally.

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

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

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

General SMITH. Senator, as you know, we keep, for about 6 months out of the year we keep a Marine Air Ground Task Force in Darwin. The Australians are phenomenal partners. So that force that is down there at the Southern end of the first island chain is absolutely vital to security and to being prepared to deter conflict and win, if required.

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

We are committed to being able to do the same with them, and that is absolutely vital. Our contribution to AUKUS is ensuring that those 2,500 marines continue to be good Ambassadors, good warfighters to enhance that already exceptional relationship with the Australians. That is all part and parcel.

Senator KAINE. I appreciate it. I yield back, Mr. Chair.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kaine. Senator Budd, please.

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

You know, in our discussion, we talked about an issue that is top of mind, I am sure for you, and for many of us as Americans, and that is the rising threat of China. So, if confirmed, how do you see the Marine Corps contributing to the Joint Force in competition and potential conflict in the Indo-Pacific?

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

Of course, our Forces in California are poised and focused on the Indo-Pacific, as is required. The Marine Corps as an expeditionary crisis response force is first to fight, and we must stay forward. We call it standing forces. But those marines are already forward.

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

Senator BUDD. Thank you. Now, there is no doubt that the Marine Corps will play a critical role for the Joint Force, but can you talk specifically about how force design is both threat informed and budget conscious?

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

Then as far as the budgets, sir, you know, if confirmed, I am responsible or would be responsible for balancing the marine air ground task force, families, munitions, housing, training, all of that. But force design was not a budgetary driven process. It was what do we need and what things are less important in the fight

that we think is coming. So, let's focus on the things that are most important.

As you know, sir, we have done some self-funding to be good stewards of the tax money, but that funding, self-funding, we have maxed that out, if you will, and we will seek support. If confirmed, I will seek support where required, and I will never be shy about telling you what our young marines need to have an unfair fight in the Pacific or globally.

Senator BUDD. Thank you for that. Since both of us have family members serving as marines, I was glad to hear you say that you do not ever want them in a fair fight. It seems like force design is intended to make sure any future fight is definitely in our favor. That being said, there is still considerable criticism of the Marine Corps' modernization efforts.

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

General SMITH. Senator, absolutely. When that data becomes available, as we have done and made modifications, because as I said, sir, I am committed to that because I want to win.

Senator BUDD. Some of the other issues that would be critical to any future fight in the Indo-Pacific is the need to work with our allies and with our partners. You alluded to that earlier, but how is the Marine Corps currently partnering and training with allies in the region? Where and how can we be doing more or better as a partner?

General SMITH. Senator, your marines—in the Pacific and globally. We are in Honduras. We are working in parts of Africa. We are in Djibouti. We are up in the high North with Norway. We are also in the Pacific, in Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore, Japan, Korea, Australia. We are globally present.

The way that we maintain that global presence in many cases is to be forward with our amphibious warships, because those warships bring with them helicopters, jets, long range fires, all in one package. Often when those exercises begin and end on certain days, you can not afford to have seven different methods to have pieces arrive piece parts.

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

Senator BUDD. Thank you, General, and thank your family as well. I yield back, Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Budd. Senator King, please.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General, welcome to the Committee and congratulations on your nomination. A couple of quick questions. First, you are the first general officer I have seen before the Committee who has grasped aggressively the potential of 3D printing, which basically can shorten the supply chain from a thousand miles to about ten feet.

I hope what you will do to make that a reality is to insist that the people in procurement procure the intellectual property as well

as the hardware. Is that something that you are going to be attending to?

General SMITH. Senator, if confirmed, I am 100 percent committed to intellectual property and technical data rights. They are vital.

Senator KING. Good. Because without it, you can not print the part that you need that will hold the whole operation up.

General SMITH. Senator, correct.

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

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

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

General SMITH. Senator, I am. Always have been.

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

General SMITH. Senator, it will have an effect. I have put my focus on our most junior marines first. We are taught leaders eat last, and so, when a general is not a colonel who has been selected for general, for example, he is not confirmed—I am also capped at the number of colonels I can have.

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

Senator KING. Would you say that this consistent blocking of these nominations is compromising National Security?

General SMITH. Sir, I think it certainly compromises our ability to be most ready. I will give you one short example, sir. Marine Expeditionary Force, our largest one, has about 48,000 marines in it. There are supposed to be a three star and a one star in charge of that formation.

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

Senator KING. That compromises readiness and decisionmaking and the effectiveness of that division.

General SMITH. Sir, it does.

Senator KING. Thank you. I think you have answered this several times. But as you know, there is criticism of FD 2030. One of the fundamental criticisms is that it converts the marines from es-

entially an offensive capable force to a defensive force. How do you respond to that criticism?

General SMITH. Yes, sir. Our ethos is offensive. We are first to fight. There is a saying that nobody likes to fight, but somebody has to know how. It is actually not true of your marines. We are an offensively minded force. Defense is a part—conduct that as well, but our systems are joined, are designed to enable the Marine Corps and the Joint and Allied Force.

We are marines, we want to win. I am less concerned about who puts the warhead downrange than that the warhead goes downrange. That is an offensive mindset. We teach that from boot camp on. We are still teaching knife fighting and bayonet fighting. We have not changed that ethos.

Senator KING. There have been some examples, though, recently. In February, my understanding is the marines were unable to meet a European Command request to surge an MEU to the Mediterranean. It took a month before the marines left North Carolina. That is one example.

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

General SMITH. Sir, in instances you describe, we had marines ready to go. We do not have the amphibious warships to be forward. Those warships are vital. That is who we are. We are a naval force as well as a Joint Force. But we have marines, but we must have the ships to be forward deployed for those instances that you describe, Senator.

Senator KING. I was not intending to ask about amphibs because everybody else has. But you just made the point that without that capability, you can have the marines, but you do not have the ability to get them there.

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

General SMITH. Senator, I am 100 percent committed to that. Any time there is data that says we need to change to be more modern, more lethal, more ready, I am in favor of that, and I am committed to change wherever change is required.

Senator KING. Thank you, General. Appreciate your service.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator King. Senator Scott, please.

Senator SCOTT. General, first off, thanks for—thanks for your service. Thanks for—and I want to thank you for your sacrifice, you and your family. You did a great job, by the way. Can you just talk about the importance of Force Design 2030 and what challenges you are having to implement it?

General SMITH. Senator, Force Design 2030 is our modernization effort to move from 15 or so years of being focused on counterinsurgencies, to being ready for the next fight before the next fight happens, as opposed to waiting for the fight and then modernizing on the fly.

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

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

Senator SCOTT. What challenges do you have to get there?

General SMITH. Senator, I think the challenges that we have will involve steady funding. We have to make sure that we stay on track, and the other piece that is important to us and will be a challenge is ensuring, which if confirmed I am committed to, that we retain our fight tonight global crisis response force while simultaneously modernizing. That is a wicked hard task, as I say, Senator. But if confirmed, I am committed to doing both because I think the American people require and demand us to do both.

Senator SCOTT. So, can you talk about your recruiting? You—as you know, the military has had some struggles on recruiting, but you have not. The Marine Corps is doing a good job. So, what are you doing this working and what can you do better? You probably do not want to give advice to other branches, so I will not ask you to do that. So why don't you just talk about what you are doing and why it is working.

General SMITH. Well, Senator, on that last point, we actually—I think we are all part of a Joint Force. I was, “birthed under Goldwater-Nichols 1986.” I started in 1987, so I do not know anything else but joint.

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

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

A young person, seasoned Marine says, I want to be that. You have to make sure that that person who they wish to emulate is the best you have to offer, and that you reward that individual with a duty station preference or a promotion, and then you hold the standard and make sure everybody knows that, as we often say, we did not join you, you joined us. These are our standards.

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

Senator SCOTT. Thanks. So, you probably do not want to say that the Biden budget is not sufficient. But if you had additional resources, what would you want them for, on top of what was requested?

General SMITH. Senator, any additional funding that we would theoretically receive from Congress, if confirmed, I am committed

to putting that to things that we are already doing, accelerating being more lethal, accelerating being even more ready, and obviously toward ensuring that our organic mobility, naval amphibious warships, CH-53K helicopters, that our platforms are even more ready than they are.

But mostly toward accelerating what we are doing because we do not know when the fight starts, so we must assume it starts when the sun goes down tonight.

Senator SCOTT. So how important is it that, take Taiwan as an example, and they get all the military equipment that they have ordered and not received. How important is that to you and your ultimate ability to make sure you can help make sure China does not take over Taiwan?

General SMITH. Senator, what I can say is that I have dealt quite a bit with foreign military sales during my time. Any time one of your friends, allies, or partner is better armed and better prepared, as we see in the Ukraine, that is a good thing for us because that is a more ready partner, is a more able partner.

When crisis comes, you do not have time to begin to interoperate. You must be interoperable before the crisis starts. If confirmed, I am committed to doing all I can to make sure that foreign military sales process is smooth.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you. Thank you for what you do.

General SMITH. Thank you, sir.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Scott. Senator Hirono, please.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To ensure the fitness of all of the nominees who come before any of the Committee's, I ask the following two foundational questions. Since you became a legal adult, have you ever made unwanted requests for sexual favors or committed any verbal or physical harassment or assault of a sexual nature?

General SMITH. No, ma'am.

Senator HIRONO. Have you ever faced discipline or entered into a treatment—settlement, rather, related to this kind of conduct?

General SMITH. No, ma'am.

Senator HIRONO. Congratulations, General, on your nomination, and of course, I join my colleagues in thanking General Berger for his years of outstanding service and leadership. I want to ask you about—well, I also join my colleagues in expressing our support for 31 amphib ships for you, and we do not—we do need to get to why, after everyone agrees that this is a good idea, and Senator Sullivan there led the charge in the latest effort to focus our attention on that need for 31 amphib, so you will continue to pursue that, in terms of your readiness.

The transition of marines off Okinawa and to more dispersed locations, including to Hawaii—we already have some of our marines in Hawaii, but has been ongoing for a long time, and to basically move people out of—our marines out of—and they—I do not quite know how we are proceeding with building up in Kaneohe, but I hope that is proceeding after such a long time. In the meantime, our alliance with Japan has gotten stronger and a new Marine Toro regiment like the one already in Hawaii will be stood up in Okinawa.

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

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

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

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

Yet, as you have testified previously, our infrastructure is not where it needs to be. If confirmed, how will you prioritize the foundational elements of readiness like water and electricity at our installations?

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

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

Senator HIRONO. Well, the thing is that those are priorities that have been articulated, and yet when we look at the requests, those priorities are not particularly reflected.

So, one of the areas that I am very much focusing on, and the Readiness Committee is our infrastructure, and I will look to you for articulation and actual funding that will be reflected, because we can not have our water pipes leaking and the electricity going off and our major hospitals in the Pacific.

All of that, and I am sure you too are familiar with what is going on at Red Hill and the need for billions of dollars to safely remove the 100 million gallons of fuel that is there. So, I am really looking for a plan, particularly for the Indo-Pacific AOR that will reflect a commitment to strong infrastructure and not constantly wait until things break down for us to pay attention. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Hirono. Senator Schmitt, please.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good to see you, General Smith. Appreciate our conversations. Nice to see your family here. Should be very proud and thank you for your service. As

you know, as we talked about, your nomination comes at a time where Communist China means business, and I think that threat has reached critical levels.

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

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

Because I think that obviously as our attention, more and more focus to the West and the Indo-Pacific theater, the Marine Corps has to play a very important role. So, what is it that you need by way of weapons systems?

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

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

Those are all part of the spectrum of organic mobility that enables marines to be first to fight. We absolutely must have that to best support the Joint Force and the Nation.

Senator SCHMITT. I know that, again Senator Scott asked us a similar question, how do you feel like we are—where are we at with this? Your honest assessment of where we are at and opportunities and challenges moving forward to reach the goal.

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

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

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

Senator SCHMITT. Well, that kind of leads, it is a great Segway, to your success on recruiting. I know you mentioned having, you know, you best advocates and recruiters out in front, and those are

how those connections are made. You know, what else would you attribute that to?

Because I think that we have had this discussion in this Committee among ourselves and with other folks who sit before us. This is a big challenge, right? We see sort of a declining pool. Is it just that? Is it the expectation that you are creating that we have a very, very high standard and we want you to, you know, join us but we have great expectations? I mean, what else is it other than having those, you know, sort of the best and the brightest in front of the recruits?

General SMITH. Senator, it is incredibly hard work on behalf of our recruiting command. It does not come without the resources to advertise, to offer the opportunity to become a U.S. marine to those young people that are out there, high schools, college graduates.

So, it is not without the basics of best facilities, best recruiting literature, best advertising. That is important. But it starts and ends with people, sir. It really is an ethos that we can not fail. Marines do not fail. We—and we tend to not attract people who are sort of interested in the service. They are going to be committed and we are going to make them better if they show up.

We are committed and we expect you to be committed, and we are not going to change that, sir. Our recruiters do not fail. They are working incredibly hard out there Senator, and they deserve our gratitude.

One thing, if I may, Senator, the ability to—if confirmed, I would seek additional help with this Committee to ensure that we do have access to all the high schools to simply offer an opportunity. If students do not want it, that is fine, but we want to make sure we offer that because we offer some of the best opportunities this country has.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you. Thanks for your service.

General SMITH. Thank you, sir.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Schmitt. Senator Warren, please.

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Congratulations, General Smith. It is nice to see you here and have your family here. So, our greatest strength as a nation is our people. It is clear that you have a strong record of making sure that marines have the support they need. You made that very clear in our conversations, but it's clear in your record, and one of the ways we communicate our priorities as a Nation is through our budget.

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

General SMITH. Senator, absolutely.

Senator WARREN. Good. Other parts of the Federal Government—unlike other parts of the Federal Government, the military services and combatant commands lobbied Congress by sending a second request for billions of dollars on top of their annual budgets. They call them unfunded priorities.

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

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

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

General SMITH. Senator, I am committed to making sure, if confirmed, that our priorities of people are in fact reflected in our budget. What I would offer, ma'am, is in rare circumstances, for example, a hurricane just hit Guam—that was certainly not something we anticipated months ago when the budget was submitted.

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

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

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

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

But you touched on another part of this in your testimony last month, noting that 45,000 marines are going to be without a three star commander. Those who support these holds say that all we are talking about is holds on something that impacts senior officers and only senior officers will be affected, and so that is all right.

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

General SMITH. Yes, ma'am. To your point, as I referenced a little bit earlier, the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, 3d Marine Expeditionary Force, 2d Marine Expeditionary Force, our warfighters forward should have a three star and a one star.

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

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

that then has subsequent second and third order effects, which do in fact lead to readiness, which our readiness is National Security.

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

General SMITH. Yes, ma'am.

Senator WARREN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Warren. Senator Cotton, please.

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

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

Could you explain a little bit why you think some of these retired general officers are so opposed to what General Berger has proposed and what he has done, and what steps you might take, if confirmed, to help mend fences?

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

I have, in the last 2 weeks, spoken to every living former commandant, and if confirmed, I am committed to continuing to listen to them and all of our veteran marines who have experience that matters, and make adjustments as need to be made that are based on data. But I am always ears open, sir, and always open to being better.

Senator COTTON. I appreciate you do not want to speak for anyone. I know that you have read the criticisms, though, of retired flag officers, and others, about Force Design 2030, many of which are well-meaning and come from people who are generally well informed about these matters. What do you think those criticisms might be missing?

General SMITH. Senator, I think the criticisms of force design are perhaps missing that we have to be first to fight. We must, in fact be mobile. We must be there. We must be light enough to get there, and I think also what I would want everyone, this Committee and others to know is what has not changed.

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

Senator COTTON. Okay. Thank you. General, a second topic on which almost everything has been said, but not everyone has said

it is amphibious ships. I am going to ask a slightly different question from the need for that extra ship, though.

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

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

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

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

Senator COTTON. Thank you. I would like to touch now finally on a topic I do not think have been addressed yet on the expeditionary advanced base operations concept of operations. Since any forces operating in the Western Pacific will face significant threats from Chinese missiles, could you please describe what resources the Corps needs to operate successfully under such conditions? Do you have the right capabilities and training that you need to execute the new EABO?

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

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

Senator COTTON. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Cotton. Senator Kelly, if you are ready.

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

The Marine Corps Air Station in Yuma is home to the largest F-35 command in the Marine Corps. They also host the weapons and

tactics instructor course that they do every year. It delivers the most advanced fighter pilots in the Marine Corps, which, as a Navy guy say, are pretty good, those marine fighter pilots, and they go on to train the rest of the forces, aviators who are ready to take this fight to the adversaries if necessary.

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

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

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

Senator KELLY. Yes, so we are looking at trying to stitch together some of these—some of this airspace within Arizona in different ways. We are looking, you know, at the—and my staff and I will be talking more about this. The FAA reauthorization bill is a critical component of this. So, General, do I have your commitment to work with also the Air Force, and the Army, and DOD to move this effort forward?

General SMITH. Senator, if confirmed, you have my absolute commitment to do that.

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

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

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

Those same 13 marines start and end training together, trained by one sergeant or staff sergeant, and then they go to their unit together. We have not done that before. They are, in my assessment, having observed it, they are better trained to operate in a disaggregated, high threat environment because they are focused on working as a team. As you know, sir, fighting as a team is key.

Senator KELLY. So, the young marine goes from boot camp to infantry school, and they train 13 squad members together? They go to a unit together.

General SMITH. That is correct, sir, and even though at that unit, they may be broken into fire teams, but that 13 Marine unit, they

stay together through training, go to the same battalion. That is the thing we have always sought. It is kind of the Holy Grail, sir, and now we are doing it.

Senator KELLY. Yes, I was not aware of that, and it does certainly make a ton of sense. Last question, in my remaining time here, I only have 30 seconds or so. Water treatment plant in Yuma. Water quality, you know, it is really a quality of life issue for marines and their families there in Yuma.

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

General SMITH. Senator, if confirmed, you absolutely have my commitment to do that on that project. What is so vital in Yuma—it is the desert, and as I said, speed is life, as you know, sir, as is water. Those families have to be well taken care of, and those aircraft and other assets that we prepare, they do require water and maintenance.

If we do not have that, it is a direct readiness impactor, and obviously we can not afford to lose the environmental piece of those ranges either. We have to have those ranges to be able to be competitive.

Senator KELLY. Thank you. Thank you, General.

General SMITH. Thank you, sir.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kelly. Senator Peters, please.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Smith, good to see you. I enjoyed our office call. I recently appreciated the opportunity to sit down and talk about a variety of issues. Once again, congratulations on your nomination here today.

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

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

General SMITH. Senator, I can, and after our office call, I went back and tasked our Deputy Commandant for Information to take a look at what is available, what options, what opportunities at Selfridge.

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

Those pieces of innovation are important. We recently went up during Northern Edge, up in Alaska, and we sent our Marine Warfighting Lab up there to experiment and confirm some of our

theories of long range communications that is not detectable because that is pretty harsh training environment up there, and we were happy to be rained and snowed, and on and be cold.

Senator PETERS. Well, you bring up 29 Palms as a possibility, or your current training and possibilities for other training as well. But when thinking of Reserve units, of Guard units, my question is, are you looking at other installations as possibilities?

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

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

Senator PETERS. Right. I certainly appreciate the Marine Corps' interest in reconfiguring its forces to meet the very rapidly changing demands of 21st century battlefield. During this process, the Marine Corps has changed the table of organization and equipment, including the divestiture of some tanks and artillery.

The force design 2030 recent annual update singled some changes from light armored reconnaissance to multi-domain reconnaissance, specifically the update costs for maritime reconnaissance, waterborne companies, late mobile companies, and light armored companies. All of these with the intent to have greater reach as well as lethality.

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

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

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

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

Senator PETERS. Thank you, General. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Peters. For a second round of questioning, Senator, Senator Sullivan is recognized for 5 minutes.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General, I want to dig into the force design issues as well. As you know, it is not without its critics. By the way, it is not just retired old Vietnam four stars. It is recently retired three stars, four stars. Some of the best minds, some of the best experienced marines, at least in my experience, and I think in your experience as well.

To Senator Cotton's question, I would sum up some of the criticism in kind of a broad category like something like this, the divest to invest strategy shed in a rapid amount of time very significant, proven Marine Corps combat capability. The numbers I have, and maybe they have changed, close to 10,000 Active Duty marines, 6,000 reservists. By the way, I think we need to be a little humble here on the recruiting. You got a lot of compliments, so I think you deserve them.

But it is easy to hit your recruiting targets when you are getting rid of a lot of marines, and a reduction of 21 percent of Active Duty infantry marines, 16 percent of Reserve Infantry marines, 67 percent of canon artillery, 33 percent of AAVs, 100 percent tanks, 100 percent of bridging three companies, along with breaching, clearing, proofing equipment, 100 percent of law enforcement.

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

As you know, General, one of the hallmarks of the—one of the hallmarks of the MAGTF is the ability to kick the door in anywhere in the world and sustain itself for weeks in heavy combat before follow on forces arrive. So how do you respond to that criticism? It is coming in from a lot of very well-respected marines, that we are undermining our ability to be the Nation's 9-1-1 combined arms force.

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

But as you know, sort of the amphibious warship piece is key. The ability for us to deploy rapidly and globally depends on us being light and lethal. We had for a good number of years developed platforms that simply were not movable, unless we pulled up to one of a handful of ports in the Pacific for a really multiday off-load.

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me ask, one of the other elements of divestment, which has been confusing—it was in one of the QFRs that I sent to General Berger. We still have not gotten it back. Is on the Marine Corps divestments in aviation, in the wing. Some

have said, with the management of these assets, it is up to 200 aircraft.

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

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

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

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me ask two final questions, one very quickly. Again, one of the criticisms when the Marine Corps talks about force design, they talk about forces focus on littoral amphib ops. But what if the next fight is not in the littoral?

What if it is back in the desert? What if it is a mount operation in an urban setting? What if marines need to cross a river? Right now, I do not think we can cross a river. Maybe I am wrong. What about that? Then I have one final question.

General SMITH. So, Senator, our primary training base remains the desert of 29 Palms, and three battalions continue to train there. So, we retain desert training expertise. We have the largest mount military operations and urban training facility in the Marine Corps at 29 Palms, and we use it. We are currently working hard to build expeditionary bridging, bridging that is built for the vehicles which we have and the assets we have that need to be moved across certain gaps. But that is key, and we have to work on that and are doing so now.

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

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

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

If confirmed, will you work with this Committee to once again, you were looking at it 4 years ago and then it kind of got dropped, to consider Alaska for increased training, best training in the world.

By the way, joint, combined, potential UDPs, and pre-positioned storage and materials needed to fight in the INDOPACOM or anywhere else in the world. You can get to—you can get anywhere in the Northern hemisphere within 78 hours if you are based in Alas-

ka, including Ukraine, Russia, China. Can I get your commitment on that, General, if confirmed?

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

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

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

[Prepared questions submitted to General Eric M. Smith, USMC by Chairman Reed prior to the hearing with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

DUTIES

Question. Section 8043 of title 10, U.S. Code, describes the duties and functions of the Commandant of the Marine Corps and requires that the officer nominated for appointment to the position have had significant experience in joint duty assignments, including at least one full tour of duty in a joint duty assignment as a general officer.

What is your understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the Commandant of the Marine Corps?

Answer. Section 8043, Title 10, U.S. code defines the duties and responsibilities of the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of the Navy, the Commandant shall preside over Headquarters, Marine Corps, transmit the plans and recommendations of Headquarters, Marine Corps to the Secretary, and advises the Secretary regarding such plans and recommendations. The Commandant facilitates the recruiting, organizing, training, and equipping of the Marine Corps to support military operations by the Combatant Commanders. The Commandant will perform such other military duties, not otherwise assigned by law, as are assigned by the President, the Secretary of Defense, or Secretary of the Navy. As a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Commandant shall advise the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense.

Question. What background and experience, including joint duty assignments, do you possess that you believe qualify you to perform these duties?

Answer. I have served in a variety of key service and joint assignments in my career spanning more than 36 years. I served as the Senior Military Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Defense. As a General Officer, I have commanded marines at all levels including as the Commanding General, Marine Forces Southern Command; Commanding General, 1st Marine Division; Commanding General, III Marine Expeditionary Force; and as the Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration and as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps.

Question. Do you meet the joint duty requirements for this position?

Answer. Yes

Question. Do you believe there is any action that you need to take to enhance your ability to exercise the responsibilities of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, par-

ticularly in regard to serving as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and assisting the Secretary of the Navy in performing certain acquisition-related functions?

Answer. No, but I am a lifelong student and seek to improve my skills daily.

Question. If confirmed, what innovative ideas would you consider providing to the Secretary of Defense in your role as a member of the Armed Forces Policy Council?

Answer. The Armed Forces Policy Council, as an advisory group to the Secretary of Defense, has the ability to shape departmental efforts to make our armed forces better. At this time in history, it is critical that our innovation efforts are carried out with maximum speed. This allows us to stay ahead of the many threats we face. As a member of the council, my position would be to remove any and all barriers which prevent the most rapid experimentation and fielding of concepts, organizations, and equipment which will bring victory on the battlefield.

Question. If confirmed, what innovative ideas would you consider providing to the Secretary of the Navy for enhancing the organization, training, and equipping of the Marine Corps?

Answer. The Marine Corps, as a part of the Naval Service, must be the most agile of any of the armed forces. We are by design smaller, lighter, and more lethal than any other organization. Working with the Secretary of the Navy and the Chief of Naval Operations, I would seek to ensure that the Marine Corps is best positioned for rapid and seamless transition from competition to crisis and back again. In terms of training, I would maximize the technological tools available to make each Marine's training more realistic and each unit's training more meaningful against a peer threat. Any equipment that I would advise our Secretary to pursue would ensure that every Marine enters a completely unfair fight against an adversary because of the range, accuracy, and lethality of the systems that we procure.

Question. What are your goals, if confirmed, for the transformation of the Marine Corps to meet new and emerging threats?

Answer. The Marine Corps must continue to lead in terms of innovation and rapid movement to organizations, equipment, and concepts that produce outsized benefit for our marines and our Nation and which place our enemies in a position of disadvantage. The ability to rapidly develop concepts for victory, wargame, experiment, and modify those concepts is vital to ensure the Marine Corps stays ahead of our adversaries. I would ensure that our wargaming and experimentation continue at an accelerated rate in order to enhance our warfighting ability.

Question. In addition to the duties enumerated in section 8043, the law provides that the Commandant of the Marine Corps shall perform such other military duties as are assigned to him by the President, the Secretary of Defense, or the Secretary of the Navy. In light of the lines of effort set forth in the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS), what other military duties do you anticipate the Secretary of Defense or the Secretary of the Navy will assign to you, if confirmed?

Answer. The Marine Corps, as the Nation's force in readiness, has the responsibility to respond to crises outside of existing guidance. This responsibility requires force modernization, capability development, and organization aimed to deter, campaign, and build enduring advantage. Each of these elements require closer integration with allies and partners as well as synchronizing broader Department of Defense efforts and aligning them with other instruments of national power. Similarly, if confirmed, I anticipate being assigned the duty of coordinating Marine Corps modernization efforts with those of the Joint Force.

Question. If confirmed, what duties and responsibilities will you assign to the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps?

Answer. The Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, has the authorities and duties with respect to the Marine Corps as the Commandant may delegate or prescribe, with approval of the Secretary of the Navy. If confirmed, the Assistant Commandant will work to manage the critical processes of the Marine Corps. The Assistant Commandant would serve as my advisor and perform my duties during any period of unavailability.

MARINE CORPS ORGANIZATION

Question. Section 8063 of title 10, U.S. Code, requires the Marine Corps composition to include not less than three combat divisions and three air wings, and such other land combat, aviation, and other services as may be organic therein. The Marine Corps shall be organized, trained, and equipped to provide fleet marine forces of combined arms, together with supporting air components, for service with the fleet in the seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and for the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign. Do you

agree that these requirements remain relevant as an organizational and operational employment framework? Why or why not?

Answer. Yes, these requirements remain relevant as an organizational and operational employment framework that provides the necessary flexibility to adapt to the threat environment and needs of the Nation. Over the past two decades the Marine Corps contributed to an enduring land campaign. Strategic guidance and the threat environment have allowed the Marine Corps to reorient as a naval expeditionary force in readiness to support fleet commanders within the overall naval and joint campaign. Through the help of Congress, the Marine Corps continues to maintain operational and tactical relevance on the modern battlefield through our modernization efforts. For example, over the years the Marine Corps has established Space and Cyber commands to meet the changing threat environment. Additionally, the Marine Corps has three Marine Littoral Regiments planned to be fully established by fiscal year 2027. These modern formations provide force structure at the tactical level to remain relevant in the current threat environment. This flexibility and the assistance of Congress is critical to maintain pace for the necessary operational employment of forces.

Question. How does Force Design 2030 nest within title 10 requirements?

Answer. Force Design adheres to the requirements set forth in Title 10 of the United States Code. The Marine Corps regularly assesses its force structure, capabilities, and readiness to ensure that it can fulfill its obligations as outlined in Title 10. Force Design seeks to optimize the Marine Corps' force structure to meet the demands of modern warfare. This plan was informed by the threat environment and developed with the direction and oversight of senior civilian and military leaders.

Force Design 2030 aims to create a more agile, flexible, and lethal force that is better equipped to operate forward, compete, project power, and influence as directed by the National Defense Strategy and other strategic guidance documents. This includes enhancing the Marine Corps' ability to conduct expeditionary and amphibious operations, improving its ability to operate in contested and denied environments, and increasing its capacity to conduct distributed operations with joint and allied partners.

THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

Question. Section 921 of the Fiscal Year 2017 NDAA made changes to section 151 of title 10, U.S. Code, concerning the service of members of the Joint Chiefs (other than the Chairman) as military advisors to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense. What is your assessment of the authorities of, and process by which members of the Joint Chiefs (other than the Chairman) provide military advice and opinions to the President, National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and civilian leadership of the Department of Defense?

Answer. Whereas the Chairman must provide advice, if confirmed, in my role as a member of the Joint Chiefs, I would be permitted to provide advice to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, or the Secretary of Defense on a particular matter in the capacity as a military advisor. Members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff may provide such advice after first informing the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman. As a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (other than the Chairman), if confirmed, I may submit to the Chairman advice or an opinion in disagreement with, or advice, or an opinion in addition to, the advice presented by the Chairman to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, or the Secretary of Defense. In instances where a member submits such advice or opinion, the Chairman shall present the advice or opinion of such member at the same time he presents his own advice to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, or the Secretary of Defense, as the case may be. The Chairman is responsible for establishing procedures to ensure that the presentation of his own advice to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, or the Secretary of Defense is not unduly delayed by reason of the submission of the individual advice or opinion of another member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. If confirmed, I would be comfortable that my views would be represented; I will be attentive to the process and prepared to offer additional views in future engagements with this Committee.

Question. If confirmed, would you commit to provide your best military advice to the President, National Security Council, Homeland Security Council, and civilian leadership of the Department of Defense, even when your advice and opinions might differ from those of the Chairman or the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

Answer. Yes.

USE OF MILITARY FORCE

Question. In your view, what factors should be considered in making recommendations to the President on the use of military force?

Answer. The use of military force is a policy decision made under certain domestic or international legal bases. The domestic legal bases for the use of military force reside with congressional and Presidential powers under Articles I and II of the U.S. Constitution, respectively. The international legal basis for the use of military force falls under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, via Article 42 (U.N. Security Council Resolutions) and Article 51 (Self-Defense).

The decision to use military force will always be informed by the facts and circumstances ruling at the time. Factors to be weighed and considered are whether a vital national security interest is threatened, whether there is a clear and attainable objective, whether the use of military force is supported by the American public, and whether the United States acts alone or in concert with partners and allies.

As the U.S. military is only one instrument of our national power, it is my hope that military force is used as a last resort, when diplomatic, informational, and economic measures fall short of national objectives.

MAJOR CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

Question. What is your vision for the Marine Corps of today? For the Marine Corps of the future?

Answer. My vision of the Marine Corps is a force that is ready to respond to any crisis tonight while simultaneously preparing itself for potential state-on-State warfare. Achieving that goal will require ironclad discipline from each individual Marine and each unit. These two ideas are complementary, not contradictory. A well-trained Marine Corps ready to deal with crises tonight is in fact best positioned to transition to conflict tomorrow. While the threats which confront the Nation will change, the Marine Corps' unique role as the crisis response force and the "First to Fight" force for major conflict will not change, today or in the future.

Question. What do you consider to be the most significant challenges you will face if confirmed as the Commandant of the Marine Corps?

Answer. I believe the most significant challenges in the near term will be recruiting and retaining the high-quality marines required to fight and win the Nation's battles. Our greatest asset is and always will be the individual Marine. Our formations and weapons systems depend on the very best that America has to offer serving as U.S. marines. This is likely to be a long-term strategic challenge that must be overcome.

Additionally, the ability to respond immediately to crisis or conflict using organic mobility is a challenge that the Marine Corps must face head on. Our unique ability to organically move ourselves is vital because it enables time for the remainder of the joint force to organize for its own deployment.

Question. What plans do you have for addressing each of these challenges, if confirmed?

Answer. I will continue to place the highest quality marines in our recruiting force and reward their exceptional performance. I will continue to uphold the Marine Corps' very high standards because it is those high standards that attract so many of America's finest to our Corps. I will continue to organize and equip our Marine Corps and work with our shipmates in the Navy to guarantee that when crisis or conflict comes, the organic mobility required to win is present.

Question. Given the major challenges you identified above, what other priorities would you set for your term as Commandant of the Marine Corps, if confirmed?

Answer. I would prioritize the acceleration of our organization, training, and equipment developments to meet the demands of the operating environment. This will ensure that our highly skilled and talented marines are outfitted, trained, and equipped for victory on the battlefield. I would further prioritize coordination with our Navy shipmates to ensure the inventory of our amphibious warships enables marines to continuously train and sustain our abilities and capabilities to respond to crises as the "Fight Tonight" force.

2022 NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY

Question. The 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) identified China as the "most consequential strategic competitor and the pacing challenge for the Department" and stated that Russia poses an "acute threat," as illustrated by its brutal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. The NDS also identifies "[m]utually beneficial Alliances and partnerships" as "an enduring strength for the United States."

In your view, does the 2022 NDS accurately assess the current strategic environment, including prioritization among the most critical challenges and enduring threats to the national security of the United States and its allies? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Yes, the current strategic environment is characterized by an era of great power competition with China and Russia presenting the most significant threats. The 2022 NDS assessment of the critical challenges in the coming decade is not only supported by the 2023 Intelligence Community (IC) annual threat assessment, but also by the actions of Russia and China. Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has demonstrated that the era of nation-State competition and conflict is still a defining characteristic of the current threat environment. However, China has the intent, capability, and capacity to challenge U.S. interests and change the rules-based order.

Question. In your view, does the 2022 NDS correctly specify the priority missions of the DOD and the capabilities by which DOD can achieve its objectives in the context of the current strategic environment? What do you perceive as the areas of greatest risk?

Answer. Yes, I believe the 2022 NDS identifies the priority mission of the DOD and lists appropriate categories of capabilities the joint force must have without being overly prescriptive. Among areas of highest risk to our forces are cyber threats, threats to space-based assets, and the large numbers of adversary surface-to-surface long-range weapons. We must maintain a naval power projection capability that is expeditionary and sustainable to compete.

Another area of significant risk is time. The pacing threat is not confined to international norms and regulations and, thus, can increase their influence in competition and rapidly modernize military capabilities with the necessary capacity. The Services must be capable of accelerating modernization to get relevant capabilities in the hands of warfighters to test, train, and gain proficiency prior to employing them in combat.

Question. Is the Marine Corps adequately sized, structured, and resourced to implement the 2022 NDS and the associated operational plans? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Yes, the Marine Corps is sized, structured, and resourced to implement the 2022 NDS. While some of our objectives will still take time to fully field or organize, the pathway to so do is clear.

Question. If confirmed, how will you address any gaps or shortfalls in the ability of the Marine Corps to meet the demands placed on it by the 2022 NDS and the operational plans that implement the strategy?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Marine Corps remains focused on identifying and then filling gaps in our capabilities. Our current robust concepts, wargame, and experiment process is well suited to highlight gaps.

Question. If confirmed, what changes or adjustments would you advise the Secretary of the Navy to make in the Marine Corps' implementation of the 2022 NDS?

Answer. Going forward, congressionally authorized multi-ship procurement must be employed for amphibious warfare ships. Affordability is maximized with this procurement strategy and provides cost savings through industrial base stability and improves current maintenance and readiness levels.

Currently, amphibious warfare ships are being decommissioned faster than they are procured and delivered. Inventory will decrease to an average of 28–29 ships over the next 5 years. The current 30-year shipbuilding plan projects an amphibious warfare ship inventory that drops and stays below the congressionally mandated floor of 31 ships. Amphibious warfare ships require a balance between new construction (2-year centers for LPDs, and 4-year centers for LHAs) and retention of LSDs to maintain no less than 31 ships.

Question. Does the Marine Corps have the requisite analytic capabilities and tools to support you, if confirmed as the Commandant of the Marine Corps, in developing and implementing the force structure, sizing, and shaping plans required to position the Corps to execute the operational plans associated with the 2022 NDS? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Yes. The Operations and Analysis Division, along with many seasoned experts across the Corps, provide exceptional insights and advice to support the force structure, sizing, and shaping plans required to execute the operational plans associated with the 2022 NDS. Through Force Design modernization initiatives, the Marine Corps has developed additional processes and analytic capabilities to speed up assessments.

The Marine Corps modernization strategy has been threat informed, concept based, and analyzed throughout our campaign of learning. We have complete 25 wargames and 42 integrated planning teams with subject matter experts from

across the Marine Corps in support of Force Design 2030. These teams grappled with an immense challenge, as they sought to modernize the Marine Corps as a naval expeditionary force that effectively deters our competitors, while remaining read to respond to a range of crises. This calendar year, we will conduct another nine wargames, primarily focused on reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance, as well as deploying and sustaining a MEF in support of major combat operations.

To support our wargaming efforts, we anticipate the opening of the Marine Corps Wargaming and Analysis Center next year. This state-of-the-art facility will significantly enhance our capability development, concept development, operational plan assessment, training, and advanced technology evaluation. Sustained funding will be required to support IT services and the necessary personnel to staff the analysis center.

OVERALL READINESS OF THE MARINE CORPS

Question. How would you assess the current readiness of the Marine Corps—across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training—to execute the 2022 NDS and associated operational plans?

Answer. The Marine Corps is more ready to execute the national defense strategy and OPLANS than it has been in the past, and we are only getting better.

Personnel: Our single greatest asset remains the individual Marine; Force Design 2030 has allowed the Marine Corps to optimize the force at approximately 172,000 while focusing on the retaining the best and brightest marines. We met our fiscal year 2022 recruiting and retention goals with all indications pointing toward the Service doing so again in fiscal year 2023. We have not and will not lower the standard. With Talent Management 2030, we fundamentally redesigned our personnel system, which was empowered by the new statutory authorities granted by Congress. These changes were implemented with a focus on retaining the best marines, specifically the NCO and junior officer corps. We have been able to build from the inside, mature the force, and capitalize on the best talent that America has to offer.

Training and education have been a focal point of the current CMCs tenure and the service has been able to make massive strides. One of our greatest improvements has been the expansion of our infantry school from 8.5 weeks to 14. We have a 10:1 student to instructor ratio now. We have our best NCOs instructing squads and returning to the fleet as the best squad leaders in the Corps. These marines now train every day for 14 weeks and go to the fleet together. Who you train with is now who you fight with, the unit cohesion makes me question why we had not started this 30 years ago.

Materiel and equipment: We are currently fielding systems that will enable the Joint force, of today and in the future, to execute the tasks set forth in the National Defense Strategy. Under our current leadership, we invested heavily in the next generation of future systems. We now have the most capable radar in the world, the TPS-80 G/ATOR, that can gain and maintain custody of adversary targets and hold those targets at risk. With the support of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering's Joint Capability Technology Demonstration Office, we are rapidly developing new systems at low cost to further enhance our warfighting capabilities. As marines, we will continue to innovate to put our adversaries in complex situations and your marines are ready to fight tonight.

Question. In your view, what are the priority missions for which current and future Marine Corps forces should be trained and ready in the context of day-to-day activities, as well as for contingencies?

Answer. The Marine Corps is our Nation's force in readiness, and premier crisis response force. As an expeditionary force in readiness which is amphibious in character, the Marine Corps must prioritize readiness to conduct amphibious operations globally today and into the future. The Amphibious Ready Group and Marine Expeditionary Unit remain a flexible, scalable, and multi-role capability for our Combatant Commanders. The training, readiness, and deployment of these formations support day-to-day activities in critical theaters, as well as provide a rapid response capability for contingency operations around the globe. The Marine Corps must prioritize training that enables naval integration and amphibious operations in order to alter the trajectory of any adversaries plans and to win if deterrence fails.

Question. In what specific ways has the Marine Corps improved or not improved its State of readiness across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training?

Answer. Congress has greatly assisted the Marine Corps readiness recovery efforts with increased topline funding over the last 4 years, which has allowed us to rebuild readiness and increase lethality in support of the National Defense Strategy. We have accelerated aviation readiness recovery, which has led to an increase in

average monthly flight time for our aircrews, an increase in mission capable rates of our aircraft, and an improvement of our aggregate aviation Training readiness rating. With sustained Operations and Maintenance funding, we have made significant gains in ground equipment readiness rates, where our aggregated ground equipment and readiness of reportable equipment have improved in both availability and serviceability. We have also seen moderate gains in materiel and equipment readiness across the force from modernization efforts as a result of Force Design 2030 and Presidential Drawdown Authority actions which have enabled us to reduce and/or replace legacy maintenance-intensive equipment and aging munitions. Combined with our focused structural changes, we have made enhancements to meet the requirements of the evolving operational environment. However, there is risk involved as we rebuild capacity in high demand capability areas. Finally, we have invested in Service-level, Joint, and Multilateral training exercises and enhancements to training ranges and live immersion training capabilities that prepare our marines to defeat peer adversaries and ensures the Marine Corps is “most ready when the Nation is least ready.” A lack of available amphibious shipping continues to challenge our ability to attain advance training standards in many of our formations and appropriately respond to crises.

Question. If confirmed, what would you do to restore full spectrum Marine Corps readiness, and under what timelines?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure to the extent a budget is passed on time, that readiness accounts are maintained at very high levels. Sustained and predictable budgetary authority over the last few years has enabled the Marine Corps to recruit, retain, equip, and train the highest quality people possible, which directly contributes to lethality and readiness. We will sustain the gains made in materiel and equipment readiness, while increasing efforts in Talent Management, and accelerating efforts to modernize our training and warfighting capabilities. I would also ensure that our training ranges and service exercises challenge our marines for State on State conflict. I will also continue to work with the Navy to improve amphibious shipping availability to meet training and operational readiness requirements. The Marine Corps is ready now, and if confirmed, I will ensure that we continue to be ready for missions in any clime and place.

BUDGET

Question. If confirmed, by what standards would you measure the adequacy of the Marine Corps budget?

Answer. The current and future readiness of the Fleet Marine Force against the pacing threat is the standard by which I would measure the adequacy of the budget. I cannot stress enough that sustained, adequate, predictable funding is the single most effective way to achieve this and to maintain our critical strategic momentum in implementing the National Defense Strategy. This financial stability is key to our ability to continue our Force Design modernization efforts, while ensuring that forward deployed Marine forces are ready to respond to crisis and provide the integrated deterrence and day-to-day campaigning necessary to build advantage with our allies and partners. A sustained, adequate, and predictable budget will also enable continued investment in critical infrastructure and quality of life requirements focused on increasing the operational capability and capacity of our installations and taking care of our marines and their families.

Question. Section 222a of title 10, U.S. Code, provides that not later than 10 days after the President's submission of the annual defense budget to Congress, each Service Chief and Combatant Commander must submit to the congressional defense committees a report that lists, in order of priority, the unfunded priorities of the armed force or combatant command.

What are your views of this statutory requirement and the utility of unfunded priorities lists?

Answer. In compliance with 10 U.S.C. 222a, the Marine Corps is required to submit a list of unfunded priorities to accompany the President's Budget submission. Our budget submission represents the most effective mix of forces, equipment, manpower and support attainable within fiscal constraints by aligning resources to prioritized investments, balancing warfighting capabilities with risk, affordability, and effectiveness. Programs prioritized on the Unfunded Priority List represent executable items that would help accelerate key warfighting investments and other modernization efforts that benefit our future force. None of the items on our UPL are of a higher priority than those requested in the President's Budget but are provided to Congress for consideration should additional funds be made available.

Question. If confirmed, do you agree to provide your unfunded priorities list to Congress in a timely manner?

Answer. Yes.

ALLIANCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Question. The 2022 NDS stresses the importance of U.S. alliances and partnerships and considers these relationships a critical strategic advantage.

If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to strengthen existing U.S. alliances and partnerships, build new partnerships, and leverage opportunities for international cooperation to advance U.S. security interests?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work in concert with the Combatant Commanders to build senior relationships with key partners and would ensure that marines were ready to deploy to meet emerging threats and opportunities.

Question. What are the major challenges for strengthening existing alliances and partnerships or building new ones, including for improving interoperability and shared operational concepts? What steps would you recommend, if confirmed, for overcoming these challenges?

Answer. Presence is required to strengthen alliances and to build new ones. marines must be forward deployed to meet these challenges. Addressing ally and partner nation security concerns focusing on the relationship between the U.S. and that partner, irrespective of a specific adversary, can make inroads. We have very positive military-to-military relationships with our Allies and partners, and we need to continue making the investments necessary to sustain those unmatched relationships. More broadly, we in the DOD must nest our efforts in the broader, whole-of-government approach to strengthen and as well as build new relationships. The Marine Corps maintains and is developing interoperability pathways with several critical allies to ensure capabilities and operating concepts evolve together and complement each other. Some of these interoperable pathways include orienting on a common purpose and supporting local governments. Our Marine Expeditionary Units play a vital role in improving out interoperability with our Allies and partners, while also providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief necessary to support local governments. To maximize our interoperability we must be forward deployed aboard L Class amphibious warfare ships.

JOINT OPERATIONS

Question. The Marine Corps is largely organizing around the concept of serving as a Stand-in Force (SIF) for the military. The Marine Corps defines the SIF as small but lethal, low signature, mobile, relatively simple to maintain and sustain forces designed to operate across the competition continuum within a contested area as the leading edge of a maritime defense-in-depth in order to intentionally disrupt the plans of a potential or actual adversary. As envisioned this concept is inherently joint.

How would you characterize the current State of Navy and Marine Corps joint operations? What gaps or shortfalls exist? What changes would you advocate to strengthen or expand Navy and Marine Corps joint operations best to meet the objectives of the 2022 NDS?

Answer. The Navy-Marine Corps team continue to enable joint operations that enhance the lethality of the Joint Force and provide flexibility to combatant commanders. The Navy-Marine Corps team have held the enduring TF 51/5 headquarters based in Central Command (CENTCOM) that continues to integrate expeditionary naval operations in support of combatant commander requirements. This past year, the Navy and Marine Corps established two Task Force (TF) headquarters in the European Command (EUCOM) and Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM). In EUCOM, TF 61/2 was designed to provide a joint task force crisis response capability through command and control (C2) of naval forces supporting contingencies in Europe and Africa—to include ongoing responses to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In INDOPACOM, TF 76/3 embarked upon an 18-month-long period of experimentation, conducting active campaigning inside a contested space. This integrated task force has demonstrated the ability to create robust information webs to support maritime domain awareness (MDA) across the theater, especially in the western Pacific. Both formations have increased MDA for combatant commanders and increased interoperability across the joint force.

The Marine Corps' ability to enable the Joint Force is critical to Active deterrence. Marine Corps' modernization efforts are providing combatant commanders with credible forces that can conduct reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance, conduct and enable Joint and Combined cross-domain strikes, and support Naval, Joint, and combined fires and maneuver. These capabilities have been designed to nest with the Combined and Joint Force to create a robust and redundant communications architecture between Marine Corps, Naval, Joint, and Combined Forces. Shortfalls in

organic mobility for Marine units may incur joint support requirements if not sufficiently resourced.

Question. Which other Service doctrines and capabilities offer the greatest opportunity for synergy with the Marine Corps in joint operations?

Answer. The Marine Corps and the other services share synergies with joint doctrine publications that outline the fundamental principles that guide the employment of US military forces. Some examples of this are Joint Pub (JP) 3-32 Joint Maritime Operations, JP 3-04 Information in Joint Operations, JP 3-06 Joint Urban Operations, and JP 3-07 Joint Stabilization Activities. Furthermore, the Marine Corps partners with the other Services in the development of 31 multi-service doctrinal publications, via the Air-Land-Sea-Space Application Center to effectively employ concepts and capabilities within the Joint Force.

Achieving integration of capabilities in the Joint Force requires dependencies and enablers. For example, the Army provides critical theater logistics support; the Air Force provides strategic airlift; and the Navy provides not only amphibious support, but also an entire range of requirements to enable amphibious and littoral operations. In terms of enablers, as part of the Stand-in force, marines will be on the forward edge of a maritime defense-in depth. We are unique in that we possess organic capabilities to persist and remain lethal across multiple domains, maneuverable, and survivable inside an adversary's weapon engagement zone. Through our campaign of learning we have found that our true value proposition is to "sense and make sense." In a 21st century multi-domain environment, linear kill chains are insufficient. Through this concept and approach, Marines will be strategically placed to operate with partners and allies during competition and will be capable of responding during crises and holding adversaries at risk during conflict. Our Stand-in Forces will increase maritime domain awareness by maintaining custody of target data and will enable the Joint Force to project power back into an anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) environment.

Question. What innovative ideas are you considering to increase Service interoperability to accomplish missions and tasks in support of Department of Defense objectives in joint operations?

Answer. To ensure our amphibious operations concepts remain current, together with the Navy, we are developing a new concept for 21st Century Amphibious Operations. It will describe how we will execute amphibious operations against future adversaries in this evolving and complex operational environment. It will also articulate the future role of amphibious operations in support of maritime campaigns and will describe new operating methods that incorporate agile platforms to supplement traditional amphibious ships.

Additionally, Stand-in Forces conducting Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations have a unique ability to advance interoperability across the Combined and Joint Force to enable CJADC2 efforts. The forward postured forces operating and persisting inside adversaries' weapons engagement zones can sense and make sense of the operating environment. While maintaining quality track data and custody of targets, stand-in forces provide maritime domain awareness for fleet and joint commanders to project power into Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2AD) environments when crisis turns to conflict.

Interoperability extends beyond our U.S. Joint Force and into our relationship with partner and allied nations. The Marine Corps' Stand in Forces maintain these critical relationships while campaigning with their forward presence providing U.S. partners and allies assurances, increasing access, and actively deter shared adversaries.

ACQUISITION

Question. In recent National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAA's), Congress expanded and refined the acquisition-related functions of the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

If confirmed, how would you assist the Secretary of the Navy in the performance of certain acquisition-related functions, while ensuring compatibility with the duties and responsibilities of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition (as established in title 10, U.S. Code, sections 8014 and 8016)?

Answer. I would execute the Commandant of the Marine Corps responsibility to determine service requirements and establish their relative priority in support of the acquisition process. I would assist the Secretary of the Navy in making decisions regarding resources and priorities, and associated tradeoffs among cost, schedule, and performance on major defense acquisition programs. Further, I would manage key acquisition talent inside the Marine Corps to ensure we have the right number

of program managers with the requisite skills and experience to effectively employ tailored acquisition approaches. Finally, recognizing the importance of the integral relationship between HQMC, OPNAV, and DON staff, I would ensure synchronization of effort and alignment of service requirements and resource prioritization to the National Defense Strategy as well as Naval, Joint, and CCOM requirements.

Question. What actions would you take to improve all three aspects of the acquisition process—requirements, acquisition, and budgeting?

Answer. If confirmed, I would continue and build on the work Commandant Berger initiated, collaboratively with ASN (RD&A), to synchronize service chief and service acquisition executive roles and authorities to deliver capabilities in support of Naval, Joint, and CCOM requirements. Specifically, I would maximize the use of wargaming, prototyping, and experimentation to accelerate requirement development, inform prioritization of resources, and enable timely cost, schedule, and performance tradeoffs. I would maintain close integration and alignment with the other elements of the Department of Navy's acquisition-related decision support system, including ASN(FM&C) and ASN(RD&A). As an integrated Naval force, unity of effort in the planning and execution of programs across the Department is critical to delivering at the speed of relevance. I would maintain awareness of acquisition efforts across the Joint Force to leverage joint development, defense industrial base optimization, and contractual opportunities. I would additionally manage key acquisition talent inside the Marine Corps to ensure we have the right number of program managers with the requisite skills and experience to effectively employ tailored acquisition approaches. In order to ensure the greatest affordability, I would encourage the congressional authorized multi-ship procurement of Amphibious Warfare Ships.

Question. What actions would you propose, if any, to ensure that requirements are realistic, technically achievable, and prioritized?

Answer. If confirmed, I would maximize the use of wargaming, prototyping, and experimentation to accelerate requirement development, inform prioritization of resources, and enable timely cost, schedule, and performance tradeoffs.

If confirmed, I would ensure early engagement by the Marine Corps Operational Test and Evaluation Activity to provide an independent assessment of key performance parameters and key system attributes testability and alignment to overall system operational effectiveness/suitability.

Question. What specific measures would you recommend to control "requirements creep" in the defense acquisition system?

Answer. We employ the Adaptive Acquisition Framework (AAF) to tailor our approach to capability development. The AAF allows us to increase focus on key requirements and move more effectively through the acquisition process. Further, the AAF enables us to take advantage of rapid prototyping and fielding of an initial capability that reinforces our focus on critical operational requirements.

Question. How would you utilize your authority to arrest the exponential escalation in cost that, in recent history, has marked the acquisition life-cycle of Service platforms and weapons systems?

Answer. I would advocate for the judicious use of rapid prototyping and experimentation to inform capability development activities; emphasize development of realistic and independent program life cycle cost estimates; and leverage my support/advisory role during key Defense Acquisition System milestones to assist with cost, schedule, and performance trades necessary to achieve service objectives. Additionally, I would ensure affordable sustainment cost objectives are identified early in the capability development process and included in requirements document to guide and inform system performance tradeoff decisions.

Question. In your view, in whom should accountability for large-scale acquisition failures and/or extraordinary cost overruns vest?

Answer. While current statutory and regulatory guidance confer acquisitions authorities and accountability to the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition & Sustainment), Secretary of the Navy (Component Head), and Service Acquisition Executive, the Commandant of the Marine Corps shares this responsibility. For Marine Corps Programs, the Secretary of the Navy has assigned acquisition authorities to both ASN (RD&A) and the Commandant of the Marine Corps. As such, accountability for acquisition failures and cost overruns is shared between ASN (RD&A) and the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

Question. In your view, are the roles and responsibilities in the acquisition process now assigned to the Commandant of the Marine Corps and the other Service Chiefs appropriate? Are there other acquisition-related roles or responsibilities that should be assigned to the Service Chiefs?

Answer. Based on my experience assisting the Commandant of the Marine Corps with execution of his acquisition related roles and responsibilities during my tenure

as both the Deputy Commandant, Combat Development and Integration and as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, the currently assigned authorities are adequate. If confirmed, I would commit to work with the Committee to identify any gaps and address them.

A natural tension exists between the objectives of major defense acquisition programs to reduce cost and accelerate schedule and the need to ensure performance meets requirements and specifications—the objective of the test and evaluation function.

Question. Has the Secretary of the Navy assigned to the Commandant of the Marine Corps responsibility for those aspects of the function of research and development relating to test and evaluation for Marine Corps acquisition programs? If so, how would you exercise this responsibility, if confirmed?

Answer. The Secretary of the Navy assigned responsibility for Operational Test and Evaluation to the Commandant of the Marine Corps for all Marine Corps acquisitions except for aviation assets which fall under the Navy's Operational Test Authority. If confirmed, I would emphasize the need for early involvement of the Marine Corps and Navy Operational Test and Evaluation communities in the capabilities development process and seek opportunities to bolster Department operational test and evaluation capacity and capability.

Question. What is your assessment of the appropriate balance between the desire to reduce acquisition cycle times and the need to perform adequate test and evaluation?

Answer. Only under the most pressing situations, e.g., urgent requirements supporting marines engaged in peacekeeping or combat operations, testing efforts may be reduced but we would more closely monitor the system in its fielded environment to re-assess our initial evaluation, tactics, techniques, and procedures to minimize the operational risks. In all other instances, Program Executive Officers and Program Managers must ensure test and evaluation programs that provide sufficient test activities to clearly demonstrate the operational effectiveness and suitability of capabilities before fielding to the Fleet Marine Force.

Question. Under what circumstances, if any, do you believe it appropriate to procure weapon systems and equipment that have not been demonstrated through test and evaluation to be operationally effective, suitable, and survivable?

Answer. With the means available today to rapidly prototype and procure limited quantities for experimentation, rarely, if ever, would it be appropriate to procure systems and equipment in support of the warfighter without requisite testing and evaluation.

Question. What do you see as the role of the developmental and operational test and evaluation communities with respect to rapid acquisition, spiral acquisition, and other evolutionary acquisition processes?

Answer. The role of developmental and operational test and evaluation communities during rapid, spiral or evolutionary acquisitions is to develop an efficient and effective test program that stresses system performance sufficiently to assess with confidence, its safety, reliability and mission effectiveness within cost and schedule constraints.

Question. Are you satisfied with Marine Corps test and evaluation capabilities, including the test and evaluation workforce and infrastructure?

Answer. I'm not one to ever be fully satisfied with existing capabilities or supporting infrastructure. I consistently look for opportunities to drive capability/process efficiencies, implement talent management initiatives focused on strengthening workforce performance, and enhance supporting infrastructure. While I assess the current test and evaluation system as adequate, I will consistently seek opportunities to build additional capacity and improve test and evaluation capabilities.

Question. In which areas, if any, do you feel the Marine Corps should be developing new test and evaluation capabilities?

Answer. The Marine Corps needs to seek opportunities in T&E infrastructure solutions that can adequately represent the future multi domain and contested environments. We must also develop tools and processes to assess operational and responsible performance of Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning capabilities.

Question. If confirmed, how would you accelerate the development of these new capabilities?

Answer. If confirmed, I will clearly identify my intent to implement measures, tools, and processes to efficiently evaluate system performance around validated mission threads and demonstrate the operational performance in multi-domain operations. Our testing organizations are already working across DOD and the Services in support of DoN T&E initiatives and the Director, Operational Test & Evaluation (DOT&E) Implementation Plan, endorsed by all Service Secretaries.

Question. What are your views on the appropriate roles of Office of the Secretary of Defense developmental and operational testing organizations with respect to testing of Marine Corps systems?

Answer. The role of DOT&E is to establish Department level operational test policy and procedures; review and analyze the results of OT&E conducted for each major DOD acquisition program; provide independent assessments to SecDef, the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD(A&S)), and Congress; make budgetary and financial recommendations to the SecDef regarding OT&E; and oversee major DOD acquisition programs to ensure OT&E is adequate to assess the operational effectiveness and suitability of the defense system in combat use. The Secretary of the Navy, ASN (RD&A), and the Commandant of the Marine Corps share authority and accountability for developmental and operational testing and evaluation of Naval capabilities. Based on this understanding, the alignment of policy, procedure, and independent assessment at the OSD level and execution of developmental and operational test and evaluation at the component/service level is appropriate and effectively supports checks and balances required by Congress.

Question. Do you think the current operational test and evaluation system also provides for the flexibility to assess commercial technologies that might be acquired or fields by the Department of Defense through means or processes that are not traditional acquisition programs of record?

Answer. Yes—By focusing on the marines' employment of new technologies within mission scenarios, the current operational test and evaluation system is agnostic to the source of the technologies or method of acquisition, and therefore retains the necessary flexibility to assess any technology that the marines might acquire.

Question. If confirmed, how would you ensure the "process" of programs of record do not limit service investment in portfolios of capabilities or mission threads?

Answer. The Marine Corps has structured its investment budget line items by capability areas to the maximum extent practical. This provides flexibility to address adjustments that may be needed due to changes such as technology, supply chain, requirements, etc. from a capability versus program of record perspective, while operating within reprogramming threshold limitations. If confirmed, I would ensure that we continue to manage the Marine Corps budget structure alignment to Force Design 2030 capability and mission thread delivery.

Question. If confirmed, how would you resource enablers, such as authorities to operate or data or certification, that Program Managers and Program Executive Officers see as outside of their requirements?

Answer. The Marine Corps has prioritized critical Force Design programs in our budget process, while ensuring key enablers are also resourced. Program Managers and Program Executive Officers ensure that any associated program enablers are identified and considered within the Marine Corps Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution process. The Marine Corps has established Enterprise Programming Teams (EPTs) that include a network of subject matter experts from across the enterprise who are closely aligned with specific programs. These EPTs serve in direct support of DC P&R during the programming phase.

JOINT ACQUISITION

Question. What are your views regarding the merit and feasibility of joint development and acquisition programs, such as the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle and Future Vertical Lift?

Answer. The JLTV program has been an exceptional model for use, but each service may still have unique usage requirements that must be accounted for.

Question. What additional programs would you consider to be candidates for joint development and acquisition?

Answer. While we currently do not have any candidates for joint development, we always look for opportunities for joint development with the other Services, our allies, and partners when it is in the best interest of the Marine Corps and the joint force. In general, munitions are ideal candidates.

Question. What are your views on joint, enabling or cross-cutting capabilities that may not be treated as acquisition programs, such as JADC2? Do you have sufficient authority to advocate or manage Marine Corps capabilities to ensure there are no seams in planning or execution of such efforts?

Answer. The Marine Corps is committed to executing the network and data integration of our programs and architectures with the Joint Force necessary to achieve JADC2 goals. Our campaign of learning to deliver Force Design led by experimentation by the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab is facilitating our ability to quickly develop prototype capabilities that inform requirements and needed JADC2 capabilities.

ties upgrades. Prototypes developed for experimentation are being provided to selected Fleet Marine Force (FMF) units for Limited User Evaluations (LUE) that results in rapid JADC2 capability incursions that enhance the force.

As the Service Chief, I would have sufficient authorities to influence the requirements, resourcing, and materiel development to ensure there are no seams in the planning and execution of such efforts.

Question. If confirmed, how would you facilitate processes for the Marine Corps that empower acquisition professionals and reduce institutional policy barriers to enable cross service requirements development and capabilities discussions?

Answer. If confirmed, I will foster a culture of innovation, balanced with disciplined risk-based execution, throughout the acquisition system. I would set conditions to enable capability solution delivery for Force Design by aligning HQMC for maximum unity of effort, and strict, prioritized focus of resources to capabilities of significant Joint, COCOM, and Naval Expeditionary contribution. Further I would seek opportunities to streamline acquisition and sustainment decision support processes by focusing on maximum decentralization of decision authority to the lowest practical level.

MODERNIZATION OF CAPABILITIES

Question. The Marine Corps' current concepts for modernization of its amphibious capabilities includes ships, ship to shore connectors and armored amphibious combat vehicles. Modernization across these systems is complex, technically challenging, and costly.

What is your assessment of the current capability of amphibious maneuver and assault systems in the Navy and Marine Corps?

Answer. The current capability assessment of amphibious maneuver and assault systems to meet the objectives stated in the 2022 NDS as well as Combatant Commander requirements is at risk.

Over the past 14 years, the Navy and Marine Corps have done 11 studies that show with historical maintenance readiness no fewer than (31) Amphibious Warfare Ships (AWS) consisting of (10) LHAs/LHDs and (21) LPDs are required to keep two three AWS Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) / Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU) forward while maintaining a sufficient number to train and certify ARG/MEU teams. If directed, the current contingency plans indicate that the Naval force will be required to deploy (5) ARG/MEUs in a condensed timeframe.

The current 30-year shipbuilding plan, when combined with decommission plans, does not meet the Fiscal Year 2023 NDAA statutory requirement of maintaining no less than 31 AWS.

The Marine Corps Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) program will provide a modern, fully amphibious armored personnel carrier to enable otherwise dismounted ground combat formations with a greater range of maneuver options in the littoral operating environment, along with significantly improved lethality, protection, and command and control. The ACV is in operation now in the Fleet Marine Force and will be fully fielded across the force by 2028.

Question. If confirmed, how would you propose to prioritize the development and acquisition of capabilities required for sea basing, connectors, and armored amphibious assault and tactical mobility ashore to achieve a full spectrum capability in the Marine Corps?

Answer. The Marine Corps, more than any other service, has a unique nature regarding essential requirements that are subject to the Naval Service budgetary process. The Amphibious Warfare Ship (AWS) statutory requirement and other critical capabilities including connectors, C4I afloat capabilities, preposition and afloat assets, and the Next Generation Logistics Ship which are essential to the Stand-in Forces and crisis response operations, all fall outside the Marine Corps Total Obligation Authority (TOA). Amongst these programs, our top priority is to ensure the operational and statutory requirement of (31) Amphibious Warfare Ships (AWS) is met.

Within our own TOA, the Marine Corps has prioritized the development and fielding of the Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV). The ACV program is in production, has achieved initial operational capability (IOC), and is aligned with Force Design. The second highest priority within the portfolio remains the replacement of the High Mobility Multi-Purpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV) fleet. The Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) program is in production and has achieved IOC.

Question. In your view, what is necessary to ensure that modernization of the amphibious force—ships, connectors, and vehicles—is achievable and affordable in the near and long terms?

Answer. Affordability can be achieved through congressional authorized multi-ship procurement of Amphibious Warfare Ships. Amphibious ship affordability is maximized with multi-ship buys that stabilize the industrial base, improve buying power, and provide efficiencies through steady, predictable workloads. This can best be achieved by balancing new construction of LPD Flight II at 2-year centers and LHA Flight I at 4-year centers.

The Marine Corps, more than any other service, has a unique nature regarding essential requirements that are subject to the Naval Service budgetary process. The amphibious warfare ship statutory requirement and other critical capabilities including connectors, C4I afloat capabilities, preposition afloat assets, and the Next Generation Logistics Ship are essential to the Stand-in Forces and crisis response operations, yet all fall outside the Marine Corps Total Obligation Authority. Our Nation is a maritime nation that requires a modern, ready, and forward postured naval force that can deter war and prevail in conflict if deterrence fails. I recognize the Marine Corps' dependency on the Navy to champion maritime expeditionary warfare requirements, but I must also elevate those requirements when these critical capabilities are not resourced to levels that enable the Marine Corps to accomplish its missions.

Modernization of the amphibious force requires ensuring our amphibious operations concepts remain current. Together with the Navy, we are developing a new concept for 21st Century Amphibious Operations. It will describe how we will execute amphibious operations against future adversaries in this evolving and complex operational environment. It will also articulate the future role of amphibious operations in support of maritime campaigns and will describe new operating methods that incorporate agile platforms to supplement traditional amphibious ships. Examples include long-range, unmanned systems that infiltrate the adversary's weapon engagement zone; dispersed formations of manned and unmanned ships that challenge adversary targeting; and the adoption of disruptive technologies.

Question. Given the future envisioned by the 2022 NDS are current Marine Corps modernization plans and budgets adequate?

Answer. Yes; the fiscal year 2024 budget request delivers the resources necessary to continue our Force Design initiatives supporting equipment modernization, installations and logistics investments, talent management reform, and training and education modernization. However, any reduction in topline will challenge our ability to modernize commensurate with the pacing threat, while simultaneously maintaining current levels of combat ready forces.

Question. How do you plan to position the Marine Corps to modernize its information capabilities for the future warfighting environment—not just its networking systems, but how it uses data and information, and how it employs information-related capabilities to shape the battlespace in peacetime, gray-zone conflict and active hostilities?

Answer. As the Marine Corps modernizes to stay ahead of the National Defense Strategy's identified pacing challenge, it is imperative that the Marine Corps pursue artificial intelligence (AI) rapidly and strategically to maintain an information and capability advantage. To remain relevant as a fighting force, the Marine Corps must adopt new practices that enable continuous enhancement in our capabilities vice large-scale capability releases. Currently, the Marine Corps is in the early stages of investing in AI with an initial focus on AI tools that improve our ability to sense and make sense of operating environments and which increase remote, uncrewed, and autonomous capabilities. These tools will decrease direct risk to marines in combat and increase our ability to understand adversary actions while disguising our own. Specifically, these tools will help create outsized effects for small, distributed forces in a contested maritime environment. The Marine Corps also has AI-based initiatives underway that will support business operations and improve decision-making processes in the areas of talent management, equipment and supply chain management, and force protection.

NAVAL SURFACE FIRE SUPPORT

Question. The DDG-1000 program was initiated to fill the capability gap for naval surface fire support. The original requirement for 24 to 32 DDG-1000 ships, each with two 155mm Advanced Gun Systems, was reduced to 12 ships, then to 10 ships, then to 7, and finally to 3 ships. The Navy now plans to dedicate those 3 ships to support theater-level fire missions.

In your view, and given this significant reduction in the number of DDG-1000 destroyers and their dedication to other missions, does the Navy program meet Marine Corps requirements for naval surface fire support?

Answer. Marine Corps fire support requirements are met by a combination of organic and joint air and surface delivered fires including missile and gunfire support from Navy ships. The operational DDG-1000 ships will contribute to fires required by the Marine Corps and joint forces.

Question. What other capabilities would you rely on to help meet naval surface fire support requirements? Will the Army's programs in Long Range Fires meet the requirements?

Answer. The Marine Corps requires highly mobile long-range fires. The key is the balance between range and weight. As part of a joint force, all fires platforms are useful. While the Navy-Marine Corps team continues to pursue cost-effective and lethal solutions in support of the naval surface fires requirement, the Marine Corps is closely monitoring the Army's advancements in long-range precision fires. For example, the Precision Strike Missile (PrSM) is an Army program to replace the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMs). Like ATACMs, PrSM can be launched from the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System. The current Army plan calls for PrSM being developed in several capability increments; Increment II is planned to incorporate a seeker warhead, enabling it to engage moving targets at ranges well beyond the rest of the Multiple Launch Rocket System Family of Munitions. Based on the Army's current program schedule, the Marine Corps plans to begin procurement of PrSM Increment II in fiscal year 2027 under our High Mobility Artillery Rocket System program.

AMPHIBIOUS COMBAT VEHICLE

Question. The Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) supports expeditionary protected mobility capability and capacity requirements with the mission is to land and maneuver the surface assault elements of the landing force, utilizing ship-to-shore water mobility during amphibious operations to seize inland objectives, and to conduct armored vehicle operations in subsequent actions ashore. The Marine Corps is procuring the ACV as a modernized platform to replace the aging AAV-7 fleet, with intent to procure three supporting mission role variants, the ACV-C (Command and Control), the ACV-30 (30mm Gun Variant), and the ACV-R (Recovery/Maintenance Variant).

What is your assessment of this modernization effort?

Answer. The ACV remains our highest Ground Combat and Tactical Vehicle modernization priority, and the capabilities the platform provides our marines for protected mobility, maneuver ashore, and support to our embarked infantry are unprecedented. The program achieved Initial Operational Capability (IOC) in November fiscal year 2021 and has been in full-rate production of the ACV-P (Personnel) variant since then with 201 vehicles delivered to-date. The program will begin delivering the next mission-role variant, the ACV-C (Command and Control), in mid-fiscal year 2024, which will deliver the latest in on-the-move C2. The remaining two mission-role variants, the ACV-30 (30mm Gun Variant) and ACV-R (Recovery/Maintenance Variant) are on track and within program cost and schedule controls. Modernization of our assault amphibian capability continues to progress toward a more lethal, survivable, and agile platform. During our transition we have learned that fielding a new 21st century wheeled assault amphibian platform demands more training and proficiency of our operators and maintainers to get it right. Based upon this learning, we have instituted several initiatives to ensure we are fielding a platform that is able to be operated safely. The ACV has had some readiness challenges early in its fielding. Our Program Management Office has been working hard, in concert with the Fleet Marine Force units to turn this around. I am happy to report ACV readiness has been steadily improving over the past 12 months.

Question. Recent news reports indicate the Marine Corps is seeking additional contractors to produce variants of the ACV, but is unable to share the technical data packages because it does not have sufficient rights to do so. What lessons is this teaching the Marine Corps that it needs to consider for future negotiations when considering what technical data rights to pursue?

Answer. The Marine Corps' acquisition strategy for the original competitively awarded contract for the initial Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) personnel carrier included an option for the complete Technical Data Package. However, due to the limited industrial base for Assault Amphibian Vehicles, along with a small Approved Acquisition Objective, it did not make fiscal sense for the Marine Corps to ultimately procure the complete TDP as the initial investment for the data coupled with the cost to facilitate a second source could not be recouped over the number of quantities planned. I believe every program should evaluate the need to procure the TDP for the system in question, but this must be weighed against the cost of the TDP and the long-term value of the package.

F-35B REQUIREMENTS

Question. The Marine Corps has stated that its F-35B requirement is 420 aircraft. The total number of F-35s planned for the Department of the Navy is currently set at 680.

Do you believe that the current plan for 680 aircraft can fully accommodate the needs of both the Navy and the Marine Corps?

Answer. I believe that the current plan for 680 aircraft can fully accommodate the needs of both the Navy and the Marine Corps. For the Marine Corps, 420 aircraft consist of 353 F-35B and 67 F-35C. Though our analysis will continue as we focus on optimizing our fleet squadron structure, 420 total F-35s adequately support primary, backup, and attrition Reserve requirements for the Marine Corps. This facilitates support to Combatant Commanders (COCOMs), Global Force Management (GFM) requirements, and the Marine Corps as a Joint Force enabler in support of the National Defense Strategy.

Question. The F-35B brings new capabilities and operational possibilities to the Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU). Such new capabilities and operating concepts require investment in shipboard infrastructure, including upgraded data links. What is your vision for L-class ship connectivity? What are your current plans to achieve that vision?

Answer. One of our desired end states for all amphibious ships is they have the capability to downlink and share F-35 data. The Navy has already installed the new Capstone Ship Self-Defense System (SSDS) on several amphibious ships, which brings the Cooperative Engagement Capability (CEC) and Link-16 to the platform. Five Landing Helicopter Docks (LHDs) are scheduled for similar upgrades over the next 5 years. This system provides a critical combat capability that will integrate with F-35s over Link-16.

We have also begun the installation of the Marine Corps Common Aviation Command and Control System (CAC2S) Afloat on amphibious ships. CAC2S is a mature capability that we have used in our Marine Air Command and Control System (MACCS) for several years and provides our MAGTFs with a multi-domain command and control capability able to support all six functions of Marine Aviation.

To date, we have CAC2S Afloat on two amphibies with a funded plan to put it on all LHA/LHD and Amphibious Transport Docks (LPDs) class ships. CAC2S Afloat is a vital enabler that enhances the Amphibious Task Force defenses, conduct long-range strikes and long-range precision fires, and integrates the MEU Aviation Combat Element (ACE) into Composite Warfare Commander (CWC) functions of Sea Control and Denial.

Question. Follow-on modernization for the F-35 is scheduled to bring key warfighting capabilities to the fleet, but the schedule and budget remain in flux. Are you concerned about the affordability and executability of the Department's plan for Block 4 Continuous Capability Development and Delivery (C2D2)?

Answer. I am always concerned about affordability and executability in any program. We continue to see cost growth and schedule challenges with delivery of Block 4, which is a priority focus area for the Marine Corps. We are exploring areas with the Joint Program Office (JPO)/Industry where we can adjust the scope and prioritize efforts.

It is vital to the Marine Corps for critical capabilities like Block 4 to deliver to the fleet when we need them, and at an affordable cost. Developmental Test Flight Science aircraft have been identified as a "pacing item" affecting executability. The Marine Corps is currently exploring options, with the other Services, to update the Flight Science fleet, which will be critical to F-35 development in the coming years.

Question. What portion of the current Marine Corps F-35B fleet will be upgraded to Block 4?

Answer. Currently, all Marine Corps F-35B and F-35C aircraft from Lot-11 on up will be upgraded to a Block 4 configuration. This translates to every aircraft delivered since 2021, and it equates to approximately 75 percent of our 420 F-35s being Block 4 or higher. The lower lot aircraft (Lot-10 and below) are planned to remain in our training squadrons.

Question. There has been much discussion about the importance of networking and connecting all Navy and Marine Corps capabilities across air, land, and sea platforms. What is the Navy/Marine Corps team doing to make machine-to-machine command and control, across multiple domains, a reality?

Answer. The Navy/Marine Corps team recognizes the importance of integrated networking capabilities across platforms. As such, the naval team is coordinating efforts to modernize to expand networking capabilities. In addition to expanding existing capabilities like the Common Aviation Command and Control System (CAC2S) and the cooperative engagement capability, the naval team is also working on devel-

opmental efforts that will provide fusion sensor feeds from airborne and surface platforms and dissemination to naval units in a secure manner.

Question. Have the Navy and Marine Corps developed and refined the joint operational concepts that will govern this integrated fight?

Answer. In addition to fielding common command and control systems across the Naval Force, such as Common Aviation Command and Control System (CAC2S), the Marine Corps is participating in the Navy's Project Overmatch. Project Overmatch represents the Navy's contribution to Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2). We are fully invested in developing capabilities that seamlessly connect with the fleet and allow the Marine Corps, as the Stand in Force (SIF), to enable kill webs and close kill chains for the Joint Force.

Question. What is being done to ensure that the Navy and Marine Corps airborne data links are interoperable and resilient against peer competitors—not only with each other—but with the Air Force and Army platforms as well?

Answer. Multiple efforts across the services seek to identify datalinks and fusion platforms that will ensure interoperability and resiliency of the future Joint Force. When facing peer adversaries, we anticipate attacks on our network, which dictates that our systems be both protected and resilient.

Considering the above, we have created a new restricted officer Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) in the Marine Corps—Interface Control Officers. These marines will be our tactical data link experts and will be critical for ensuring we build and support resilient and interoperable networks.

Question. Current technologies allow “low probability of intercept/low probability of detection” datalinks to connect 4th and 5th generation aircraft. As well, other platforms, operating across multiple domains can be networked. Who is leading this effort for the Navy, the Marine Corps, and across the joint force, and what progress is being made?

Answer. All the Services are exploring pathways to ensure interoperability and information exchange requirements. These efforts are tied to unique Service funding lines and priorities. The F-35 Joint Program Office (JPO) is quickly becoming a touchpoint for the Services to collaborate on datalink efforts, identify interoperability requirements, and share information and resources.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION

Question. U.S. superiority in key areas of innovation is decreasing or has disappeared, while our competitors are engaging in aggressive military modernization and advanced weaponry development. DOD has identified 14 critical technology areas in which investment to develop next generation operational capabilities is imperative: hypersonics; future generation wireless technology; advanced materials; integrated network systems-of-systems; directed energy; integrated sensing and cyber; space technology; quantum science; trusted artificial intelligence (AI) and autonomy; microelectronics; renewable energy generation and storage; advanced computing and software; human-machine interfaces; and biotechnology. Much of the innovation in these technologies that could prove suitable for national defense purposes is occurring outside of the traditional defense industry.

What do you see as the most significant challenges (e.g., technical, organizational, or cultural) to U.S. development of these key technologies, or gaining access to such technologies from the commercial marketplace?

Answer. U.S. technology development challenges arise when we discuss competition for resources, such as radio frequency spectrum and the continued availability of spectrum access. The ability to train with the full capability of future systems remains paramount to maintain a force in readiness capable of global response.

Within a DOD context, I view the challenges as primarily cultural/organizational. Although we have made progress with new authorities, such as the DOD Adaptive Acquisition Pathways (AAP), for increasing speed to capability, technology continues to outpace our rules, regulatory constructs, and policy.

Question. How well do you think those Department investments in these technologies are appropriately focused, integrated, and synchronized across all Military Departments and Agencies?

Answer. Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Research and Engineering (OUSD (R&E)) does a terrific job at identifying and coordinating R&D research areas across the Department. Laying the right foundation through Force Design 2030 and our data and AI infrastructure layer helps facilitate the integration of new technologies in a rapid manner. Although DOD has challenges with respect to rapid integration into the DOD enterprise architecture, Combined Joint All Domain Command and Control (CJADC2) is helping the Department bring together people, processes, and capabilities in a more focused manner resulting in better alignment.

Question. How has the Marine Corps prioritized limited R&D funding across your technology focus areas? Specifically, where is the Corps either increasing or decreasing focus and funding?

Answer. Marine Corps R&D funding has primarily been focused on those capabilities related to Force Design. These are long range fires, recon and counter recon capabilities, and C2 transport infrastructure to support data exchange requirements. Maintaining and balancing investments in both near term and longer-term R&D is necessary to keep pace with our adversaries.

Question. How is the Marine Corps balancing revolutionary capability advancements as compared to “quick win” incremental improvements that can be rapidly fielded?

Answer. The Marine Corps balances “quick win” incremental improvements against strategic force design transformations in order to be responsive to the strategic environment and threat-informed timelines. For instance, the Marine Corps is developing capabilities and prototypes such as the Family of Integrated Targeting Cells now which enable our forward FMF warfighters along with combined or joint targeting architectures in order to afford the service time to enact more diverse and advanced solutions that more fully integrate into the Combined Joint All Domain Command and Control (CJADC2) architecture. As another example, we are embracing and leveraging Advana/Jupiter for Enterprise data analytics in advance of building out our own data mesh environment all the way to the tactical environment.

Question. What efforts is the Marine Corps making to identify new technologies developed commercially by the private sector and apply them to military and national security purposes? What are the challenges that you perceive to increasing collaboration between the private sector and Marine Corps?

Answer. The Marine Corps is constantly engaged with industry to evaluate prospective technologies for our needs. Our primary impediment to rapid experimentation within our environment is the cybersecurity accreditation processes that must be completed prior to executing.

Question. How can the operational experience of the warfighter better be integrated into the research and development process? Are there appropriate places to interject warfighters in the interaction between the DOD research and engineering community and the private sector?

Answer. The relevance of our technical solutions is directly linked to the timeliness of our recent operational experiences when developing and acquiring cutting-edge technologies. Leveraging iterative development with smaller, more frequent capability deliveries, and receiving rapid feedback from end users is a demonstrated recipe for success. This should be the standard for all our programs. One example on how we’re doing this today is with the Marine Corps Software Factory (MCSWF). The MCSWF is upskilling warfighters with technical skills and actively involving Marine developers who have direct operational experience. This model ensures that the technologies being developed align closely with the real-world challenges faced by the warfighters. These Marine developers bring firsthand knowledge of operational environments, tactics, and the needs of the end-users.

Question. How are you leveraging experimentation and prototyping opportunities to look at new technologies and concepts that might be beneficial for the Marine Corps, or better support the Corps role in joint operations?

Answer. Our Marine Corps Software Factory (MCSWF) prototype is a project where marines are trained to develop software solutions for other marines quickly and effectively. It is a collaboration between the Marine Corps and the Army Software Factory in Austin, TX. The goal is to leverage the expertise and partnerships with industry, academia, and other services to maximize resources and create innovative solutions. The MCSWF incorporates cutting-edge commercial technology, data science, and AI to accelerate the development of technical solutions. Once fully implemented, it will give our Commanders the capability to rapidly build technical solutions at the speed of relevance in ambiguous operating environments.

Question. In your view, what steps must DOD take to protect and strengthen our National Security Innovation Base to ensure that critical information is protected?

Answer. In the past, we viewed cybersecurity from a point of view where we protect networks and systems. Today, we have no choice but to take a data-centric approach with zero trust principles to protect data wherever it may reside. The DOD needs to continue encouraging our partners to leverage resources provided by the Defense Cyber Crime Center’s Defense Industrial Base (DIB) Cybersecurity program and the National Security Agency’s Cybersecurity Collaboration Center. Additionally, as DOD implements our zero trust data security approach, we must publish standards and incorporate associated contract language.

INDO-PACIFIC REGION

Question. What are the key areas in which the Marine Corps must improve to provide the necessary capabilities and capacity to the Joint Force to prevail in a potential conflict with China?

Answer. Mobility in the littorals is a challenge. With the Navy, we are the naval expeditionary force in readiness and the global crisis response force.

The Marine Corps fights as a Marine Air Ground Task Force and has developed a great deal of its own organic aviation mobility. We have 16 MV-22 squadrons; are standing up a 4th C-130 squadron; and we have reached Full Operational Capability with our CH-53K, the only heavy lift helicopter in the Joint Force. This is significant but we also require the maritime littoral mobility of 31 L Class amphibious ships, 35 Landing Ship Medium (LSM), and other littoral connectors.

Question. Do you support the Defense Posture Realignment Initiative (DPRI), including the realignment of some U.S. marines from Okinawa to Guam and the buildup of facilities at other locations such as MCAS Iwakuni, Japan?

Answer. Yes.

Question. China's anti-access, area denial capabilities (A2/AD)—including long-range ballistic and cruise missiles, advanced integrated air defenses, electronic warfare, and cyber—pose a significant challenge for U.S. forces. How would you assess the threat to Marine Corps forces and facilities from Chinese missile forces? Is it fair to say that Marine Corps' forces and facilities in the Indo-Pacific—from Japan to Guam—could face sustained missile attack from the beginning of a contingency? How will the Marine Corps execute its concept of operations known as Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations in the presence of such sustained attacks? In your assessment, have Marine Corps investments, concepts of operations, and/or posture shifts to date sufficiently addressed this threat?

Answer. The Marine Corps, along with USINDOPACOM and the Joint Force are taking steps to increase missile defense and harden our posture in the theater. Additionally, as a Service, we are continually updating our organization, training, equipment, and operating concepts, to mitigate the threats posed by our adversaries' capabilities.

Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) is a foundational naval concept that creates opportunities for the Service by improving our own ability to maneuver and exploit control over key maritime terrain, fully integrating Fleet Marine Force and Navy capabilities to enable sea denial and sea control, and support sustainment of the fleet. EABO is tightly coupled with the Navy's concept for Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO) and is aligned to the ideas presented in the Joint Warfighting Concept. Together, EABO and DMO advocate for integrated yet distributable naval formations to support sea denial and sea control in the face of potential adversaries who pose increasing challenges to current naval forces.

Question. Do you believe the planned joint force mix of tactical aircraft is sufficient to counter current and future threats in INDOPACOM, where the "tyranny of distance" is such a major factor?

Answer. The acceleration of the PLA's threat systems is not fully known, so if confirmed, I would not be satisfied with anything less than sufficient.

Question. Do you believe DOD has sufficient sealift and airlift capabilities to move marines throughout INDOPACOM for both training and contingency purposes and to support Marine Corps force conducting Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations?

Answer. We can do better. The Marine Corps, partnered with the Navy, is the Joint Force's naval expeditionary force of readiness and our Nation's global crisis response force. Expeditionary means light, mobile, flexible, responsive, and lethal. To do this, the Marine Corps can not stand by and wait in line for STRATLIFT, it will be too late. We need the ability to respond when the indications and warnings present themselves. To do this, we need organic mobility. The Marine Corps has organic aviation, but the DOD and Congress need to find a way to meet the amphibious warfare ship minimum requirement of 31. We also need connectors and that is a minimum of 35 Medium Landing Ships. These vessels, and the partnership with the Navy and its Sailors, will be the force multiplier the Joint Force needs to gain the advantage for both training and contingency purposes in INDOPACOM.

Question. What alternative concepts of operation, platforms, and basing opportunities exist to address potential shortfalls in this area?

Answer. The Concept for Stand-in Forces and the updated Tentative Manual for Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations describe our recommended concept of operations in the Pacific. Additionally, we are developing and experimenting with numerous ground, sea, and aviation platforms that are manned and unmanned for tactical and theater mobility. As we strengthen our relations with our allies and part-

ners in the region we will develop and learn new alternatives that can fill current gaps and shortfalls.

The Marine Corps is developing bridging solutions to support littoral mobility until sufficient Medium Landing Ships (LSM) are delivered. The initial bridging plan consists of a combination of Expeditionary Fast Transports (T-EPF), charters and landing craft.

EUROPE

Question. What are the key areas in which the Marine Corps must improve to provide the necessary capabilities and capacity to the Joint Force to meet NDS priorities in the European AOR?

Answer. The Marine Corps is a global force and a force provider to the EUCOM commander. The capabilities we are developing are not only applicable in a single theater. Our Stand-In Force concept applies in the littorals of Europe just as it does in the Indo-Pacific. We have recently done tremendous work in the European AOR with TF-61/2, and our 2d Marine Aircraft Wing. Just like anywhere else, we provide organized, trained, and equipped forces to enable the CCDR to campaign. We can and are improving our ability to operate in the High North by strengthening our partnership with our NATO Allies and European partners to enable Joint Force capacity.

Question. What is the value of the Marine Rotational Force-Europe? Do you support continuing that presence into the future?

Answer. The Marine Rotational Force-Europe (MRF-E) enables us to build on relationships with our NATO partners while maintaining skills to operate in extreme cold weather and arctic conditions. MRF-E provides a combat credible force to the EUCOM commander, and gives him options when dealing with crises and when working with our Allies and partners. If confirmed, we will continue to provide combat credible forces as required to the EUCOM Commander.

MARINE CORPS FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Question. What is your assessment of the progress made in evolving MARSOC capabilities?

Answer. The role of MARSOC has changed significantly since its inception in 2006, and we continue to make necessary changes that are consistent with our Service Force Design initiatives and derived from our governing national strategy documents. MARSOC leverages its unique placement and access while working closely with key Allies and partners to create advantages for decisionmakers. MARSOC's modernization efforts are driving the development of multi-domain sensing capabilities that can serve to illuminate malign activity and present options in competition or accelerate targeting in crisis and conflict.

Over the last 16+ years, MARSOC has demonstrated a unique ability to effectively integrate with Allies and partners, while synchronizing collective capabilities that support our Nation's interests and promote the sovereignty and security of our partners around the globe. Their persistent presence in key areas enables them to serve as a connector for Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational (JIIM) capabilities, which makes them a critical enabler for the Marine Corps, United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), and the joint force as a whole.

Question. What unique attributes and capabilities do you believe MARSOC brings to the joint force?

Answer. MARSOC provides the joint force a unique capability by ensuring the littorals can be leveraged to create advantages for the joint force. They have shown they can masterfully employ SOF Peculiar activities to conduct multi-domain operations that can be advantageous for the joint force. MARSOC is unique from the other SOCOM components in that they assess and select experienced marines from a variety of occupational specialties from within the service to ultimately generate a SOF capability to answer GCC requirements. This diversity of background, experiences and skill sets fosters a talented, mature, and capable force offering for the demands of a complex operating environment.

MARSOC applies an integrated intelligence and operations approach to characterize the environment and enable other governmental agencies or partner nations to understand our adversary's malign activities more fully. Additionally, MARSOC's development of advanced uncrewed systems, their sensors, and their enablement via the use of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning technologies will expand and thicken joint force kill webs and enable joint force targeting capabilities in contested space.

Question. If confirmed, what would be the principal issues you would have to address to improve MARSOC operations?

Answer. As the Marine Corps executes Force Design 2030, MARSOC is working in parallel on their own modernization efforts, which includes their concept of Strategic Shaping and Reconnaissance (SSR). This concept is not only meant to provide the Joint Force unique global options for deterrence, but also shapes the environment in the event of conflict. MARSOC capabilities already, and will continue to, contribute to USSOCOM efforts related to What Winning Looks Like, as well as to Service concepts as elements of the forward-deployed Stand in Force working alongside and in collaboration with FMF units.

We must continually assess if MARSOC possesses the correct mix of organic capabilities that allow it to operationalize the SSR concept.

OPERATIONAL ENERGY

Question. DOD defines operational energy as the energy required for training, moving, and sustaining military forces and weapons platforms for military operations, including the energy used by tactical power systems, generators, and weapons platforms. Longer operating distances, remote and austere geography, and anti-access/area denial threats are challenging DOD's ability to assure the delivery of fuel. As the ability to deliver energy is placed at risk, so too is the Department's ability to deploy and sustain expeditionary Marine forces around the globe.

What are your ideas for future capabilities that would enable an expeditionary Marine Corps through the assured delivery of energy to the warfighter?

Answer. Demand reduction and use of alternative and renewable energy sources may be useful to our ability to fight and win in the future. We will continually face rising costs in energy and depend on supply chains that will be contested. We are experimenting with electric and hybrid vehicles, as well as solar and hydrogen energy. These alternate energy sources must be sustainable in expeditionary environments. As an example, infrastructure challenges associated with charging electric vehicles, even at home station, are amplified in a deployed and austere operating environment. I am committed to continued experimentation of alternate power sources while ensuring warfighting capability remains the priority.

Question. What are your ideas for reducing the risks associated with the Corps's dependence on vulnerable supply lines?

Answer. It is absolutely true that one broken link in a linear supply chain can result in an untethered force. Our MAGTF is already designed to operate with a degree of self-sufficiency, although this is not sustainable indefinitely. We are adjusting our institutional mindset from reliance on a vulnerable supply chain toward sustaining the force with resilient supply webs that leverage all available logistics capabilities with our Navy, joint, coalition, and commercial industry partners. I support the investments already in progress to reduce demand at the point of need, push advanced manufacturing capability down to our tactical units to increase self-sufficiency, and building a Global Positioning Network that forward positions equipment, supplies, and theater sustainment.

INFORMATION OPERATIONS

Question. In January of this year, the Marine Corps established an Information Command under a Major General. This Information Command is intended to integrate all disciplines that the Marine Corps considers to be "information-related," including cyber, space, intelligence, and all aspects of information operations, such as Military Deception, Psychological Operations, Military Information Support Operations, and Electronic Warfare.

What is your understanding of how this Command is establishing or will establish units or teams that are responsible for providing integrated capabilities to support the information warfare needs of the combatant commands?

Answer. The Marine Corps Information Command (MCIC) provides unity of effort and serves as the operational linkage across five commands including: Marine Forces Cyberspace (MARFORCYBER), Marine Forces Space (MARFORSPACE), Joint Forces Headquarters Cyber Marines (JFHQ-C(M)) / Joint Task Force Ares (JTF-ARES), and the Service Cryptologic Component (SCC). The MCIC supports Combatant Commands and Fleet Marine Forces (FMF) through traditional Global / Cyber Force Management processes.

Question. What specific structures and processes are being put in place in this Command specifically to integrate across the elements of Information Warfare?

Answer. The MCIC staff is responsible for integrating, synchronizing, and enabling elements of Information Warfare (IW) leveraging all Information Related Capabilities (IRCs) in support of naval, joint, and combined campaigning. The MCIC

employs subject matter expertise from disciplines to include cyberspace operations, space, communications, special access programs (SAP) / special technical operations (STO), and information operations (i.e., MISO, MILDEC, fires, COMMSTRAT, EMSO, SIGMAN, civil affairs, etc).

Question. From what source, if any, does this Command receive common requirements for joint forces and joint training to support joint information operations?

Answer. The MCIC processes requirements through three established mechanisms to include the Global / Cyber Force Management and Military Requirements Alignment Processes (GFMAR, CFMAR, and MRAP). Service requirements and priorities are captured via GFM and Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) Deputy Commandant Plans, Policy, and Operations (DC, PP&O), force synchronization conference. SIGINT requirements are captured through established NSA/CSS processes. USCYBERCOM communicates additional requirements for assigned or allocated forces via the CFMAR process. The MCIC, and other associated commands, coordinate by with and through the MARFORs, sister services, assigned commands, interagency partners, and others to identify opportunities or requirements that support the Commander's responsibilities and functional area alignment.

CYBER

Question. The readiness of the Cyber Mission Forces assigned to U.S. Cyber Command is substantially below acceptable levels. This shortfall is due primarily to the lack of sufficient numbers of personnel in each of the services in three critical work roles that are especially demanding: tool developers, exploitation analysts, and interactive on-net operators.

What is your understanding of the causes for the Marine Corps' shortfalls in recruiting, training, and retaining personnel qualified for these work roles?

Answer. Retention issues have not impacted our force presentation for USCYBERCOM critical and pacing work roles to date.

Question. What is your understanding of the Marine Corps' plans to correct this shortfall?

Answer. The Marine Corp is committed to 100 percent assignment in the Cyber Mission Force and continues close coordination with USCYBERCOM to deliver the operational capacity required by GEN Nakasone and USCYBERCOM. We have instituted a series of accession and retention bonus along with establishing an "Active Duty Service Obligation for IONs". Our data continues to indicate that marines are staying in the Force and on target in cyberspace because they are committed to the mission.

Question. The mission of U.S. Cyber Command (CYBERCOM) is offensive and defense warfighting in the cyber domain. However, so far, General and Flag Officers selected to serve as Commander of Cyber Command have been intelligence specialists rather than line officers. If confirmed, you will be a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and an adviser to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense.

Do you think that CYBERCOM as a warfighting command could or should be led by an officer trained and experienced in commanding joint operations?

Answer. USCYBERCOM could be led by an officer trained and experienced in commanding joint operations, as long as the officer has significant intelligence experience and understands the US Intelligence Community (IC). Full-spectrum cyberspace operations are inextricably linked to intelligence. Cyberspace operations are executed by, with, and through the information environment and are fully informed by intelligence and often yield intelligence. Commander USCYBERCOM is a unique position in that it is also the Director of the National Security Agency (NSA) and therefore requires unique experiences and skillsets. Many previous operational achievements and successes in cyberspace and the information environment rest on the alignment of USCYBERCOM and NSA.

END STRENGTH

Question. The Marine Corps' Active Duty end strength authorization has fallen from 186,200 in fiscal year 2020 to 177,000 in fiscal year 2023. The President's Budget would cut an additional 4,700 marines for fiscal year 2024.

Do you believe Marine Corps' Active Duty end strength should continue to fall?

Answer. Current plans have end-strength remaining at 172,300 through fiscal year 2028 and increasing to a floor of 174,600 by fiscal year 2030 to achieve modernization initiatives. The Marine Corps intends to achieve this floor sooner if possible.

Question. Is the Marine Corps' current end strength sufficient to implement the 2022 NDS and execute the associated operational plans? If not, what end strength

do you believe is necessary to meet the demands placed on the Marine Corps by the 2022 NDS and associated operational plans?

Answer. Yes, the current end-strength of the Marine Corps is sufficient to implement the 2022 NDS, the associated operational plans, and the Global Force Management requirements. The Marine Corps fiscal year 2023 target end strength is 172,300, based on the impacts from COVID and our planned reduction to support modernization efforts. Current plans have end strength increasing to 174,600 by fiscal year 2030.

Question. If recruiting continues to be a challenge, how will you ensure the Marine Corps has sufficient personnel to support the 2022 NDS?

Answer. The Marine Corps' current plans have end strength increasing to 174,600 by fiscal year 2030. This will be accomplished in part by increased retention, which has been exceptional. The Marine Corps met its retention mission in fiscal year 2022 and will do so in fiscal year 2023 as well. We are grateful that, once an individual becomes a Marine, they want to remain a Marine. In keeping with the tenets of FD2030, the Marine Corps is retaining more of our highest performing marines especially within leadership and highly technical billets. This will prepare our forces to succeed on dispersed, complex, distributed, and high-technology future battlefields.

Question. What additional force shaping authorities and tools does the Marine Corps need, in your view?

Answer. I would ask that Congress continue to ensure the Marine Corps has the predictable funding for us to execute the flexible incentive and special pay authorities and non-monetary incentives to their greatest effect, particularly in critical, hard-to-fill specialties. If confirmed, I will be sure to come to you with any new statutory authorities that we may need.

MARINE RESERVE

Question. In your view, what is the appropriate relationship between the Active Marine Corps and the Marine Corps Reserve?

Answer. Historically, our Reserve component has supported the Active component and fought alongside them. Our Reserve component is an integral part of the Marine Corps Total Force. The ability of the Marine Corps to meet combatant commanders' requirements on a day-to-day basis, as well as respond to a major contingency, is absolutely linked to the readiness of our Marine Corps Reserve. Similarly, the Active and Reserve components must be viewed as having a dynamic, mutually supporting relationship, rather than a unidirectional support relationship from the Reserve force to the Active component.

Question. What is your vision for the roles and missions of the Marine Corps Reserve? If confirmed, what new objectives would you seek to achieve with respect to the Reserve's organization, force structure, and end strength?

Answer. Our Reserve Force will continue to serve in all domains, remaining ready to augment and reinforce our Active Force for both preplanned missions and national emergencies. We are continuously working to optimize the organization, structure, and end strength of our Reserves to meet mission requirements, including increasing the permeability of service from Active component to Reserve component, and back, as part of our Talent Management 2030 initiative. The right Marine for a specific job should not be constrained simply because the task is normally associated with an Active or Reserve component billet. We must become comfortable with processes that enable us to pair the right marines, with the right talent, to the right billets.

Question. Are you concerned that continued reliance on the Reserve components to execute operational missions—both at home and around the globe—is adversely affecting the Marine Corp Reserve's ability to meet its recruiting and retention missions? Why or why not?

Answer. Our citizens join the Marine Corps for a reason. They want to serve. Our Reserve Force is no different. They seek meaningful opportunities to practice their profession. If anything, mission tasks to our Reserve helps to boost recruiting as our Reserve marines

Question. In your view, does the Marine Corps Reserve serve as an operational Reserve, a strategic Reserve, or both? In light of your answer, should the Marine Corps Reserve be supported by improved equipment, increased training, and higher levels of overall resourcing for readiness going forward?

Answer. Both. As a Total Force, the Marine Corps strives to seamlessly integrate the Reserve component with our Active component forces. We consistently plan and budget for new equipment and training, seeking to maximize AC-RC interoperability and overall readiness at every opportunity. We must continue to provide our Re-

serve component the high-quality training opportunities that are afforded our Active component to ensure the Total Force is uniformly prepared to respond to crisis or conflict. At the same time, we remain mindful of the fact that the demands of our Reserves must be balanced so as not to unreasonably disrupt civilian occupations.

Question. Do you expect to meet prior service accession goals for the Marine Corps Reserve this fiscal year? Why or why not?

Answer. Yes. The Marine Corps is on pace to meet this fiscal year's Reserve component prior service recruiting accession requirement in each category for both officer and enlisted accessions.

Question. What is your understanding and view of the Office of the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness proposal for comprehensive Reserve Component Duty Status Reform?

Answer. I fully support the legislation proposed to update and simplify Reserve component duty statuses. It is essential to producing real efficiencies and reducing unnecessary complexity. The measure would reduce the number of duty statuses and ensure RC Marines activated under different authorities are entitled to the same benefits. This will increase lethality and readiness of our Total Force.

Question. Does the Marine Corps have the personnel and pay information technology systems required to implement effectively this Reserve Component Duty Status Reform proposal, if enacted in law?

Answer. Yes, the Marine Corps is well-equipped to implement the Reserve Component Duty Status Reform changes. The Marine Corps Total Force System (MCTFS) is a mature, fully integrated pay and personnel system that allows our Reserve members to seamlessly transition between components. It already handles both Active and Reserve component pay and entitlements, allowing reservists to transition between duties statuses and receive the pay and entitlements they deserve in a timely and accurate fashion.

RECRUITING AND RETENTION

Question. The National Defense Strategy Commission asserted unequivocally that the most critical resource required to produce a highly capable military is highly capable people, in the quantity required, willing to serve. Yet, DOD studies indicate that only about 23 percent of today's youth population is eligible for military service, a decrease of 6 percentage points in the last 5 years. Further, only a fraction of those who meet military accession standards are interested in serving.

As rates of physical inactivity among American youth continue to rise, what in your view, if anything, could the Marine Corps do to prepare potential recruits for military service, and specifically service in the Marine Corps?

Answer. The Marine Corps has always prepared American youth for success after they are contracted and enter the Delayed Entry Program. Beyond that, the best way to prepare the youth of America for service is a national effort by all government and educational leaders. The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports is a great example of a way to combat the growing youth obesity epidemic.

Question. What do you consider to be the key to your future success, if confirmed, in recruiting the highest caliber American youth for service in the Marine Corps?

Answer. The key has and will always be the marines and the standards we uphold. The Marine Corps' recruiting force must also be manned and resourced to meet the future needs of the Corps. As population and technologies shift, we must be agile in bringing the story of the Marine Corps—and the opportunities we offer—to the young men and women of America.

Question. What do you consider to be key to your future success, if confirmed, in retaining the best qualified personnel for continued service in positions of greater responsibility and leadership in the Marine Corps?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to expand retention of our highest-performing, most committed, and talented marines. We have been working hard to provide improved predictability, transparency, and certainty to our marines and their families while preserving career development and our ethos and culture of the most responsive and expeditionary fighting force in the world. Another key to retention success is focus on and funding for our Marine & Family Programs.

Question. In your view, do current accessions standards—particularly DOD-wide criteria for tier-one recruits—accurately predict recruit attrition and/or future success in the Marine Corps?

Answer. Current accessions standards for tier-one recruits have been reliable predictors of recruit attrition and future success in the Corps. In concert with DOD and the other services, we continue to explore evaluation methods to expand a more holistic view of talent as indicators of potential.

Question. Given the historically low numbers for eligibility to serve, do you believe a reassessment of accessions standards is in order? If so, what accessions standards in your view are outdated or worthy of review?

Answer. Earning the title Marine will always be challenging, but I agree that accession standards must continuously be reviewed. Given the State of the physical and mental health of the youth of America, I look forward to working with you and recruiting stakeholders to ensure we have it right.

Question. In your view, does the Marine Corps have the necessary authorities to recruit and retain personnel with critical skills, including cyber?

Answer. Yes. The Marine Corps appreciates all the authorities we have received to support improved recruiting and overall talent management. We are open to additional initiatives to further improve school access. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you to ensure we continue to retain our top marines, especially those requiring critical skills.

Question. What monetary and non-monetary incentives are the Marine Corps employing in an effort to retain Marine aviators? Which incentives or combinations thereof have proven most effective?

Answer. Aviation retention is a challenge that must be viewed holistically and cannot be solved by bonuses alone. Availability of flight hours, opportunities to train and execute missions, stability in assignments, and other non-monetary factors are important. It is a challenge to compete with the monetary compensation packages and family stability offered by commercial airlines who seem to be increasingly aggressive in recruitment of qualified aviators. If confirmed, I will work with the other services, DoD, and Congress to study ways to ensure we have a sufficient volume of skilled Marine Corps aviators.

Question. Because the “all-Volunteer” military depends on a constant flow of volunteers each year, as the number of eligible and service-propensed American youth declines, it will become increasingly difficult to meet military needs.

Do you agree with the premise that the shortage in the number of American youth eligible and interested in serving in the Armed Forces poses a threat to national security?

Answer. Absolutely. The significant decline in propensity and eligibility has concerned the Marine Corps for years. Our country is replete with talent and, if confirmed, I commit myself to engaging national leadership to revitalize the value of service to our American youth. Access to high schools, community colleges, and universities is also imperative to reach the highest caliber men and women of our country. Addressing these issues is of the utmost importance, and I would look forward to being part of that effort.

Question. What is the role of “influencers”—parents, grandparents, teachers, coaches, and clergy to whom a young person turns for advice—in a young person’s decision to join, or not to join the Marine Corps?

Answer. The role of influencers is immeasurable. Today, the youth of America exist in an environment where influence is inexpensive and readily available. Through social media and persistent connectivity, the youth of today are constantly bombarded with narratives of service, many of which are negative and erroneous. The traditional influencers—family, teachers, coaches, and government leaders—are more important today than ever.

Question. Has the integrated DOD recruiting campaign, Their Success Tomorrow Begins With Your Support Today, been successful in increasing the willingness of youth or their influencers to consider service in the Marine Corps?

Answer. While we do not have data on the specific impact to the Marine Corps, any support from the government and DOD to reinforce value of service to influencers is vital and appreciated. We know that parents and other influencers play an important role in guiding youth views on military service. I believe the DOD campaign raises overall awareness of the military as an option while allowing each service the opportunity to differentiate unique missions and cultures.

MILITARY COMPENSATION

Question. The Department of Defense has traditionally assessed the competitiveness of military pay by comparing Regular Military Compensation against salaries earned by a comparable civilian demographic.

Do you agree that the primary purpose of a competitive military pay and benefits package is to recruit and retain a military of sufficient size and quality to meet the objectives of the 2022 NDS?

Answer. Yes. Fair compensation is a readiness issue and improves quality of life and retention. We are actively participating in the DOD’s 13th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, to make sure our marines are being adequately com-

compensated for their service. If confirmed, I will look forward to the results and take all appropriate actions on the recommendations.

Question. What is your assessment of the adequacy of the current military pay package in achieving this goal—particularly given the ever-tightening recruiting market?

Answer. The dominant motivation to earn and keep the title Marine is the sense of purpose and pride that marines have in service to the Nation. With that said, we know that compensation is a dinner table issue for many families and competitive pay and compensation are essential to our ability to recruit, retain, and provide for the overall quality of life for our marines and their families. We are actively participating in the DOD's 13th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, to make sure our marines are being adequately compensated for their service. It is important we carefully consider the total compensation package pay, allowances, bonuses, housing, healthcare, tax advantages, Thrift Savings Plans, etc. If confirmed, I will look forward to the results and take all appropriate actions on the recommendations.

Question. Do you believe the largely "one-size-fits-all" model for military pay adequately rewards individuals for their specialized skills and provides an appropriate incentive to scientists, engineers, and members of other high-value professions to access into the military?

Answer. Congress has given us many flexible incentive and special pay authorities and non-monetary incentives to assist with filling the critical, hard to fill specialties that we need. Authorities such as special pays and incentives are undeniably factors in retention decisions. They are the most direct way we can influence the decision that help shape our force. Studies and our own anecdotal experience support the belief that special and incentive pays are highly effective when combined with a strong sense of purpose, individual agency, challenging opportunities for growth, quality of life for Marine families, and competitive pay. We are thankful that Congress has given us broad and flexible authorities—and funded these authorities—so that we can fine tune our incentives to the skills and occupations that we need to retain.

Question. What changes, if any, would you recommend to the current military pay and benefits package?

Answer. I believe the overall compensation and benefit package is competitive. However, we are actively participating in the DOD's 13th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, to make sure our marines are being adequately compensated for their service. If confirmed, I will look forward to the results and take all appropriate actions on the recommendations.

Question. What specific recommendations do you have for controlling the rising cost of military personnel?

Answer. Controlling the rising costs of personnel is a challenge. However, we must always keep faith with our marines. As a Nation, we are asking our service members to perform more complex tasks on more dynamic and fast-paced battlefields with more complicated technologies than at any time in human history. In an American society where dual-income, dual-career households have become the norm, and perhaps a necessity, Marines spouses are frequently disrupted in their career progression and earning potential by the instability of the military career. We are actively participating in the DOD's 13th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, to make sure our marines are being adequately compensated for their service. If confirmed, I will look forward to the results and take all appropriate actions on the recommendations.

SERVICE OF TRANSGENDER PERSONS

Question. Each of the Service Chiefs has testified before this Committee that in their experience, the service of transgender individuals in their preferred gender has had no negative impact on unit or overall military readiness.

In your experience, has the service of transgender individuals in their preferred gender had any negative impact on unit or overall military readiness?

Answer. No. I am not aware of any negative impact on readiness.

Question. In your view, what would be the impact on readiness of requiring the separation of all transgender soldiers currently serving in the military? Please support any assertions with non-anecdotal data.

Answer. We do not want to lose any high performing marines. We do not know the total number of transgender marines in the Marine Corps, but we believe the number is small.

Question. How many marines have sought and been approved for an "in-service transition" since 2021?

Answer. In accordance with DOD policy, we do not track medical requests for “in-service transition”.

Question. How many transgender persons have enlisted or commissioned into the Marine Corps since 2021?

Answer. In accordance with DOD policy, we do not track gender marker changes.

Question. How many marines have changed their gender marker in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) since 2021?

Answer. In accordance with DOD policy, we do not track gender marker changes.

Question. How many marines have been referred to the disability evaluation system due to complications related to an in-service gender transition since 2021?

Answer. The Department of Navy (BUMED) manages the criteria for referral to the disability evaluation system. If confirmed, I would be happy to discuss this with BUMED and followup.

MILITARY QUALITY OF LIFE

Question. The Committee remains concerned about the sustainment of key quality of life programs for military families, such as family advocacy and parenting skills programs; child care; spouse education and employment support; health care; and morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) services, including Commissary and Military Exchange stores.

If confirmed, what quality of life and MWR programs would you consider a priority?

Answer. The Commandant has testified that the highest quality of life priorities are health care, housing, and childcare. The Marine Corps is committed to caring for our marines and their families and always striving to improve their quality of life. If confirmed, I will remain committed to ensuring that these and other quality of life programs continue to be a priority.

Question. How would you work across the Marine Corp and with Military Service Organizations and Congress, to sustain and enrich high-value quality of life and MWR programs for marines and their families?

Answer. If confirmed, I would continue our goal of creating a seamless system of care with multiple stakeholders—both internal and external to the Marine Corps, to include service organizations, Congress, DOD, other services, and the public/private sector. Through these partnerships, we can expand our reach and enhance the programs and services our marines and families most need.

FAMILY READINESS AND SUPPORT

Question. What do you consider to be the most important family readiness issues for marines and their families?

Answer. As we mature our force and seek to retain more marines every year, supporting marines and families is critical to recruit and retain the right marines. We view family readiness through the perspective of each individual Marine and that Marine’s family; the life events that they will experience together, the challenges they will face together, and the elements critical to the quality of life for any family. Similarly, I understand that no two families are the same, that they will not have the same needs or experiences and that their needs may change as their family’s circumstances change. The Marine Corps must possess a system capable of accommodating the broadest range of needs that may exist. However, certain commonalities will no doubt exist in the needs of families writ large. Safe and sufficient housing, access to childcare, continuity of childcare arrangements, access to high quality medical services and specialty care, spousal employment opportunities, and co-location of dual-military families are all key issues impacting family readiness.

Three of the Marine Corps’ primary family readiness priorities are childcare, spouse employment, and PCS flexibility. Our warfighting readiness is dependent on a Marine’s support structure at home and in their communities. I recognize the importance of Marine and family stability and support it as a major line-of-effort for successfully achieving our talent management goals. If confirmed, I will seek to expand high-quality childcare, improve spouse employment opportunities, and increase PCS flexibility.

Question. If confirmed, how would you ensure that the family readiness issues you identified are properly addressed and adequately resourced?

Answer. If confirmed, I will aim to ensure Marine commands have the tools required to fully inform their marines of the opportunities that exist. Further, I will work with the Department of the Navy to ensure that childcare and medical facilities are adequately resourced, both through military construction and hiring and retaining a sufficient workforce to operate these facilities. If confirmed, I will examine personnel assignment processes to better facilitate both the continuity of childcare

arrangements, housing, and spousal employment that are currently affected by the current 36 month Permanent Change of Station (PCS) cycle. Outside the contiguous United States (OCONUS) moves are challenging for many families in all the above categories, and the process to clear a family who volunteers for a OCONUS move is currently lengthy and burdensome. If confirmed, I will examine the incentives for OCONUS moves, the process for moving a family to an OCONUS location, and the support that is available overseas to ensure our Marine families have what they need from the initial receipt of orders through their return to the United States.

Ensuring that our marines and their families understand the full spectrum of our family readiness capabilities and resources and recognize them as part of the Force Preservation construct is critical. If confirmed, I will work to increase utilization of these capabilities to maintain a Marine's readiness, resiliency, and quality of life, balanced with the other needs of the Marine Corps.

Question. If confirmed, how would you ensure that support related to mobilization, deployment, and family readiness is provided to Marine Corps Reserve families, as well as to Active duty Marine families who do not reside near a military installation?

Answer. If confirmed, I will remain committed to ensuring quality of life support programs are designed to effectively assist all marines and their families, whether they are deployed, geographically isolated, or on the home front. Face-to-face and virtual learning and support opportunities will continue to be offered along with toll-free telephone and internet resources. Our family readiness programs will continue to be flexible and constantly adjusting to meet the needs of our geographically dispersed marines and their families.

Question. The Committee often hears that Active duty families have difficulty obtaining child care on base and that there are thousands of military families on waitlists to receive infant care.

If confirmed, what specifically would you do to provide Marine Corps families with accessible, high-quality childcare, at an appropriate cost?

Answer. Our primary childcare challenges are staffing related. To mitigate these challenges, we have utilized non-competitive childcare employee transfers, increased employee salaries, and provided CDC employees with childcare discounts. If confirmed, I will continue to look for additional solutions, as well as consider recommendations from the DOD Child Development Program Recruitment, Retention and Compensation Task Force.

SUPPORT FOR MILITARY FAMILIES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Question. If confirmed, how would you ensure that a Marine with a special needs family member is relocated only to a new duty station at which the medical and educational services required by that family member are available?

Answer. Every Marine enrolled in EFMP receives a careful review of their proposed PCS orders to ensure the location meets the medical and educational needs of family members. EFMP continues to excel in its mission to ensure marines are assigned to duty stations where the required medical services and educational support are available for their family members' needs.

Question. If confirmed, how would you ensure effective administration of the exceptional family member program (EFMP), balancing the needs of the Marine Corps, the needs of exceptional family members, and the desires of both marines and their dependents to have a rewarding experience in the Marine Corps?

Answer. The Marine Corps EFMP ensures continued effectiveness by remaining a 'high touch' person-to-person program with quarterly engagement with every enrolled family. This allows the staff to build meaningful relationships with families to focus our efforts on proactive preventive support activities. Our specialized attorneys provide free legal counsel and representation to EFMP families, as they seek State and Federal disability-related benefits to which they are entitled. Our 'Warm Hand Off' process that assists EFMP families before, during and after a PCS. If confirmed, I will prioritize the EFMP.

Question. If confirmed, what new initiatives might you suggest for improving the ability of marines with a special needs family member to obtain the medical services and support their family member requires?

Answer. The Marine Corps EFMP has a strong record of service to our marines and families. To continue this success, we must prioritize funding, training, and support for our EFMP staff and installation commands. If confirmed, I would recommend continued development of Defense Health Agency medical case management for highly impacted EFMP families prior to a PCS. This will ensure these families have a dedicated medical case manager to help them transition their medical care within and across TRICARE Regions.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Question. On May 17, 2022, Secretary Austin established the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee (SPRIRC) to conduct a comprehensive review of clinical and non-clinical suicide prevention and response programs across the force.

If confirmed, what specific role and tasks would you establish for the Marine Corps in implementing the SPRIRC's recommendations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will remain focused on trying to reduce the number of suicides. The Marine Corps is working with the Office of the Secretary of Defense to develop SPRIRC implementation plans and will take swift action once guidance is issued.

Question. If confirmed, specifically what would you do to ensure that sufficient suicide prevention and mental health resources are available to deployed marines, as well as to marines and their families at home station?

Answer. The Marine Corps will continue to provide mental and behavioral health resources to marines deployed or forward based, and to family members in need at home station locations through our vast network of prevention stakeholders and workforce. The current provider shortage is a challenge. If confirmed, I will advocate for additional providers to meet the needs of marines and families. I will also continue to ensure that our Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) marines are trained to identify those within their ranks who may be demonstrating signs of distress. For marines not near an installation, the Marine Corps has partnerships with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Guard Bureau to expand marines' access to counseling and other resources.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Question. Despite significant efforts by the Military Services over the past decade to enhance their prevention of, and response to sexual assaults, including measures to care for victims and hold assailants accountable, the current data continues to show increasing prevalence of sexual assault and unwanted sexual conduct, primarily for female service members aged 17 to 24. These findings echo reports this year of increases in the prevalence of sexual harassment and assault at the Military Service Academies.

Do you believe the policies, programs, and resources that the Department of the Navy and the Marine Corps have put in place to prevent and respond to sexual assault, and to protect sailors and marines who report sexual assault from retaliation, are working? If not, what else must be done?

Answer. I appreciate the recent IRC recommendations and increased resourcing for sexual assault prevention and response. The Marine Corps supports these efforts and is fully engaged in implementing the IRC recommendations. I believe they will improve prevention and response, so we ask for time to implement these new requirements. The Marine Corps will remain steadfast in holding perpetrators accountable for their crimes and actions; assisting victims with the care they need; and ensuring commanders and senior enlisted are responsible for the climate of their unit. If confirmed, I will remain committed to preventing incidents of sexual assault.

Question. The most recent report on the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment at the Military Service Academies revealed disturbing levels of sexual harassment in particular, placing the Service Academies among the poorest performing military units in incidents of harassment, suggesting an environment conducive to sexual assault and other misconduct. What is your reaction to this report, and what actions would you propose to reduce the prevalence of sexual harassment at the Service Academies?

Answer. I defer to the Department of Navy on sexual assault prevention and response at the Academy. However, I am sure many of the actions needed to combat sexual assault are similar. I appreciate the recent IRC recommendations and increased resourcing for sexual assault prevention and response. The Marine Corps supports these efforts and is fully engaged in implementing the IRC recommendations. Further, the Marine Corps will continue to send only the highest caliber officers to the United States Naval Academy to ensure they are part of a positive command climate.

Question. If confirmed, what specific role would you establish for yourself in preventing sexual harassment in the Marine Corps, including within the civilian workforce?

Answer. Just as unit commanders set priorities and serve as personal examples within their units, so does the Commandant of the Marine Corps for all marines and civilian marines. If confirmed, I will continue to foster a culture of account-

ability and trust, and to ensure the Marine Corps provides the support and care for those in need. I remain committed to taking every report seriously while promoting trust in the chain of command. This must remain a priority with constant vigilance and continuing education for marines of all ranks across our Corps.

Question. Do you perceive that you need additional authorities from Congress to improve the Marine Corps programs to prevent sexual harassment and sexual assault?

Answer. The Marine Corps is not seeking additional authorities at this time. If confirmed, I will notify Congress if I believe we need new statutory authorities.

MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE

Question. If confirmed, what actions would you take to ensure that sufficient mental and behavioral health resources are available to deployed and forward-based marines, as well as to marines and families at home station locations?

Answer. In keeping with the response from question 148, the Marine Corps will continue to provide mental and behavioral health resources to marines deployed or forward based, and to marines and families at home station locations through our vast network of prevention stakeholders and workforce. The current provider shortage is a challenge. If confirmed, I will advocate for additional providers to meet the needs of marines and families. I will also continue to ensure that our Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) marines are trained to identify those within their ranks who may be demonstrating signs of distress. For marines not near an installation, the Marine Corps has partnerships with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Guard Bureau to expand marines' access to counseling and other resources.

Question. If confirmed, what specifically would you do to ensure that sufficient mental and behavioral health resources are available to Reserve Component Marines and their families who do not reside near a military base?

Answer. The Marine Corps ensures that mental and behavioral health resources are available to Reserve marines and their families who do not reside near a military base. Our Psychological Health Outreach, Military OneSource, Vet Center, and Yellow Ribbon Programs are all available to Reservists and provide support throughout activation cycles and deployments. The Marine Corps also has partnerships with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Guard Bureau to expand marines' access to counseling and other resources. If confirmed, I will ensure these services remain.

Question. The Marine Corps has made progress in reducing the stigma associated with help-seeking behaviors, but some marines remain concerned that their military careers will be adversely affected should their chains of command become aware that they are seeking mental or behavioral health care. At the same time, the Marine Corps chain of command has a legitimate need to be aware of physical and mental health conditions that may affect the readiness of the marines under their command.

In your view, does the Marine Corps effectively bridge the gap between a servicemember's desire for confidentiality and the chain of command's legitimate need to know about matters that may affect individual service member and the unit readiness?

Answer. Protecting a servicemember's confidentiality is of utmost importance to the Marine Corps and the Marine Corps will ensure that only those with a need to know about a Marine's private matters will be informed. This helps ensure marines seek the help they need. We want marines to seek help for their mental and behavioral health—just as if they would for a physical injury. Get help, get treated, and get back in the fight.

Question. In your view, do non-medical counseling services provided by DOD Military Family Life Counselors have a role in promoting the readiness of marines and their families?

Answer. Yes. DOD Military Family Life Counselors and other non-medical counseling services are an important part of the continuum of care and services that increase readiness and resiliency in the Force. Additionally, we continue to support Military OneSource which provides confidential, non-medical counseling, resources and support to our marines and their families anywhere in the world.

LEGAL SERVICES

Question. How are responsibilities for legal services allocated between the Staff Judge Advocate to the Commandant and the Counsel for the Commandant?

Answer. The Staff Judge Advocate to the Commandant (SJA to CMC) and the Counsel for the Commandant (CL) have two distinctive roles. Title 10, United States

Code, section 8046 dictates the Staff Judge Advocate to the Commandant's (SJA to CMC) responsibilities, while Department and Service regulations set forth the Counsel for the Commandant's (CL) duties.

By law, like the Service Judge Advocates General, the SJA to CMC is the Commandant's legal advisor on all matters arising within the Marine Corps and from the Commandant's Joint Chiefs of Staff membership. The SJA to CMC advises the Commandant and Headquarters, Marine Corps on any matter directed, or on any matter the SJA to CMC determines should be brought to the Commandant's attention. The SJA to CMC assists the Commandant in executing Title 10 responsibilities to organize, train, and equip legal support essential to an expeditionary force.

CL is part of the Office of the General Counsel of the Navy. CL advises on acquisition law; arms control and international arms regulation; business and commercial law; real and personal property law; civilian personnel and labor law; fiscal law; environmental law; occupational safety and health law; intellectual property law; Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act law; some legislation; and such other areas as may be assigned to support the Navy and Marine Corps.

SJA to CMC and CL share intelligence law and oversight of intelligence activities, intelligence-related activities, special access programs, sensitive activities, ethics and standards of conduct, and cyber law.

Question. How would you modify the allocation of these responsibilities, if confirmed?

Answer. No modification of responsibilities is necessary.

Question. Who has responsibility for providing legal advice on military justice matters in the Marine Corps?

Answer. The SJA to CMC, exclusively. This is by statute: 10 U.S.C. 8046. Further, like the Service Judge Advocates General, 10 U.S.C. 806 requires the SJA to CMC to make frequent inspections in the field in supervision of the administration of military justice. Marine judge advocates advising Commanders at all levels regarding military justice do so under the supervision of the SJA to CMC. The SJA to CMC is also exclusively responsible for qualifying Special Trial Counsel for certain types of offenses (10 USC 824a) and serving on the Joint Service Committee on Military Justice (DoDI 5500.17).

Question. What is the role, if any, of the Counsel for the Commandant in making duty assignments for Marine Corps judge advocates?

Answer. None. Statutory responsibility over the assignment of Marine Corps judge advocates rests with the Commandant, who exercises that authority through Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, with the advice of SJA to CMC.

Question. What is your view of the need for the Staff Judge Advocate to the Commandant to provide independent legal advice to the Commandant of the Marine Corps?

Indispensable. A Commandant's access to independent legal advice from the SJA to CMC is essential to the Marine Corps. It is so important that 10 U.S.C. 8046 prohibits any interference with that advice by any officer or employee within of DOD.

Question. What is your view of the responsibility of Marine Corps judge advocates to provide independent legal advice to Marine Corps commanders?

Answer. Independent legal advice by Marine Corps judge advocates is as important to commanders as it is to the Commandant—it is indispensable and protected by statute (10 USC 8046). Marine Corps doctrine provides "The role of a judge advocate within a staff is to help generate and maintain tempo for a Commander through the application of timely, correct, and complete legal advice." Independent legal advice helps our Commanders make the best decisions possible in the fastest time possible.

OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM REFORMS

Question. The John S. McCain NDAA for fiscal year 2019 contained several provisions to modernize the officer personnel management system. These reforms were designed to align officer career management with the priorities outlined in the 2018 NDS. How is the Marine Corps implementing these authorities today and to what effect?

Answer. I believe the provisions within the 2019 NDAA have benefited the Marine Corps significantly, and the Marine Corps has implemented many of these authorities in Talent Management 2030. Options such as promotion opt-out and career intermission have positively contributed to mid-career retention. The Marine Corps plans to enact pilot programs this year for lateral entry and increased Active-to-Reserve and Reserve-to-Active permeability.

Question. If confirmed, how would you lead the Marine Corps in further leveraging these new authorities?

Answer. We appreciate the authorities given to us by Congress in fiscal year 2019 and have implemented many of them, most recently as part of Talent Management 2030. We believe that promotion opt out and career intermission have positively contributed to mid-career retention. We have laid the foundations and are enacting pilot programs this year for lateral entry and increased Active-to-Reserve and Reserve-to-Active permeability. If confirmed, I will continue to expand and accelerate these efforts and will not hesitate to ask for assistance from this Committee when required.

Question. Are there other authorities that the Marine Corps needs in order to modernize the management of its officer personnel?

Answer. Not at this time.

JOINT OFFICER MANAGEMENT

Question. The NDAA for fiscal year 2017 modified the Joint Qualified Officer (JQO) system established by the Goldwater-Nichols Act in two significant ways. First, it broadened the statutory definition of “joint matters” to expand the types of positions for which an officer can receive joint duty credit. Further, it reduced from 3 years to two the minimum tour length required for joint duty credit. What is your assessment of the effectiveness of the fiscal year 2017 modifications to the JQO system?

Answer. The fiscal year 2017 modifications to the JQO system and current updates have been effective and allow for greater flexibility in the assignments process. Greater assignment flexibility facilitates optimal career progression like key billets in grade, broadening PME, and command assignments. Additionally, the flexibility enables the fulfillment of service requirements while fully supporting the joint force.

Question. In your view, are the requirements associated with becoming a JQO, and the link between attaining joint qualification and eligibility for promotion to Flag officer rank, consistent with the operational and professional demands of Marine Corps officers?

Answer. Yes. We believe that current JQO requirements are well-aligned with what it takes to be an effective officer in the Marine Corps. Lifelong career development of our officers is essential to ensuring that officers serving as general and flag officers have the requisite experience and education in joint matters. Joint warfighting experience and expertise is a key factor increasing lethality and readiness.

Question. In your view, what additional modifications, if any, to JQO prerequisites are necessary to ensure that Marine Corps officers are able to attain both meaningful joint and Corps-specific leadership experience and adequate professional development?

Answer. I believe that access to JPME-II officer education opportunities is vital to support joint education requirements and ensuring the Marine Corps maximizes the number of officers designated as joint qualified. I do not have any additional modifications of the JQO prerequisites to recommend at this time.

PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION

Question. The 2022 NDS asserts that Professional Military Education (PME) curricula should be refocused to foster critical thinking and analytical skills, fluency in critical languages, and integration of insights from the social and behavioral sciences.

If confirmed, what actions would you take to update the Marine Corps’ PME system to ensure that it fosters the skills highlighted in the NDS to develop a cadre of strategic thinkers and planners with both the intellectual and military leadership acumen to merit promotion to General Officer?

Answer. We have already shifted both officer and enlisted PME to an outcomes-based education model to ensure that graduates possess the critical and creative thinking skills, decisiveness, and warfighting acumen needed to win in today’s complex global environment. Programs such as the School of Advanced Warfighting and the Commandant’s Doctor of Philosophy program, which select officers who have demonstrated the ability for strategic thinking and planning, directly contribute to the cadre of warrior scholars able to serve the Nation now and in the future as General Officers. Additionally, the Marine Corps recently established the Strategist Management program, which focuses on aligning officers with specialized PME to utilization tours that are well suited to their advanced education in strategy application. If confirmed, I would expand on the initiatives in Training and Education

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to advance the integration of emerging technology within the Marine Corps' training and educational institutions as an enduring priority. We are in the process of hiring talent to support expanded curriculum in the areas of emerging technology and cyber and have already begun to integrate these topics, along with space, into both officer and enlisted PME curricula. While raising overall cognizance in these areas, the Marine Corps will continue to partner with the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), recognized as a premier STEM school, to produce officers and enlisted marines who are trained for, then fill specific technical billets. NPS is the main provider for technical graduate programs for the Marine Corps, including the Service's technical PhD program, which produces PhDs annually in areas like Operations Service's technical PhD program, which produces PhDs annually in areas like Operations Service's technical PhD program, which produces PhDs annually in areas like Operations Service's technical PhD program, which produces PhDs annually in areas like Operations Service's technical PhD program, which produces PhDs annually in areas like Operations

Answer. With the exponential advances in artificial intelligence and unmanned systems, there is a requirement to develop proficiency in the employment of software and automation in warfighting. While we train for speed and accuracy, we educate for creativity and judgment. We have only begun to scratch the surface of employing AI, whether it be in autonomous weapons systems, developing plans, or adapting cross-domain kill-webs. To that end, we are in the process of hiring an Emerging Technology Chair to infuse relevant trends into PME as they affect our application of technology in a complex and evolving global space.

Question. DOD is the Federal Government's largest employer of civilian personnel. The vast majority of DOD civilian personnel policies comport with requirements set forth in title 5 of the U.S. Code, and corresponding regulations under the purview of the Office of Personnel Management. Over many years, the annual defense bill has included numerous extraordinary hiring and management authorities applicable to specific segments of the DOD civilian workforces.

Answer. One of our greatest challenges is the time to hire new employees. Delays in hiring can cause us to lose talent to the private sector, who can hire faster than we can. We thank Congress for the direct hiring authorities you have provided us; they are making a positive difference in recruiting talent.

Yes. I believe there are adequate authorities to address civilian employees whose performance is not acceptable or who engage in misconduct. I also believe that Marine Corps civilian and military supervisors are provided training to take appropriate action in these situations. However, because these situations can often be complex, it is important to look for ways to improve training to help us adequately manage these situations. If confirmed, I would like to work with you on possible ways to improve this.

CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

Question. In order to exercise legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress receive timely testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information from the executive branch.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to appear and testify before this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to provide this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information, as may be requested of you, and to do so in a timely manner? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to consult with this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to keep this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this Committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this Committee? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, Federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this Committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JACK REED

AUDIT

1. Senator REED. General Smith, why is it important for the Marine Corps to achieve a clean audit opinion?

General SMITH. We owe the U.S. taxpayer and our Congress the ability to see and understand the pathway of how, and on what, every dollar we are given is spent. Achieving a clean audit opinion will demonstrate that we are spending our financial resources as intended, expenditures are authorized appropriately, critical needs are being met in a timely manner, and that we are keeping the receipts so that we can balance the checkbook at the end of each month. Accountability has always been a core value in the Marine Corps, but the audit is helping to shape what we do and how we do it to enable increased visibility and transparency for our leaders. These improvements will help us to make faster and smarter decisions in an environment that is increasingly time and resource constrained.

2. Senator REED. General Smith, what steps has the Marine Corps taken to evaluate unit readiness and commander performance based on audit results?

General SMITH. Commanders have always been held accountable for the readiness of their equipment and marines. Commands are inspected on their training, administration, financial management, maintenance, supply, and other areas that measure a unit's readiness. The results of these inspections, along with other metrics, contribute to the evaluation of a unit, and its commander. Audit results are now another measure that can be used to evaluate a unit's readiness. Audit results, whether they be good or bad, inform us how we can do our jobs better, quicker, and more efficiently. One of the areas of audit that has received intense focus has been the accountability of our military equipment, ammunition, gear, and real property. The Marine Corps has received very positive audit results in this area. These results demonstrate that the work our marines do every day to maintain and ensure accountability of our property is valuable for both combat readiness and good financial stewardship.

COST ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM EVALUATION

3. Senator REED. General Smith, the Office of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE) was established in the 2009 Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform Act to reintroduce an independent cost estimation capability to both supplement, as well as provide analytic oversight, for the Service cost estimation communities. Do you think that overall the Department of Defense (DOD) cost estimates have improved since 2009, including by providing help to the Service cost estimation shops to improve their analyses?

General SMITH. As a result of the Weapons System Acquisition Reform Act, cost estimation within the DOD has improved. For example, the latest edition of the Cost Guide Book in 2020 provides the detailed timeline and process for developing the Independent Cost Estimate (ICE) for Major Defense Acquisition Programs (MDAPs). CAPE's statutory function to provide the ICE for MDAPs acts as a forcing function for the Services to ensure their estimates have multiple reviews prior to committing a significant amount of resources to an acquisition program as well as to ensure the program will be fully funded in the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP).

4. Senator REED. General Smith, could you provide some examples where CAPE has supported Marine Corps analyses, and what the outcome was as a result of that support?

General SMITH. During the deliberative budget process CAPE has supported cross service collaboration and information sharing which has led to some optimal program decisions. For example, CAPE's analysis of the MQ-9 program identified an opportunity for cost avoidance by transferring platforms from the Air Force, that were planned for divestment, to the Marine Corps to support a need for similar capability. CAPE's analysis resulted in \$170 million cost avoidance to the Department which, in turn, was reinvested in other Force Design programs and readiness.

Additionally, during the deliberative budget process, Marine Corps collaboration with CAPE analysts regarding classified and special access programs resulted in \$1 billion increase to the planned investment in those programs. This increased investment resulted from CAPE's assessment of the positive value of the proposed capabilities to the joint force and the need to accelerate the development of the capabilities against the pacing threat.

5. Senator REED. General Smith, in what ways do you think CAPE could improve their ability to support the Department, as well as the Military Services?

General SMITH. Marine Corps analysts work with CAPE analysts on a daily basis. CAPE's team of analysts supplements and supports our service analysis through collaboration, information sharing, and independent cost estimates. In particular, CAPE's review of service and program office assumptions on the cost, schedule, and performance of Major Defense Acquisition Programs through evidence-based analysis can lead to refined cost estimates and more accurate programming and budgeting decisions. The most valuable aspect of an independent cost analysis is true independence and disciplined adherence to data-based analysis in examining service and joint requirements. This is where CAPE provides the most value to the Title 10 responsibilities of the Service Chief and the Joint Force.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOE MANCHIN III

LESSONS LEARNED IN UKRAINE

6. Senator MANCHIN. General Smith, I very much appreciated our conversation yesterday in my office. One of the topics we discussed was the justification of our support to Ukraine due to the lessons we're learning, and fulfilling our duty as the superpower of the world in upholding democracy for a nation that is shedding its blood for that chance. What lessons has the Marine Corps learned and how do you plan to implement them if confirmed as the Commandant?

General SMITH. Though I believe that many of the final lessons from this war may only be apparent after its conclusion, we are capturing vital data and observations as the Russia's war against Ukraine progresses, and we will continue to learn as the war continues. In my testimony, I mentioned the importance of mobile, low signature forces and the ability to strike from long-range. In addition to those points, the use of unmanned systems in many roles informs our Force Design modernization and our work with Intelligent Robotics and Autonomous Systems. I would also like to underscore the critical importance of inspirational leadership and esprit on all levels from the strategic to the tactical on the Ukrainian side. The human factors will always be predominant in war, and the Ukrainians have over-performed because of their indomitable fighting spirit and willingness to make enormous sacrifices to defend their country and way of life. Additionally, the protraction of the war and the continuing exorbitant rate of munitions expenditure on both sides underscore the need for a resilient U.S. defense industrial base (DIB). We must assume that any near-peer fight in the future will not be resolved in days or weeks. In contrast, it will most probably conclude in months if not years or decades. Accordingly, we must ensure that our DIB retains excess capacity and the ability to rapidly expand if needed. I would also add a critical but intangible factor: the value of adaptation. The Russians have adapted in response Ukrainian gains, and the Ukrainians have adapted in response—and the cycle continues. We will take away new lessons with every adaptation, but the broader point is the critical ability of our forces to adapt real time to changes on the battlefield. This is something marines have been doing throughout our history, and it is a core aspect of our Talent Management 2030 and Training and Education 2030 initiatives. Having the right talent that is trained to operate and adapt in a chaotic environment is at the heart of our current and future force.

FUNDING TO TAKE CARE OF OUR PEOPLE

7. Senator MANCHIN. General Smith, another topic we touched on was the stark contrast between Russia's treatment of their troops and the treatment of our troops. We leave no one behind and created the Defense POW/MIA [Prisoner of War/Missing in Action] Accounting Agency to ensure anyone that was lost at war is constantly being searched for, but the Russians fail to support their troops on the front lines and abandon their corpses where they fall instead of returning them to their loved ones. I make this point to say that our troops and their families know when they put on that uniform that they will be taken care of no matter what happens, and that comes at a premium price. Has this been your experience over your more than 35 years of military service?

General SMITH. Yes. In my experience, and throughout the history of the Marine Corps, we have and will always "take care of our own." Our devotion to our marines and their families epitomizes our highest ideals of "Semper Fidelis."

DELAYED BUDGET AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS

8. Senator MANCHIN. General Smith, multiple sources, including retired general officers, the National Defense Industrial Association, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Pentagon itself have all recognized the damage failing to pass a budget on time has on both our national security and the taxpayer. The American Enterprise Institute threw out a rough estimate of \$200 million per day under the latest continuing resolution that covered the start of fiscal year 2023, that's a total of \$18 billion. The DOD Comptroller noted that from fiscal year 1991 to 2010 the average delay for defense appropriations was 29 days, and that has since ballooned out to 118 days, 4 months. I have repeatedly asked the Pentagon for as concise a number as possible to put a figure on the damage these delays are causing to our national security and wasted taxpayer money, but so far I have only received an estimate from General C.Q. Brown in the Air Force who told me that a continuing resolution would see the Air Force and Space Force lose \$9 billion in purchasing power. Can I have your commitment to identify these impacts to the Marine Corps going for-

ward to help hold us in Congress accountable to getting the Department funded on time?

General SMITH. Yes.

JOINT ALL DOMAIN TRAINING COMPLEX

9. Senator MANCHIN. General Smith, thank you for coming to West Virginia last October to see the training the Marine Corps is already doing in my State. I also greatly appreciate your honest assessment of the role West Virginia could play in the future if our significant amount of mine land was made available for military training. Thankfully after working with the Department for nearly 5 years, a feasibility study will begin this year to identify precisely what this training could look like in a concept I've termed the Joint All Domain Training Complex (JAD-TC). What value do you see for East Coast Marine Corps units in training in the difficult and dynamic terrain of West Virginia?

General SMITH. In 2021, in an effort to improve infantry officer training, the Marine Corps researched numerous training venues and chose FOLA Mine Complex training area (FMCTA) in West Virginia as a suitable location based on the terrain, climate, and ample opportunities to meet training outcomes. Since 2022, the Marine Corps' Infantry Officer Course has conducted culminating exercises (CULEX) designed to simulate 96 hours of force-on-force continuous distributed combat operations against a peer adversary in a dynamic environment at FMCTA, with over 500 infantry officers completing this training. West Virginia offers a reasonably affordable, offsite training venue to replicate expeditionary distributed operations. The complex terrain presents unique challenges for combat operations and is consistent with the global latitudes observed in the Peoples Republic of China (PRC), Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Additionally, the challenges presented by the climate and vegetation offer a superb opportunity to conduct simulated combat operations in an austere environment, that will better prepare our marines to fight and win in the future.

10. Senator MANCHIN. General Smith, if confirmed, do I have your commitment that the Marine Corps will engage in this feasibility study moving forward?

General SMITH. If confirmed, you have my commitment to engage in a feasibility study moving forward.

FORCE DESIGN 2030

11. Senator MANCHIN. General Smith, the Marine Corps has made many necessary divestments from legacy platforms, such as tanks and investments in newer technologies and capabilities that will better enable the Marine Corps to counter our pacing threat, China. Specifically, the Marine Corps has self-funded over \$15 billion worth of investments in new capabilities. I would say that makes them very proactive in their stewardship of the taxpayers' dollars. Can you detail to the Committee, how as Commandant of the Marine Corps, you would continue the development of Force Design 2030 where General Berger will be leaving off?

General SMITH. If confirmed, I commit to the continued modernization of the Marine Corps to ensure a ready, capable, and postured naval expeditionary force is available to compete on the current and future battlefield. Moreover, I remain committed to integrating your Marine Corps with the Joint Force and our partners and Allies.

To remain ahead of our adversaries in an operating environment that evolves at a faster pace than ever before, I will continue to champion adaptive and iterative change within the Service. The Marine Corps' Campaign of Learning guides and informs modernization by providing a disciplined and structured mechanism for analysis, experimentation, and evaluation. This methodology has and will continue to be applied to be as efficient and effective as possible.

12. Senator MANCHIN. General Smith, we're proud to see the Marine Corps making tough decisions as it relates to funding to get after the China problem, but what is your estimate for future funding increases needed to support Force Design 2030 and what will be your top three priorities?

General SMITH. My estimate for future funding requirements needed to support Force Design 2030 will be provided in the fiscal year 2025 budget and in each subsequent budget cycle as we take stock of the impacts of inflation and prioritize our modernization efforts across the Department.

The Services must be capable of modernizing faster than the pacing threat while accounting for adversary timelines that the Intelligence Community and Strategic Guidance have projected. Force Design has made significant progress and the Ma-

rine Corps is better prepared as a naval expeditionary force-in-readiness to operate inside actively contested maritime spaces in support of fleet operations and joint campaigns. There are several priorities that the Marine Corps is focused on to sustain modernization efforts: equipment modernization, talent management reform, and training and education modernization. These pillars will ensure our force stays focused and on target in developing a Marine Corps that is lethal and enables the Joint Force to project power forward when directed. If confirmed as Commandant, I will remain committed to accelerate these priorities to continue modernization efforts across the Marine Corps to remain expeditionary and ready.

AMPHIBIOUS SHIP FLEET

13. Senator MANCHIN. General Smith, previously referred to amphibious warships as the “Swiss Army knife” of the Joint Force, whether deploying to Europe in the face of Putin’s war in Ukraine or providing humanitarian aid and disaster response, our sailors’ and marines’ use aboard of amphibious ships does more to project power and maintain United States global dominance than any other tool in the Joint Force’s kit. Put simply, they punch well above their weight class. Unfortunately, these ships are placed very low on Navy’s priority list. Ignoring, for the moment, the failure of the Navy to adequately fund the production of amphibs, what is your assessment of the importance of and the quantity of amphibs needed for the Marine Corps to carry out your mission in an open conflict with China and the People’s Liberation Army (PLA)?

General SMITH. The Marine Corps has a requirement for no fewer than 31 amphibious warfare ships: 10 LHA/LHD and 21 LPDs. Since 2019, three Department of the Navy studies have examined amphibious warfare ship force structure requirements. The 31-ship requirement was informed by combining the findings of those studies, the most recent being the Secretary of the Navy directed Amphibious Fleet Requirement Study (AFRS) in 2022, with amphibious warfare ship readiness trends over the past 10 years. AFRS was a threat informed, scenario-directed, model driven, multiple phase event executed by the analytic arms of the Navy and the Marine Corps. The findings of AFRS were briefed to the service chiefs and SecNav, and 31 amphibious warfare ships were reported as the minimum required. This finding is consistent with 11 amphibious warfare ship inventory studies completed over the last 14 years.

The last Congress recognized this requirement in the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act, Public Law 117–263 (2023). Section 1023 requires the Navy maintain “not fewer than 31 operational amphibious warfare ships, of which no fewer than 10 shall be amphibious assault ships.” This law mirrors the needs of the 2022 National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy, but it is important to note, this requirement is a floor not a ceiling.

TALENT MANAGEMENT 2030—INVEST AND RETAIN ENLISTED MARINES

14. Senator MANCHIN. General Smith, in 2021 the Marine Corps published Talent Management 2030. This document detailed various proposals to ensure that the Marine Corps maintains its lethality by investing in its most important weapons system—marines. As you know, the Marine Corps discharges 75 percent of first term enlisted marines every year and recruits approximately 36,000 new marines every year to fill the subsequent gap instead of retaining and investing to build experience in these younger marines. Can you comment on the potential benefits of a “retain and invest” model?

General SMITH. Our success on future battlefields depends on our force being more highly trained, cognitively mature, and operationally experienced. We always seek to attract and recruit the best and brightest that our Nation has to offer. We recognize that the investment we make in marines to prepare for the changing character of future conflicts needs to grow. This emphasis on the “retain and invest” model envisions marines staying in uniform longer and enables us to invest in their experience, professional development, advanced training, and education. This goal is particularly true for those high-technology and leadership intensive occupational specialties. By changing our paradigm, and through a deliberate targeted maturation of our force, we are increasing the proportion of fully trained, qualified, experienced, and deployable marines in our ranks to be better positioned to dominate on dynamic, complex, and distributed future battlefields.

15. Senator MANCHIN. General Smith, what are the biggest challenges you believe you will face as the Commandant toward affecting this reform?

General SMITH. Talent Management 2030 reform consists of processes and policies to include modernizing personnel information technology (IT) systems and upgrad-

ing analytical personnel modeling software. The scale and scope of the challenge represented by our disparate, discreet data bases are significant. However, we have invested in developing a modern personnel IT system that increases transparency to marines, commanders, and human resource professionals. We envision that this system will soon be able to leverage artificial intelligence to best match the aptitudes, skills, and desires of individual marines to the warfighting requirements of the Marine Corps. While we have made initial gains, we need to increase the pace of progress. This requires navigating the current acquisition process that is not conducive to rapidly acquiring and fielding IT solutions. We ask for continued support from Congress in this vital endeavor.

LANDING SHIP MEDIUM

16. Senator MANCHIN. General Smith, under General Berger, the Marine Corps recently stood up its first Marine Littoral Regiment, which is intended to directly deter China's aggression in the Pacific, in Hawaii. However, I am concerned that the Marine Littoral Regiment is missing their key piece of equipment—the Landing Ship Medium (LSM). This ship is meant to be a low-cost, low-draft, and survivable vessel, which is exactly what this Committee has asked for in rapid acquisition of equipment, but was not included in the Navy's Fiscal Year 2024 budget request. In fact, the Navy does not plan to purchase any LSMs until Fiscal Year 2025. At a time of increasing tensions in the world, especially the Pacific, as the future Commandant how do you believe this delay in acquiring the Landing Ship Medium hinder the Marine Corps' ability to operate in costal environments?

General SMITH. Operational intra-theater surface maneuver, tactical mobility, and sustainment are critical today in the Indo-Pacific to assure campaigning activities are achieved for integrated deterrence of malign activities. Until the Medium Landing Ship (LSM) is available in appreciable numbers (IOC fiscal year 2034), the Navy and Marine Corps have developed a strategy known as the Littoral Maneuver Bridging Solution (LMBS). The LMBS utilizes a mixture of available ships and landing craft, as well as chartered platforms with an operational focus for use in Indo-Pacific region. The LMBS provides flexible options and informs future naval resourcing decisions to ensure the Marine Corps can operate throughout the littorals as required until the LSM is delivered to the fleet. However, I must emphasize that the LMBS is only a stop-gap measure. The Navy cannot postpone any further this Committee's direct request to purchase LSMs in the near future.

17. Senator MANCHIN. General Smith, will you explain the difference in Marine Corps capability against our pacing threat when comparing 18 LSMs that the Amphibious Force Requirement Study identifies as a minimum capability and 36 LSMs, which the Marine Corps considers their requirement?

General SMITH. The purpose built, beachable, shore-to-shore LSM requirements is derived from multiple studies and wargames that highlight a critical gap in capability and capacity between amphibious warfare ships and their complementary landing craft. The LSM allows shore-to-shore maneuver, mobility and sustainment of task organized units of action of stand-in forces (SIF) and enables sustained logistics forward in contested environments. The delay in this capability hinders our ability to establish key terrain and develop relationships required. The LSM inventory objective is 35 ships based on the concept of operations (CONOPS) to provide littoral maneuver for three Marine Littoral Regiments (MLR) as the foundational formation of the SIF. The near-term inventory requirement is 18 LSM to initiate the program. Maturation of the CONOPS and experimentation will inform the long-term inventory objective.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MICHAEL ROUNDS

SPECTRUM

18. Senator ROUNDS. General Smith, there is an effort by some in Congress to require sharing of all or some of the 3.1–3.45 GHz band of the electromagnetic spectrum between the Department of Defense and commercial interests in the private sector. As I understand it, the 3.1–3.45 GHz band is primarily used by Department of Defense ground-, air- and sea-based radars and sensors to detect airborne and missile threats. For example, the Marine Corps G/ATOR [Ground/Air Task Oriented Radar] system uses that band to track cruise missiles, aircraft, and remotely piloted vehicles, as well as rocket, artillery, and mortar fire. Can you confirm that the Marine Corps relies upon systems that reside on this portion of the spectrum to enable their warfighting capabilities and protect our marines? If so, can you share any

other examples of either specific systems that currently operate there or some of the missions and capabilities which rely on this portion of the spectrum?

General SMITH. Yes, Marine Corps radars exclusively rely upon this band to ensure a tactical advantage against our adversaries supporting the Marine Corps' detection and tracking range requirements, as well as on-the-move detection. Other examples of systems that rely upon this spectrum band include Marine Air Defense Integrated System (MADIS); and the Installation Counter small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (I-CsUAS) fixed-site tower radar. These systems represent 100 percent of our Short-range surface-to-air shoot-on-the-move air defense; short range electronic warfare C-UAV air defense; and protection for the maneuver force capabilities.

19. Senator ROUNDS. General Smith, providing this Committee with your best military advice, can you characterize the risk to the mission and the risk to the Force if action were taken to enable the auction of portions of this band prior to the analysis of the results of the statutorily required DOD-NTIA [National Telecommunications and Information Administration] study, which is required to be completed by September 2023?

General SMITH. Proceeding with the auction prior to completing the analysis poses critical risks to the Marine Corps' ability to support operations and training in support of defense of the homeland and strategic deterrence. If the auction were to take place before a full analysis of risks, the Marine Corps could lose vital capabilities as described in question 18.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

QUESTION FOR THE RECORD OVERVIEW

20. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, I am submitting many of the same questions for the record (QFR) I asked General Berger following the Department of Navy's fiscal year 2024 posture hearing on April 18, 2023. Two months later I have yet to receive a response. Please answer all of these QFRs in your own voice and expressing your personal opinion. Avoiding duplicating answers from what the Committee will eventually be receiving from General Berger is important in assessing your independent views as the new nominee to be Commandant of the Marine Corps.

General SMITH. I am grateful for the opportunity to answer your questions in my own voice to express my independent views. Many of my views of the Marine Corps have been developed through my responsibilities as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps and previous positions, such as the Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration. In both positions, I developed a deep understanding of the strategic guidance that directs modernization, the threat environment that supports strategic assessments, and the innovative concepts and analytical underpinnings designed to achieve that same guidance. In cases where the questions require me to provide responses based on facts my responses will be similar to those provided by General Berger. Where applicable, I have provided and highlighted my individual views and assessments.

MARINE CORPS RECRUITING

21. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, over the last year the Marine Corps has received significant praise for meeting its recruiting goals while the other Services have not. However, Force Design 2030 has cut more than 12,000 marines since 2019 from the Active Duty component alone. Do you believe that personnel reductions in the Active and Reserve components made it easier for the Marine Corps to meet its recruiting goals?

General SMITH. I do not. The current recruiting environment is challenging for all Services and end strength reductions have not made it easier. While Active Duty end strength has dropped, current plans have end-strength remaining at 172,300 through fiscal year 2028 and increasing to a floor of 174,600 by fiscal year 2030 to achieve modernization initiatives. This milestone will be accomplished in part by increased retention, which has been exceptional. The Marine Corps met its retention mission in fiscal year 2022 and will do so in fiscal year 2023 as well. We are grateful that, once an individual becomes a marine, they want to remain a marine. In keeping with the tenets of FD2030, the Marine Corps is retaining more of our highest performing marines especially within leadership and highly technical billets. The high retention of our best marines will prepare our forces to succeed on dispersed, complex, distributed, and high-technology future battlefields.

FORCE DESIGN 2030 DIVESTMENT

22. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, militaries around the world have long understood combined arms to mean employing a combination of infantry, tanks, cannon artillery, engineers, and close support aircraft in a coordinated manner. Those same militaries today are endeavoring to add these systems to their inventories, and daily we see their utility on the battlefields in Ukraine. Yet, the Marine Corps has divested or are on the way to divesting all the Marine Corps' tanks, two-thirds of its cannon artillery, nearly all its engineering equipment that enables breaching of enemy minefields and obstacles, all its engineering equipment that enables clearing and proofing minefields, all its bridging, and nearly a third of its close support rotary and fixed wing aircraft. How is it possible for the Corps to have "the most proficient combined arms teams on the globe" without these needed weapons and items of equipment?

General SMITH. The Marine Corps defines combined arms as "the synchronized and simultaneous application of different arms and elements of combat power to achieve an effect greater than if each element were used separately or sequentially."

At its core, the Marine Corps modernization effort is focused on enhancing the ability to conduct combined arms. A key element of Force Design 2030 is developing and employing modern capabilities that contribute to a multiple joint "kill webs." This approach also improves our ability to leverage non-lethal fires that provide the combatant commander more options in day-to-day competition and pre-conflict deterrence activities. However, we continue to invest in modern lethal fire platforms that provide a more effective capability than legacy systems. This includes legacy systems such as heavy tanks and towed, tubed cannon artillery that lack the precision and range to be relevant in the maritime and littoral battlespaces applicable to our directed pacing threat. The idea that FD2030 reduces the ability of marines to conduct combined arms is an uninformed thought. One of our modern rifle companies will be able to destroy most targets on R400 (combined arms company assault range aboard Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, CA) before even leaving its attack position, which is not the case for a pre-FD2030 rifle company.

Prior to Force Design 2030 initiatives, the Marine Corps focused primarily on kinetic combined arms consisting of surface and air assets making our combined arms capabilities two dimensional. Today, the Marine Corps still maintains the ability to conduct combined arms in the surface, air, and sea domains but we have significantly increased both the kinetic and non-kinetic combined arms capabilities in the cyber and space domains creating a multi-domain capability. Regardless of what assets are utilized to employ combined arms, they will only be as effective as the Command and Control (C2) architecture that is designed to enable the execution of the assets. Therefore, Force Design 2030 has focused significantly on organizing, training, and resourcing the MAGTF to effectively conduct MAGTF C2 at echelon and rapidly transition across the competition continuum to enable all-domain joint and combined kill webs. To do this we must transition from a legacy, air-land battle paradigm to a 21st century, all-domain, joint single battle mindset. We can no longer accept multiple, disparate C2 systems optimized for single-domain awareness bound by analog/human-speed processing. There are a variety of ongoing efforts to evolve the Service's C2 capability to conduct all domain operations, enable kill webs, and further expand our value to the joint and combined force.

23. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, do any of the changes to force structure in Force Design 2030 violate the title 10 requirement that "[t]he Marine Corps, within the Department of the Navy, shall be so organized as to include not less than three combat divisions and three air wings, and such other land combat, aviation, and other services as may be organic therein?" In your answer, please provide specific references to MCRP 1-10.1 and the exact number of marines in the three divisions and three air wings in 2018 and 2023.

General SMITH. Force Design 2030 adheres to the requirements set forth in Title 10 of the United States Code. The Marine Corps regularly assesses our force structure, capabilities, and readiness to ensure that we can fulfill our obligations as outlined in Title 10. Force Design 2030 optimizes Marine Corps force structure to meet the demands of the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) and of modern warfare. This plan was developed with the direction and oversight of senior civilian and military leaders.

Force Design 2030 creates a more agile, flexible, and lethal force that is better equipped to operate forward, compete, project power and influence as directed by the 2022 NSS, NDS, and other strategic guidance documents. These robust modernization efforts include enhancing the Marine Corps' ability to conduct expedi-

tionary and amphibious operations, improving our ability to operate in contested and denied environments, and increasing our capacity to conduct distributed operations with joint and allied partners. These efforts are also directly tied to our Title 10 requirements of:

“The Marine Corps shall be organized, trained, and equipped to provide fleet marine forces of combined arms, together with supporting air components, for service with the fleet in the seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and for the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign.”

Over the past two decades, the Marine Corps has been involved in a land campaign as the Nation directed and required. Force Design 2030 redirects the Marine Corps to our original mission as a naval expeditionary force in readiness that supports the fleet commanders within the naval campaign. Overall, Force Design 2030 intends to ensure that the Marine Corps remains a highly capable and responsive force that can effectively fulfill our obligations under title 10 and other statutory and regulatory requirements.

Total Force Structure—Active Component

	2018	2023
Total	186807	178678
Change in force structure		-8129

Division

	2018	2023
Total	43695	39727
Share of total force	23.4%	22.2%
Change in force structure		-3968

Wings

	2018	2023
Total	39343	35931
Share of total force	21.1%	20.1%
Change in force structure		-3412

24. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, if confirmed as the next Commandant it will be your responsibility to organize, train, and equip marine forces. It stands to reason that marines would need to have the skill and knowledge to operate effectively in conjunction with supporting elements from sister Services, which would require training with them. Including information on units, dates, and locations, where have marines trained with the Army tank units, combat engineers, and bridging units in the past year?

General SMITH. The Marine Corps conducted multiple joint exercises with U.S. Army units in the previous 12 months at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana, and during Exercise Northern Strike 23–1 at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan. The purpose of this training is to prepare marines to operate effectively in a joint environment. Consequently, Marine Corps Operation Plans (OPLANS) are being revised in accordance with guidance from combatant commanders, and capabilities contained in the Defense Readiness Tables and Apportionment Tables in response to Force Design 2030.

Marine Corps training with Army tank, combat engineer, and bridging units in the previous 12 months includes:

- a. National Training Center 22–10; 3—16 September 2022; Ft Irwin, CA.

- i. 3d Low Altitude Air Defense Battalion trained with 2d Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division to increase close-in, low altitude, surface-to-air weapons fire proficiency and readiness in support of maneuver elements and joint force.
- b. National Training Center 23-05; 20 February—31 March 2023; Ft Irwin, CA.
 - i. 1st Anglico trained with 2d Armored Brigade Combat Team, 3d Infantry Division to increase Joint Terminal Attack Controller proficiency and readiness.
- c. National Training Center 23-06; 20 March—30 April 2023; Ft Irwin, CA.
 - i. 3d Anglico trained with 3d Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division to increase Joint Terminal Attack Controller proficiency and readiness.
- d. Northern Strike 23-1; 20—29 January 2023; Selfridge Air National Guard Base, MI.
 - i. VMFA-115 trained with 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery Regiment, 32d Infantry Brigade Combat Team to increase proficiency in Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations, cold weather Joint Close Air Support, Forward Air Controller-Airborne; Tactical Air Control-Airborne, Strike Coordination and Recon, Armed Recon, and Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses.
- e. Joint Readiness Training Center 23-04; 20 February—5 March 2023; Ft Polk, LA.
 - i. 2d Anglico trained with 2d Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division to increase Joint Terminal Attack Controller proficiency and readiness.
- f. Joint Readiness Training Center 23-07; 12 April—13 May 2023; Ft Polk, LA.
 - i. 6th Anglico trained with 3d Infantry Brigade Combat Team-Airborne, 82d Airborne Division to increase Joint Terminal Attack Controller proficiency and readiness.

25. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, in General Berger's statement to the Committee for the Navy's fiscal year 2023 posture hearing, he stated ". . . the Marine Corps is now complete with our major divestments. Reducing the approved acquisition objectives (AAO) of major programs like the CH-53K or F-35 at this point would not produce resources for investment elsewhere and would be premature decisions." Because the Marine Corps has cut squadrons it is unclear where the major program aircraft you list will go if the Marine Corps retains the numbers of aircraft in the program of record (POR). If you're confirmed as the next commandant will you come back to Congress seeking funds for the personnel and support equipment required to again stand up the needed squadrons?

General SMITH. The Marine Corps Program of Record (POR) for F-35 is 420, and 200 for CH-53Ks. The number of squadrons (organizational construct), and aircraft (composition) within aviation units has always evolved inside the POR to ensure the Marine Corps remains the Nation's crisis response force, while modernizing to meet the challenges of the future operating environment. To provide an example of this evolution, between 1990 and 2016;

- F/A-18 squadrons changed organizational construct or composition nine times.
- AV-8B squadrons changed organizational construct or composition six times.
- H-1 squadrons changed organizational construct or composition six times.
- CH-53 squadrons changed organizational construct or composition four times.

No plan remains static. Today, the Marine Corps seeks to optimize its force construct to support the Joint Force and meet combatant commanders (COCOM) force requirements. Ideally, the Marine Corps can staff these organizational construct changes with internal manpower structure offsets. For instance, the Commandant made the decision to increase two forward based F-35 squadron composition from 10 F-35s to 12; qualified maintainers from the training squadrons will be used to offset the increase in manpower required to maintain more aircraft. The training squadrons will be, in turn, backfilled by contract maintenance.

In sum, these decisions must take a holistic approach to the entire personnel structure of the Marine Corps, to ensure the service builds the most capable Fleet Marine Force to support the Joint Force and meet COCOM force requirements. Therefore, if confirmed as the CMC, I would seek congressional support for any structure and equipment increase required to meet national security objectives.

26. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, the Marine Corps' divestment of its tanks and assault breaching, route clearance, and bridging assets raises concerns about the Marine Corps' ability to meet its title 10 requirement to organize, train and

equip fleet Marine Forces “... for the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign.” The Commandant has stated previously that the Marine Corps will get these items from the Army. Was an agreement in place with the Army when the Marine Corps began Force Design 2030 divestments?

General SMITH. There was no formal agreement with the U.S. Army when the Marine Corps began Force Design modernization efforts. After multiple iterations of wargaming, analysis, and strategic guidance, heavy land-combat capabilities were determined to not be a high priority for prosecuting the landward portion of a naval campaign in the areas prioritized to the naval Services in the NDS. This is especially true in the modern threat environment that is characterized by advanced technological capabilities that operate in multi-domain formations with long-range precision fires platforms creating an anti-access, area-denial (A2/AD) dilemma for the surface naval fleet. The Marine Corps divested of tanks, route clearance, assault breaching, etc. to invest in new capabilities more readily applicable to the future joint maritime operating environment.

27. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, are there any current agreements with the Army or other Services on these divested or reduced capabilities?

General SMITH. No. While there are formal joint agreements for capabilities such as aerial refueling, theater level logistics, etc. there is no formal agreement with the other services concerning these capabilities divested of or reduced as a part of Force Design modernization efforts. It is worth repeating that any future fight will inherently be a joint fight. In that fight, we, as services, are tasked with manning, training, and equipping our respective forces to provide those forces to a Joint Force Commander who will have the authority to employ those forces with mutually supporting joint capability without the need for formal agreements or MOUs. Given its modular organization, the MAGTF remains tailorable, able to receive attached units from other services or nations, such as naval construction battalions, or infantry/armor brigades.

28. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, has the Marine Corps formalized any agreement with the Army to provide equipment or capabilities since 2019?

General SMITH. No; however, should Marine Corps Forces find themselves in a land campaign requiring the use of heavy armor, and if said armor is available within the theater of operations, the Joint Force Commander has the authority to task organize by pairing Marine Corps infantry formations with U.S. Army armored formations.

The Marine Corps and the U.S. Army regularly train alongside one another employing the full spectrum of the respective service's capabilities. Once forward deployed in response to crisis or contingency, it is the Joint Force Commander's responsibility and prerogative to task organize U.S. Army and Marine Corps formations in such a way that make sense to accomplish the mission.

29. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, what assurances has the Marine Corps received from the Army about the availability of these units or assets for training and integrating with Marine formations during combat operations?

General SMITH. There have been no assurances. As a general rule, services do not provide assurances to other services regarding what assets they may or may not make available for training. The Marine Corps and the U.S. Army regularly train alongside one another employing the full spectrum of the respective service's capabilities. Once forward deployed in response to crisis or contingency, it is the Joint Force Commander's responsibility and prerogative to task organize U.S. Army and Marine Corps formations in such a way that makes sense to accomplish the mission.

30. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, during the May 2022 Department of the Navy posture hearing, I asked General Berger to “provide to this Committee a timeline and a chart that anticipates year by year between now and 2030, or maybe even looking back when Force Design 2030 began, to what we are divesting and what we are gaining and how will that make sure that the gap in the trough between divestment in combat capability is not so big that it poses risk to the force or mission.” General Berger answered “I can absolutely do that. That is the rationale that is the reason behind publishing each year, this is where we are with Force Design, this is what we have learned today, the actions taken, this is the plan ahead, which we published last month for this year.” It has been almost a year since he made that commitment. Please provide the information requested in 2022 in a detailed format that clearly visualizes when capabilities have been divested or reduced since 2019?

General SMITH. The product you are referring to is the Force Design 2030 Annual Report. Since becoming Commandant in 2019, General Berger has published an unclassified report to update the service and our various stakeholders about where we are in our modernization. These reports capture and provide rationale to all decisions related to divestment. The 2022 report was released in May 2022.

The 2023 Force Design 2030 annual report was released on 5 June.

31. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, can you provide a timeline that indicates which Marine Corps capabilities, including equipment, Military Occupational Specialties, and number of personnel, have been divested or reduced because of Force Design 2030, as requested in section 1023 of the Fiscal Year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)?

General SMITH. Over the past five President's Budget (PB) cycles from fiscal year 2020 through fiscal year 2024, the Marine Corps divested \$18.2 billion of legacy equipment and invested \$15.8 billion in modernization.

**USMC DIVEST TO INVEST
(PRESIDENT'S BUDGET 220 TO PRESIDENT'S BUDGET 2024)**

(\$B)	President's Budget 2020	President's Budget 2021	President's Budget 2022	President's Budget 2023	President's Budget 2024	Total*
Divestment	0.7	1.8	5.9	8.7	1.1	18.2
Investment	0.7	1.2	5.9	7.0	1.1	15.8

*Note: Numbers may not add due to rounding.

With the drawdown of forces supporting operations in CENTCOM in 2014, the Marine Corps identified the necessity to transition from sustaining a land campaign to modernizing the force in support of maritime campaigning inherent in our Title 10 requirements. To maintain operational and tactical relevance on a modern battlefield due to the evolution of technology, the Marine Corps divested of legacy force structures that were of lesser relevance for a naval expeditionary service. Additionally, budget constraints were identified by 2018 NDS architects and Marine Corps' Force Design 2030 planners with the underlying assumption that the Department's topline budget would grow modestly at a 2 percent inflation rate. Furthermore, the Marine Corps' divestment strategy followed the 2018 and 2022 NDS and the associated Defense Planning Guidance that directed the divestment of legacy capabilities and modernization at the speed of the pacing threat.

In the President's Budget 2020 cycle, the Marine Corps reallocated \$0.7 billion by divesting of the AN/TPS-59 Air Defense Radar, AAV7A1 Project Improvement Program, and the MV-22 Aerial Refueling System (VARS). These funds were used to invest in such programs as Ground Based Air Defense (GBAD), F-35 spares and Block 4 modification, nascent Command-and-Control systems, sensors, and communications platforms.

In the President's Budget 2021 cycle, we reallocated \$1.8 billion by divesting of certain ground programs such as the Light Armored Vehicle Program Improvement Project (LAV PIP) and M1A1 Weapons and Combat Vehicle Modification Kits. The Marine Corps also made a 2,300 Active component reduction in end-strength, and unit modifications of Fleet Anti-terrorism teams and Combat Logistics Battalion. The Marine Corps used \$1.2 billion of these funds to invest in Strike/Anti-surface warfare capabilities, network, sensors, intelligence platforms, Air Defense, Ground Combat lethality modernization, and S&T programs.

In the President's Budget 2022 cycle, as part of the overall Force Design 2030 investment strategy, the Marine Corps made our second largest divestment of \$5.9 billion by reducing the Active component end-strength by 5,100, completing our divestments in legacy force structure such as Tanks, Bridging Companies, and Law Enforcement Battalions in addition to reducing Active and Reserve Infantry Battalions, Cannon Artillery Batteries, and Aviation Squadrons. One hundred percent of these divestments were directly used to invest in critical ground-based fires programs such as

Navy Marine Corps Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS) and Organic Precision Fires Family of Systems (OPF FoS). Advanced sensor investments included the MAGTF Unmanned Aircraft System Expeditionary (MUX)/Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE)—MQ9A, Ground/Air Task Oriented Radar (G/ATOR) and MAGTF Electronic Warfare Ground Family of Systems (MEGFoS). Fur-

thermore, critical ground networking investments were made in our Network on The Move (NOTM) and Marine Corps Enterprise Network (MCEN).

In the President's Budget 2023 cycle, the Marine Corps made our largest divestment of \$8.7 billion with a 744 reduction in Active component end-strength, as well as further reduction to legacy capabilities such as the Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group (MCSCG) and Marine Augmentation Program-Korea (MAP-K) programs and delayed procurement of Joint Light Tactical Vehicles (JLTVs), F-35B Joint Strike Fighters, CH-53K Heavy Lift Helicopters. We also took unique approaches to save resources by reducing capacity during Marine Week, made a 10 percent reduction to Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves, and a 15 percent reduction to Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) staff positions to include Marine Forces Reserve (MARFORRES) and the supporting establishment. Nearly all these divestments, over \$7.0 billion, were directly used to modernize critical areas that enable Force Design 2030 by investing in multi-domain areas such as Command and Control (Big Data Platform), Counter Air, Counter C5ISR-T, MQ-9A Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) sensors and enablers, and Anti-Surface Warfare capabilities.

In the President's Budget 2024 cycle, the Marine Corps reallocated over \$1.1 billion from such programs as Organic Precision Fires, Amphibious Combat Vehicles, and Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicles, as well as a 15 percent reduction in the Marine Corps Bands program to eight field bands. All divested funds were directly utilized to invest in critical warfighting capabilities such as Signature Management (YETI), Secure Expeditionary Resilient Position, Navigation and Timing (SERPNT), Light Marine Air Defense Integrated System (L-MADIS), and Tactical Communication Modernization. Aviation investments were utilized to increase Flight Hour Program and the MV-22 nacelle improvement program. Additionally, several Talent Management investments were made, including increased funding for Sexual Assault Prevention and Response programs and the Marine Corps Embassy Security Guard.

After completing five budget cycles with this approach, the Marine Corps does not plan to divest any more capacity or legacy programs.

The two charts below identify specific military occupation specialties (MOS) (Graph 1) and platforms (Graph 3) that the Marine Corps reduced in capacity, divested completely, or transitioned due to modernization efforts tied to strategic guidance.

MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY CHANGES RELATED TO FD2030 (GRAPH 1)

OccFld	OccFld Name	2018	2023	Change STR	STR Growth or Reduction	2018	2023	Difference in Percent of Total STR	Relative Growth OR Relative Reduction
						% Total STR	% Total STR		
01	Manpower and Administration	7670	7029	-641	Reduction	4.1%	3.9%	-0.172%	Reduction
03	Infantry	26014	23172	-2842	Reduction	13.9%	13.0%	-0.957%	Reduction
04	Logistics	5797	5466	-331	Reduction	3.1%	3.1%	-0.044%	Reduction
13	Engineer, Construction, Facilities, and Equipment	8399	7442	-957	Reduction	4.5%	4.2%	-0.331%	Reduction
18	Tank, AAV, and ACV	2115	1426	-689	Reduction	1.1%	0.8%	-0.334%	Reduction
21	Ground Ordnance Maintenance	3921	3522	-399	Reduction	2.1%	2.0%	-0.128%	Reduction
27	Linguist	620	479	-141	Reduction	0.3%	0.3%	-0.064%	Reduction
28	Ground Electronic Maintenance	4435	3774	-661	Reduction	2.4%	2.1%	-0.262%	Reduction
30	Supply Administration and Operations	6454	5723	-731	Reduction	3.5%	3.2%	-0.252%	Reduction
33	Food Service	1981	1639	-342	Reduction	1.1%	0.9%	-0.143%	Reduction
34	Financial Management	1414	1338	-76	Reduction	0.8%	0.7%	-0.008%	Reduction
35	Motor Transport	13835	12051	-1784	Reduction	7.4%	6.7%	-0.662%	Reduction
41	Marine Corps Community Services	123	105	-18	Reduction	0.1%	0.1%	-0.007%	Reduction
43	Public Affairs	584		-584	Reduction	0.3%	0.0%	-0.313%	Reduction
46	Combat Camera	474		-474	Reduction	0.3%	0.0%	-0.254%	Reduction
57	CBRN	933	886	-47	Reduction	0.5%	0.5%	-0.004%	Reduction
58	Military Police	4050	3477	-573	Reduction	2.2%	1.9%	-0.222%	Reduction
60	Aircraft Maintenance	5604	4692	-912	Reduction	3.0%	2.6%	-0.374%	Reduction
61	Aircraft Maintenance (RW)	5830	4875	-955	Reduction	3.1%	2.7%	-0.392%	Reduction
63	Organizational Avionics	4076	3386	-690	Reduction	2.2%	1.9%	-0.287%	Reduction
64	Intermediate Avionics	2538	2054	-484	Reduction	1.4%	1.1%	-0.209%	Reduction
65	Aviation Ordnance	2658	2462	-196	Reduction	1.4%	1.4%	-0.045%	Reduction
66	Aviation Logistics	2243	2052	-191	Reduction	1.2%	1.1%	-0.052%	Reduction
70	Airfield Services	2338	2080	-258	Reduction	1.3%	1.2%	-0.087%	Reduction
73	Navigators and Unmanned Aircraft System Officers/Operators	462	428	-34	Reduction	0.2%	0.2%	-0.008%	Reduction

MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY CHANGES RELATED TO FD2030 (GRAPH 1)—Continued

OccFld	OccFld Name	2018	2023	Change STR	STR Growth or Reduction	2018	2023	Difference in Percent of Total STR	Relative Growth OR Relative Reduction
						% Total STR	% Total STR		
75	Pilots	4852	4121	-731	Reduction	2.6%	2.3%	-0.291%	Reduction
81	MISC	4250	3925	-325	Reduction	2.3%	2.2%	-0.078%	Reduction
86	Small UAS Specialist	251	237	-14	Reduction	0.1%	0.1%	-0.002%	Reduction

With the reduction in capacity in specific Military Occupation Specialties (MOS), Force Design 2030 acted on the necessity to train and equip critical enablers that enable the Marine Corps and forward deployed formations to operate in multi-domain environments. As a result, the Marine Corps invested in critical MOS that were either non-existent pre-Force Design 2030 or in need of acceleration. The increased investment in critical enablers such as intelligence, networks, communications, space, and cyber have accelerated the ability of the Marine Corps to operate in multi-domain operations at the tactical level.

REDUCTIONS OF LEGACY PLATFORMS BY YEAR (FISCAL YEAR 2024 TO 2028) (GRAPH 2)

System	Total Fielded	Fiscal Year 2024	Fiscal Year 2025	Fiscal Year 2026	Fiscal Year 2027	Fiscal Year 2028
M1A1	452	Divestment Complete				
AVLB	28	Divestment Complete				
LAV	1,055	~40–50	~40–50	No further reductions planned		
MRAP	3391	176	174	Divestment Complete		
HMMWV	11043	1220	572	715	817	920
MTVR	6582	1050	431	29	53	0
LVSF	1681	181	304	46	13	0
AAV	1,074	79	106	116	46	

An important aspect to distinguish in the Marine Corps' modernization is the distinct difference between a divestment in a platform compared to a transition or modernization in a platform. Based on analysis, wargaming, and experimentation the Commandant concluded in 2020 that the Marine Corps' inventory of bridging platforms—Armored Vehicle Launched Bridge (AVLB), Medium Girder Bridges (MGB), and Improved Ribbon Bridges (IRB), were best suited for land operations ashore. For reference, the AVLBs, MGBs, and IRBs all require large black-bottom commercial seafloat or Maritime Prepositioning Ships to get to the fight, requiring permissive offload at seaports and significant preparation time to prepare for on-ward movement to support maneuver. Even when permissive offloads are conducted, mobility mismatch between maneuver forces and engineering and breaching capabilities can pose tactical challenges. During the opening land conflict of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, maneuver forces routinely outpaced supporting assets such as heavy logistical assets, bridging, and breaching capabilities. The tempo and threat environment of the future operating environment makes these heavy capabilities irrelevant, particularly considering the limited quantity of systems and the significant requirements for large shipping and aircraft to move these capabilities into position across a maritime theater.

However, many of the above platforms are currently being transitioned to modernized platforms. The Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAV) is transitioning to the Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV). The Marine Corps will have 139 ACVs fielded by June 2023. This equates to 21.9 percent of the 632-vehicle acquisition objective. These ACVs will equip seven Fleet Marine Force ACV Platoons, a training allocation at the Assault Amphibian School, and a test set at the Amphibious Vehicle Test Branch. Additionally, the High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWV) have begun a programmatic sunset synched with the fielding and complete service transition to the Joint Light Tactical Vehicles (JLTV). The Marine Corps has 3,488

JLTVs and 187 JLTV trailers fielded as of 5 June 2023. This equates to 27.9 percent of the 12,500 vehicle fiscal year 2030 acquisition objective and 4.7 percent of the 4,000 JLTV trailer fiscal year 2030 acquisition objective. 84 percent of these vehicles are fielded to I, II, and III Marine Expeditionary Forces. The remaining vehicles are allocated to Marine Special Operations Command, Training and Education Command, and supported specialty truck programs (e.g., the Network on the Move and Marine Air Defense Integrated System programs).

32. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, which of the capabilities being divested or reduced under Force Design 2030 will be provided by other Services?

General SMITH. One of the more notable capabilities divested by the Marine Corps as part of Force Design 2030 is the M1A1 main battle tank. Given that the Marine Corps has historically and by US Code been responsible for the “conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign” and informed by warfare trends, the Marine Corps divested tanks with the understanding that the Army possesses adequate armor capacity to respond to the demands of the joint force.

Through detailed operational planning, historical analysis, and a rigorous Campaign of Learning, we made some hard decisions regarding engineering and breaching capabilities. Consequently, the Marine Corps divested its inventory of bridging platforms to include the Armored Vehicle Launched Bridge (AVLB), Medium Girder Bridges (MGB), and Improved Ribbon Bridges (IRB) which are too heavy and slow to be relevant in modern operations. The Marine Corps and Army are working collectively with industry to develop a more suitable lightweight, scalable tactical bridging platform that can be transported on current Joint Light Tactical Vehicles (JLTVs). The Marine Corps is currently awaiting delivery of three test vehicles for experimentation within our engineer formations. In the meantime, the Marine Corps retains its capability to do nonstandard bridging. On a frequent basis Marine engineers are used for theater security cooperation and for support to other government agencies to construct non-standard bridges, which continues to build their experience with the use of local materials.

The Marine Corps also divested of its Active component law enforcement (LE) battalions; the Marine Corps retains one Reserve component LE battalion, 4th LE Battalion, additionally almost 600 Marine Military Police Officers were transferred from those LE battalions to fill a decade-long gap in base security. In the future fight our bases are power projection platforms making this transfer critical for success in the next fight. The Marine Corps is confident that most LE battalion mission sets and requirements can be fulfilled by other Marine Corps formations during the conduct of a naval campaign. Any additional requirement for law enforcement exceeding what might be handled by organic Marine Corps units or by activating components of 4th LE Battalion will have to be handled by the Army.

33. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, does the Marine Corps have any formal agreement or plan with other Services to provide capabilities being divested or reduced under Force Design 2030 such as bridging or assault breaching?

General SMITH. No, but while there are no formalized agreements for other services to provide capabilities divested or reduced under Force Design 2030, it is important to note that any future fight will be a joint fight. In such a joint fight, we, as a service, are tasked with manning, training, and equipping our respective forces provided to a Joint Force Commander who will have the authority to employ those forces with mutually supporting joint capability without the need for formal agreements. It is highly unlikely that the Marine Corps will deploy as a stand-alone force to fight against a peer adversary for any extended periods absent support from the other services or the militaries of allied and partner nations.

34. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, would you bring back any of the capabilities the Marine Corps has divested since 2019?

General SMITH. Force design is an ongoing and iterative process. Design changes are driven by evolutionary and revolutionary improvements in U.S. capabilities and in reaction to changing threat capabilities and capacity. Given the constant interplay between friendly and adversary warfighting systems, it is impossible to predict with certainty if any specific combat, combat support, or combat service support capability or capacity would need to be reversed or substantially altered. That said, I am confident that the FD2030 choices that we have planned or are executing are the most appropriate ones to the present and foreseeable operational conditions as described in recent national security and defense strategies.

If confirmed, I am open to bringing back any capability that I am convinced by data and facts is required to accomplish the missions assigned to the Marine Corps.

FORCE DESIGN 2030 INVESTMENT

35. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, can you provide a timeline that indicates which Marine Corps capabilities, including equipment and Military Occupational Specialties, have been added because of Force Design 2030, including when they will achieve Initial Operational Capability and Full Operational Capability?

General SMITH. With the reduction in capacity in specific Military Occupation Specialties (MOS), Force Design 2030 acted on the necessity to train and equip critical enablers that enable the Marine Corps and forward deployed formations to operate in multi-domain environments. As a result, the Marine Corps invested in critical MOSs that were either non-existent pre-Force Design 2030 or in need of acceleration. The increased investment in critical enablers such as intelligence, networks, communications, space, and cyber have accelerated the ability of the Marine Corps to operate in multi-domain operations at the tactical level.

MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY CHANGES RELATED TO FD2030 (GRAPH 1)

OccFld	OccFld Name	2018	2023	Change STR	STR Growth or Reduction	2018	2023	Difference in Percent of Total STR	Relative Growth OR Relative Reduction
						% Total STR	% Total STR		
02	Intelligence	4898	4936	38	Growth	2.6%	2.8%	0.141%	Growth
05	MAGTF Planners	707	751	44	Growth	0.4%	0.4%	0.042%	Growth
08	Field Artillery	4611	4617	6	Growth	2.5%	2.6%	0.116%	Growth
09	Instructor	2823	5173	2350	Growth	1.5%	2.9%	1.384%	Growth
17	Cyberspace Operations		1936	1936	Growth	0.0%	1.1%	0.084%	Growth
23	Ammunition and EOD	2272	2341	69	Growth	1.2%	1.3%	0.094%	Growth
26	Signals Intelligence/ Ground Electronic Warfare	2308	2765	457	Growth	1.2%	1.5%	0.312%	Growth
31	Distributed Management	588	808	220	Growth	0.3%	0.5%	0.137%	Growth
44	Legal Support	1033	1131	98	Growth	0.6%	0.6%	0.080%	Growth
45	COMSTRAT		1271	1271	Growth	0.0%	0.7%	0.711%	Growth
48	Recruiting and Retention	446	475	29	Growth	0.2%	0.3%	0.027%	Growth
55	Music	862	867	5	Growth	0.5%	0.5%	0.024%	Growth
59	C2 Electronics Maintenance	1512	1798	286	Growth	0.8%	1.0%	0.197%	Growth
62	Aircraft Maintenance (FW)	3530	3539	9	Growth	1.9%	2.0%	0.091%	Growth
68	Meteorology and Oceanography	414	438	24	Growth	0.2%	0.2%	0.024%	Growth
72	Air Control/Air Support/ Anti-Air Warfare/Air Traffic Control	2824	3523	699	Growth	1.5%	2.0%	0.460%	Growth
80	MISC MOS	10764	11237	473	Growth	5.8%	6.3%	0.527%	Growth
82	Regional/Foreign Affairs	137	145	8	Growth	0.1%	0.1%	0.008%	Growth
87	Ground Operations Specialist	126	274	148	Growth	0.1%	0.2%	0.086%	Growth

MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY CHANGES RELATED TO FD2030 (GRAPH 1)—Continued

OccFld	OccFld Name	2018	2023	Change STR	STR Growth or Reduction	2018	2023	Difference in Percent of Total STR	Relative Growth OR Relative Reduction
						% Total STR	% Total STR		
88	Special Education Program	313	336	23	Growth	0.2%	0.2%	0.020%	Growth
89	Sergeant Maj/1st Sgt	1356	1407	51	Growth	0.7%	0.8%	0.062%	Growth
06	Communications	14804	14617	-187	Reduction	7.9%	8.2%	0.256%	Growth
11	Utilities	2793	2687	-106	Reduction	1.5%	1.5%	0.009%	Growth

Military Occupational Specialty Changes Related to FD2030 (Graph 1)

In the President's Budget 2020 cycle, funds saved from divestments were used to invest in such programs as Ground Based Air Defense (GBAD), F-35 spares and Block 4 modification, nascent Command-and-Control systems, sensors, and communications platforms.

In the President's Budget 2021 cycle, \$1.2 billion saved from divestments were used to invest in Strike/Anti-surface warfare capabilities, network, sensors, intelligence platforms, Air Defense, Ground Combat lethality modernization, and S&T programs.

In the President's Budget 2022 cycle, funds from divestments were directly used to invest in critical ground-based fires programs such as Navy Marine Corps Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS) and Organic Precision Fires Family of Systems (OPF FoS). Advanced sensor investments included the MAGTF Unmanned Aircraft System Expeditionary (MUX)/Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE)—MQ9A, Ground/Air Task Oriented Radar (G/ATOR) and MAGTF Electronic Warfare Ground Family of Systems (MEGFoS). Furthermore, critical ground networking investments were made in our Network on The Move (NOTM) and Marine Corps Enterprise Network (MCEN).

Nearly all these divestments from President's Budget 2023 cycle, over \$7.0 billion, were directly used to modernize critical areas that enable Force Design 2030 by investing in multi-domain areas such as Command and Control (Big Data Platform), Counter Air, Counter C5ISR-T, MQ-9A Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) sensors and enablers, and Anti-Surface Warfare capabilities.

All divested funds from President's Budget 2024 cycle were directed utilized to invest in critical warfighting capabilities such as Signature Management (YETI), Secure Expeditionary Resilient Position, Navigation and Timing (SERPNT), Light Marine Air Defense Integrated System (L-MADIS), and Tactical Communication Modernization. Aviation investments were utilized to increase Flight Hour Program and the MV-22 nacelle improvement program. Additionally, several Talent Management investments were made, including increased funding for Sexual Assault Prevention and Response programs and the Marine Corps Embassy Security Guard.

IOC & FOC Projections Program	IOC (Y/N)	Projected FOC
MAGTF Unmanned Aerial System Expeditionary / Medium Altitude Long Endurance Increment I	Y	Fiscal Year 2025
MAGTF Unmanned Aerial System Expeditionary / Medium Altitude Long Endurance Increment II	N	Fiscal Year 2027
Long Range/Long Endurance Small UAS	N	Fiscal Year 2030
Medium Range/Medium Endurance Small UAS	Y	Fiscal Year 2030
Short Range/Short Endurance Small UAS	Y	Fiscal Year 2030
CH-53K	Y	Fiscal Year 2029
KC-130J	Y	Fiscal Year 2027

IOC & FOC Projections Program	IOC (Y/ N)	Projected FOC
F-35	Y	Fiscal Year 2030
Common Aviation Command and Control Small Form Factor	N	Fiscal Year 2029
Medium Range Intercept Capability	N	Fiscal Year 2028
Marine Air Defense Integrated System	N	Fiscal Year 2028
Light-Marine Air Defense Integrated System	N	Fiscal Year 2028
Installation Counter Small UAS	N	Fiscal Year 2034
Ground/Aviation Task Oriented Radar	Y	Fiscal Year 2025
Medium Range Air Defense Radar	N	TBD
Cryptologic Technician Networks	Y	Fiscal Year 2026
High Mobility Artillery Rocket System	Y	Fiscal Year 2024
Navy Marine Corps Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System	N	Fiscal Year 2030
Long Range Unmanned Surface Vessel	N	Fiscal Year 2031
Joint Light Tactical Vehicle	Y	Fiscal Year 2030
Amphibious Combat Vehicle Family of Vehicles	Y	Fiscal Year 2028
Littoral Explosive Ordnance Neutralization Family of Systems	N	Fiscal Year 2027
EOD Robotics	N	Fiscal Year 2026
Ordnance Exploitation Modernization	N	Fiscal Year 2026
Render Safe/Access Tool Modernization	N	Fiscal Year 2027
Mounted Explosive Hazard Defeat	N	Fiscal Year 2026
Operational Command Post	N	Fiscal Year 2026
MAGTF Common Handheld—Dismounted	Y	Fiscal Year 2025
Network on the Move-Ground	Y	Fiscal Year 2026
Mounted Military-Code Receivers (Defense Advanced Global Positioning System Replacement)	Y	Fiscal Year 2030
Advanced Electronic Warfare Digital Payload	N	Fiscal Year 2026
Constructive Electromagnetic Spectrum Operational Environment System	N	Fiscal Year 2025
Spectrum Services Framework	Y	Fiscal Year 2027
Multi-Function Electromagnetic Warfare Ground Family of Systems	N	Fiscal Year 2029
Signature Management	Y	Fiscal Year 2026
Maritime Targeting Cell Expeditionary	Y	Fiscal Year 2025
UH-1Y	Y	FOC ACHIEVED
AH-1Z	Y	FOC ACHIEVED

IOC & FOC Projections Program	IOC (Y/ N)	Projected FOC
MV-22B	Y	FOC ACHIEVED
Full-sized Common Aviation Command & Control System	Y	FOC ACHIEVED
Communication Emitter Sensing and Attacking System II	Y	FOC ACHIEVED
Engineer Reconnaissance	Y	FOC ACHIEVED
Family of Medium/Heavy Tactical Trailers & Ancillary Equipment	Y	FOC ACHIEVED
Joint Battle Command Platform	Y	FOC ACHIEVED
Network on the Move-Air	Y	FOC ACHIEVED

RESPONDING ACROSS THE SPECTRUM OF CONFLICT

36. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, the Marine Corps you may inherit in 2023 looks significantly different than the Marine Corps General Berger inherited in 2019. In responses provided to my office by the Marine Corps following an April 14, 2023 briefing on section 1023 of the Fiscal Year 2023 NDAA, the Marine Corps reported:

- A 56 percent reduction in the number of 155mm howitzers
- Pre-Force Design: 126 howitzers (21 x 6-gun batteries)
- Force Design: 56 howitzers (7 x 8-gun batteries)
- A 100 percent reduction in armor and associated assault bridging
- A 100 percent reduction in assault breaching with the total divestment of the M1150 Assault Breaching Vehicle fleet
- A 12 percent reduction in the number of infantry battalions (24 to 21) and a 9 percent reduction in the number of marines in each infantry battalion for a total of a 21 percent reduction of infantry marines which corresponds to 1 out of 5 in the marines Corps.

Are these numbers accurate?

General SMITH. The accuracy of the above numbers varies between topics. The most current information pertaining to each topic is listed below:

- A 56 percent reduction in the number of 155mm howitzers
 - o Pre-Force Design 2030: 126 howitzers (21 x 6-gun batteries)
 - o Force Design 2030: 56 howitzers (7 x 8-gun batteries)
 - o **Both are accurate.** Pre-Force Design 2030, the Marine Corps maintained 21 cannon artillery batteries organized with 6 howitzers for a total of 126 howitzers. In fiscal year 2027, the Marine Corps will retain 7 batteries organized with 8 howitzers for a total of 56 howitzers, a roughly 56 percent reduction. Those batteries are being replaced with different fire support systems.
 - o The Marine Corps is transitioning 14 cannon artillery batteries to 14 Medium-Range Missile (MMSL) Batteries, which will be capable of employing multiple precision fire missiles, including Naval Strike Missiles and the MLRS Family of Munitions.
 - o Additionally, the Marine Corps will retain 6 Reserve component batteries, which will also increase to 8 howitzer batteries in fiscal year 2025.
 - o Since 2019, the lethal capacity of the Marine Divisions has increased. As measured by crew served weapons to include artillery firing systems, combat vehicles, and infantry weapons systems, the Marine Corps possesses more combat power. By 2030 toward artillery, rockets, and missiles more than double (132 percent) since 2019.
- A 100 percent reduction in armor and associated assault bridging
 - o **Both are accurate.** The divestment of M1A1 Main Battle Tanks also nullified the requirement for the 85-ton load capacity of the Armored Vehicle-Launched Bridge (AVLB). The subsequent divestment of all AVLBs and associated force structure removed an assault bridging capability to accommodate the Marine Corps ground combat and tactical vehicle inventory. As a result, Marine Corps combat developers are now working with Army researchers and industry to develop a lightweight, scalable tactical bridging solution to accommodate all current (and planned) Marine Corps ground combat and tactical vehicles. That is, the Marine Corps has divested of non-expeditionary armor

and associated assault bridging, capabilities that are not optimized for maritime campaigning and instead seeks to generate expeditionary solutions to existing and emerging capability gaps.

- A 100 percent reduction in assault breaching with the total divestment of the M1150 Assault Breaching Vehicle fleet.
 - o **Mostly accurate.** The weight and size of the M1150 Assault Breaching Vehicle (ABV) makes it incompatible for amphibious landings and littoral operations. However, the divestment of this armored breaching system including its twin M58 Mine Clearing Line Charges (MICLIC), remote firing machine gun, heavy armor protection, proofing and clearing attachments (i.e., mine plow, rake, and blade), and associated force structure does limit the Marine Ground Combat Element's ability to conduct protected and in-stride assault breaching. Dismounted marines continue to train with and utilize the Anti-Personnel Obstacle Breaching Systems (APOBS) to blast 45-meter-long paths through anti-personnel mine and wire obstacles to enable foot-mobile movement. Marine Combat Engineers also continue to train with and employ the trailer-mounted MICLIC for mounted operations for breaching 100-meter-long vehicle lanes through mines and other obstacles, though the follow-on lane proofing relies on dismounted combat engineers using hand-held detectors.
- A 12 percent reduction in the number of infantry battalions (24 to 21) and a 9 percent reduction in the number of marines in each infantry battalion for a total of a 21 percent reduction of infantry marines which corresponds to one out of five in the Marines Corps.
 - o Total force structure allocated to infantry battalions reduces until 2029, when the IBX-30 reorganization is complete. Force Structure reductions occur in two phases. Phase 1 included divestment of three infantry battalions; 3d Battalion 8th Marines in Camp Lejeune, 2d Battalion 3d Marines, and 3d Battalion 3d Marines in Hawaii along with the reorganization of 1st Battalion, 3d Marines into 3d Littoral Combat Team (LCT). Phase 2 of reductions is IBX-30 reorganization, which reduced the size of each infantry battalion by 9.4 percent, from 894 to 811 Marines (Marine Structure only—Does not include Navy structure within infantry battalions). The combination of reducing from 24 to 21 Infantry Battalions and the IBX-30 reorganizations result in a 19.4 percent reduction in infantry Battalion structure due to FD2030.
 - o However, both the Littoral Combat Team and the modernized IBX-30 infantry reduction of marines within infantry battalions do not provide the necessary context to understand the increased lethality these formations have gained by investments in capabilities such as precision fires, advanced sensor assets, and critical communications equipment to synthesize targeting. There are more killing assets per infantry Marine in 2030 than in 2019. Infantry battalion lethality, as measured by share of crew-served weapons per Marine assigned to infantry battalion, increased by 28 percent from 2019 to 2030. These smaller formations support Marine Corps concepts of Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) and Stand-in Forces (SIF) that are capable of persisting inside an adversaries' weapons engagements zone during competition, responding to crises, and seizing and defending key maritime terrain during conflict.
 - o **Inaccurate** Combining the 12 percent reduction of infantry battalions and 9 percent reduction of marines within infantry battalions to equate to a 21 percent total loss does not provide the accurate context for the gain in capabilities. The manning percentage has increased substantially (89 percent to 97 percent).
 - o The 21 marine infantry battalions are still sufficient to meet operational commitments while maintaining a 1:3 deployment to dwell ratio. These smaller formations support Marine Corps concepts of Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) and Stand-in Forces (SIF) that are capable of persisting inside an adversaries' weapons engagements zone during competition, responding to crises, and seizing and defending key maritime terrain during conflict.
 - o As noted above these raw numbers do not provide the necessary context to understand the increased lethality these formations have gained by investments in capabilities such as precision fires, advanced sensor assets, and critical communications equipment to synthesize targeting. Moreover, as a combined arms force, the Marine Corps will retain 7 Active component and 6 Reserve component tube-artillery batteries and 14 Medium Range Missile (MMSL) batteries and 3 Long Range Missile (LMSL) batteries. While initially fielded with an anti-ship missile, the MMSL will incorporate the MLRS Fam-

ily of Munitions (MFOM) allowing a wider array of effects. In aggregate, we have increased our ground indirect fires capability.

Overall, the increased lethality of the core infantry battalion is improved through increased manning. From 1995 until now, Battalion T/Os have gotten smaller, but the manning percentage has increased, and the unit-to-unit variances have decreased. The higher manning level allows commanders to train as they will fight.” For Infantry battalions, the manning as a percent of T/O is 97 percent now; up from 89 percent in 1995 (all battalions aggregated). In 1995 only 5 of 24 battalions were manned above 100 percent of T/O while 12 were below 90 percent of T/O, compared to that to 2023 where 10 battalions are above 100 percent and only 5 are below 90 percent.

37. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, the new Marine Littoral Regiments (MLR), three of which will be established within III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), will not have the minimum number of LSMs they need to execute Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations/ Stand-in Forces (EABO/SIF) for at least 5 years according to the Navy’s shipbuilding plan, robbing them of intra-theater mobility. Will the MLRs be able to execute combat operations in the intervening years before they receive LSMs?

General SMITH. All forces are dependent on Joint, Naval, and organic mobility assets to maneuver throughout the battlespace. However, the current programmatic timeline for Medium Landing Ships (LSMs) does not support delivery to support (1) Marine Regiment until fiscal year 2033. Until the LSM becomes fully operational, the service has explored other interim solutions to support SIF. The interim planned composition is (2) T-EPFs, (5) stern landing vessels (SLVs), and (5) LCUs until the LSM becomes available in fiscal year 2033. These provide options for moving the SIF, but are limited and should not be seen as a substitute for the LSM requirement.

Although III MEF demonstrates the ability to operate as a SIF without the Medium Landing Ship (LSM), the service and III MEF have registered the requirement for both inter-(operational) and intra-(tactical) mobility.

38. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, last year during your posture hearing General Berger and I discussed a risk trough, the time between when existing Marine Corps combined capabilities are divested or reduced and new capabilities come on line to replace them. The world is a dangerous place and the Marine Corps seems to be firmly in the risk trough. This seems like the period of maximum danger. We are no longer the legacy Marine Corps yet the new capabilities promised with Force Design 2030 are not arrived. If you are confirmed as the next Commandant will you be better positioned to respond to contingencies across the conflict spectrum than the Marine Corps your predecessor inherited?

General SMITH. Today, the Marine Corps is better prepared to serve as a naval expeditionary force-in-readiness and to operate inside actively contested maritime spaces in support of fleet operations and joint campaigns. The Marine Corps is already standing-in alongside allies and partners within reach of enemy weapon systems during competition. During crisis the Marine Corps also continues to be the premiere global crisis response force. Critical to this is maintaining no less than 31 L-Class amphibious warfare ships and delivering 35 Medium Landing Ships (LSMs) to posture forces forward to provide the Marine Corps the required maritime maneuver and mobility. During conflict the SIF is prepared to seize and defend key maritime terrain, support sea control and denial operations, and maintain custody of maritime targets in support of projecting combat power from the Joint Force back into an anti-access, area denial environment.

Additionally, while there is work that needs to be done, our initial investments in lethality are already bearing fruit. With the support of congress, III Marine Expeditionary Force will be receiving the first delivery of the Navy Marine Corps Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS). This is a significant milestone, as within 3 years since Force Design 2030 started, we will be operationalizing a new capability we did not have before—a ground-based anti-ship capability.

39. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, in answers provided by the Marine Corps staff to questions from my office, the Marine Corps frequently stated that divested combat capabilities were “incompatible for amphibious shipping and littoral operations.” But not all future Marine Corps missions will be focused on littoral operations. How does Force Design 2030 support operations outside the littorals?

General SMITH. The plan for light, lethal, and distributed forces would be successful in operations outside of the littorals. On 16 March 2022, TF 61/2, led by a Marine General Officer with a task-organized staff was integrated into the U.S. 6th

Fleet Headquarters in Naples, Italy, and executed a combined joint exercise, planned operations for various ARG/MEU teams in multiple locations throughout the theater, and improved Maritime Domain Awareness for the Fleet Commander and partners and allies. Task Force 61/2 executed a proof of concept during 2022 in which they provided 6th Fleet Headquarters with real-time Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA). In that effort, Marine forces tested, refined, and validated concepts of employment for MDA and closing kill webs, while also conducting real-world, time sensitive reconnaissance-counter reconnaissance missions. These efforts continue to support 6th Fleet operations as well as nested within EUCOM and Africa Command (AFRICOM) priorities and have since turned into a rotational force.

40. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, for decades the Marine Corps has provided the hedge the U.S. military needs for unexpected contingencies. As the other Services focused on the Soviet military the Marine Corps honed its capabilities as the Nation's rapid global response force. One criticism of Marine Corps Force Design is that in reorienting on the "pacing threat"—the Chinese PLA—the Marine Corps has given up much of its 9–1–1 capabilities. Does Force Design 2030 retain the weapons and equipment that enabled the Marine Corps to hedge as the other Services turn their attention to China?

General SMITH. The Marine Corps has not divested any equipment or structure that prevent the service from still being the premier global crisis response force. The Marine Corps still maintains seven MEUs. The structural organization of our MEUs will also remain the same and will be comprised of a Command Element (CE), a Battalion Landing Team (BLT) as the Ground Combat Element (GCE), a Composite Aviation Squadron as the Aviation Combat Element (ACE), and a Combat Logistics Battalion (CLB) as the Logistics Combat Element (LCE).

The Marine Corps continues to have capacity for seven MEUs. Force Design 2030 has not changed the number of MEUs the Marine Corps can field; in fact, Force Design 2030 reinforces the need for the continued global employment of this versatile and highly capable unit.

Multiple Administrations, multiple National Defense Strategies, and a half-dozen sets of associated Defense Planning Guidance, as informed by the broader Intelligence Community (IC), direct the Marine Corps to pace to the principal threat and focus on the principal theater. The Marine Corps does not have the authority—nor a differing understanding of the threat environment—to deviate from those threat-informed sets of strategy. The Marine Corps has complied with political leadership's overarching guidance and decisions—while retaining its ability to respond to crisis globally—as that same guidance charges the Navy and Marine Corps to retain response capabilities. In fact, a forward and credible, lethal and resilient, Stand-in Force does just that—it creates Flexible Deterrence Options and Flexible Response Options to combatant commanders in the face of emerging crises.

41. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, General Berger and Lieutenant General Heckl have testified that the Marine Corps is fully capable of meeting all global commitments. Nearly 60 percent of the Maritime Prepositioning Forces required to sustain marines have been cut, the Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) Augmentation Program-Kuwait has been eliminated, and prepositioned equipment in Norway has been reduced. Do these reductions or eliminations or pre-positioned equipment impact the Marine Corps' ability to meet global commitments?

General SMITH. The Service's elimination of the MEU Augmentation Program—Kuwait supporting CENTCOM was due to it being purpose built to support marines deployed to and engaged in that region, and with the strategic guidance focusing the Marine Corps on the INDOPACOM theater, that purpose was no longer a priority based on available resources. The reduction in Marine Corps Prepositioning—Norway was of legacy equipment and said equipment is no longer needed for a crisis response in EUCOM. The Service remains fully capable of meeting all global commitments; however, with 5 additional Maritime Prepositioning Ships (MPS) in Reduced Operating Status (ROS) it will take longer for combatant commands to close the force. This increase in time to close the force highlights the need to fully fund our prepositioning program.

Current Impact: The Navy decision to place 5 additional MPS in ROS will not only diminish the ability to forward position and sustain these additional forces required to counter aggressive People's Republic of China (PRC) actions, but also increase the strain on III MEF forces, allies, and partners in the FIC, and limited organic and joint air and maritime transportation assets.

Future Impact: This impact will be felt most acutely in a crisis where the ability to close forces will be diminished by the requirement to use other assets to sustain already forward-postured forces.

Additionally, MPF is tied to every Operation Plan (OPLAN), not just those in the Indo-Pacific. Placing Maritime Prepositioning Ships in a Reduced Operating Status delays the U.S. Marine Corps' responses in all OPLANs.

Due to placing the 5 MPS in ROS, for MARFORPAC Crisis Response, MPS arriving in theater went from C+25 to now between C+60 and C+75. Sustainment will be late to the need, resulting in critical risk to mission and force.

The Service is developing a Global Positioning Network (GPN) as a recognition that we need to think differently about how to preposition assets around the globe to support our Stand-in Forces across the full range of military operations.

42. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, has the Marine Corps' capability to meet all global commitments been exacerbated by the admitted shortage of amphibious shipping?

General SMITH. Yes. A shortage of amphibious shipping has exacerbated the Marine Corps capability to meet global commitments.

The decrease in the overall Amphibious Warfare Ships (AWS) inventory, combined with consistent/constant Global Force Management (GFM) demand and longer than planned maintenance availabilities have resulted in an overworked AWS fleet with no "ready bench" and insufficient numbers to fulfill Secretary of Defense-directed GFM requirements, delayed ARG/MEU deployments (slower response), and reductions in amphibious training & certification periods (warfighting proficiency).

WAR GAMES

43. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, were the studies, war games, or analysis that informed General Berger's decision on the Marine Corps force structure briefed to the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of the Navy, combatant commanders, or Members of the Senate and House Armed Services Committees?

General SMITH. Yes.

No one wargame, study, or live-force experimentation event was sufficient to prompt the service to undergo significant service-level changes to force structure. Instead, the body of evidence resulting from many wargames and experiments over the course of several years, which when aggregated, illuminated for the service that change was necessary and thus provoked action. The studies, war games, and analysis listed below informed the modernization decisions and investments that enacted Force Design 2030.

Once developed, the Commandant briefs and seeks approval of his plans from both the Secretary of the Navy and the Secretary of Defense. If approved, they become a part of an overall defense program assembled by the Secretary of Defense. The program is then sent to the Office of Management and Budget to be incorporated into the President's budget estimate for submission to Congress. In essence, OMB's delivery of the administration's submission to Congress signals the President's endorsement of anything included therein. Once delivered, the House and Senate Armed Services Committees unpack Department of Defense plans, study them, and decide whether to authorize and fund them.

Force Design 2030 was included in the Marine Corps' Fiscal Year 2021 Presidential Budget. It was approved by then-Secretary of the Navy Richard Spencer and briefed directly to then-Deputy Secretary of Defense David Norquist at the Deputy's Management Action Group. Per standard practice, it was then considered by the Director of Cost Analysis and Program Evaluation and endorsed. Based on supportive recommendations from both that director and the Deputy Secretary, Secretary of Defense Mark Esper approved Force Design 2030.

A collection of the most significant influencing events is included below. There are currently unclassified and secret wargame reports and experimentation reports that have been produced that either identified the need for Force Design 2030 or have resulted from wargames conducted to aid Force Design 2030 decisions.

Reports are available for the following wargames and experimentation events which pre-dated FD2030:

Advanced Naval Technology Exercise 2017, April 2017

- Purpose: Examine ship to shore maneuver, amphibious fire support and effects, amphibious C4, clearing amphibious assault lanes, and information warfare.
- Reports available: unclassified final report

MAGTF Warrior 17 Wargame, 12–16 June 2017

- Purpose: Define Marine Corps capabilities required to conduct sea control and power projection within a joint campaign against a peer adversary.
- Reports available: Secret final report.

Dawn Blitz 2017, October 2017

- Purpose: Examine EAB concepts such as naval integration, maritime strike, sea control, EAB development, and F-35 integration with Advance Field Artillery Tactical Data System (AFATDS)
 - Reports available: unclassified report
 - Expeditionary Warrior 18 Wargame, 2–6 April 2018
 - Purpose: Examine operational level logistics support to Marine expeditionary forces in the western Pacific in an anti-access/area denial environment.
 - Reports available: Secret final report.
 - Naval Services Game 18, 9–12 July 2018
 - Purpose: Explore command relationships, tasking, capabilities, and employment implications of Marine Corps and Navy forces task-organized for littoral combat across the full range of naval missions.
 - Reports available: Secret final report.
 - MAGTF Warrior 18 Wargame, 17–21 September 2018
 - Purpose: Inform future logistics operating concepts of support and how the MEF will be organized, trained, and equipped to support and sustain operations as part of an inside force.
 - Reports available: Secret final report.
 - Within Sea Dragon Phase II initiative, Trident Juncture 2018, October–November 2018
 - Purpose: To test hybrid logistics, particularly data-driven logistics systems and additive manufacturing with CLB-2 as the assigned experiment force
 - Reports available: unclassified final report
- After the Commandant's Planning Guidance (CPG) was released in the summer of 2019 and Force Design 2030 modernization began, the Marine Corps has conducted over 400 congressional engagements with Members, Professional Staff Members, and staff from personal offices. We received extensive feedback from these engagements that helped inform follow-on experimentation. Marine Corps leadership values and honors the need for congressional oversight and has actively supported that lawful requirement.
- From January 2020 to April 2023, Headquarters Marine Corps, Combat Development and Integration (CD&I), alone has conducted 221 of those engagements. Of those 221 engagements roughly 30 percent were classified briefs at the secret level and above. The remaining 70 percent of those engagements were at the unclassified level to be as transparent as possible in our modernization efforts.
- Marine Corps component commanders routinely brief their supported combatant commander on changes to Marine Corps capabilities.

44. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, when did the Marine Corps determine its current amphibious shipping requirement of 31 ships?

General SMITH. The Marine Corps has a requirement for no fewer than 31 amphibious warfare ships 10 LHA/LHD and 21 LPDs. Since 2019, three DoN studies have examined amphibious warfare ship force structure requirements. The requirement was informed by combining the findings of those studies, the most recent being the SecNav directed Amphibious Fleet Requirement Study (AFRS) in 2022, with amphibious warfare ship readiness trends over the past 10 years. AFRS was a threat informed, scenario directed, model driven, multiple phase event executed by the analytic arms of the Navy and the Marine Corps. The findings of AFRS were briefed to the Service Chiefs and Secretary of the Navy. This finding is consistent with 11 amphibious warfare ship inventory studies completed over the last 14 years.

45. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, in what documents was 31 amphibious shipping requirement communicated to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV) staff, Secretary of the Navy, Secretary of Defense, and Members of Congress?

General SMITH. Since 2019, three DoN studies have examined amphibious warfare ship force structure requirements. The requirement was informed by combining the findings of those studies, the most recent being the SecNav directed Amphibious Fleet Requirement Study (AFRS) in 2022, with amphibious warfare ship readiness trends over the past 10 years. The findings of AFRS were briefed to the Service chiefs, SecNav, and components of the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). Congressional interest in the AFRS prompted OSD to submit a Report to Congress. On 27 December 2022, findings were submitted to Members of Congress.

46. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, the Center for Strategic and International Studies' (CSIS) recent war game "First Battle of the Next War" found MLRs could contribute to the fight on a limited basis but were largely nonfactors as political as-

sumptions and China's defensive capabilities prevented them from being close enough to the fight. In fact, in several instances of the game, United States players tried to move an MLR onto Taiwan by air or sea, but in all cases the unit and transportation assets were destroyed trying to do so. Ultimately, the CSIS war game found one squadron of bombers alone had more impact on the battlespace than an MLR. What is your assessment of this war game and its conclusions?

General SMITH. The CSIS war game report on "First Battle of the Next War" provides an in-depth analysis of the challenge, the methods utilized, and key results. With additional context in the level of planning that went into the war game to include the players that were involved and the extent to which they were making decisions, based on operational contingency plans, more substantial feedback on the wargames report can be provided. The CSIS emphasized:

First, the criticality of employing a whole-of-government approach to prioritizing the deepening of diplomatic and military ties with regional allies and partners, especially Japan. The MLR placement and access to key maritime terrain enables joint force maneuver and is the conceptual framework of the Stand-in Force. The placement and access necessary to assure allies and partners, to deter adversaries, and to pose a credible threat in the event of armed conflict is contingent upon strong international ties developed through application of all the instruments of national power.

The second point is that the United States cannot wait when deciding what to do in the event of a crisis. Should the PRC give indications and warnings of a cross-channel invasion of Taiwan and thereby escalate from competition to crisis, it is crucial for US political leadership to act quickly to provide the Marine Corps with the time necessary to reposition forces on key maritime terrain where they can be optimally employed in support of the Joint Force.

While there are multiple points of agreement with the CSIS study and the Marine Corps' vision for the anticipated future operating environment, there were two areas of disagreement that must be highlighted:

First, regarding the difficulties associated with resupplying missiles to an MLR while engaged in conflict, it is important to emphasize the MLR's kinetic fires capability is a secondary function. While the MLR certainly maintains a robust fires capability, its primary role is to function as part of an integrated and redundant network of expeditionary sensors at key battlespace chokepoints, providing situational awareness, targeting data, and Command & Control (C2) for the naval, joint, and coalition force. By combining Marine Corps sensors with joint kinetic and non-kinetic fires and effects, the stand-in force can hold key adversary assets at risk and disrupt adversary decisionmaking, thereby enabling the rapid deployment of naval, joint, and coalition forces in theater. The MLR provides combatant commanders with both options and improved information upon which to interpret and manage their decisionmaking space.

Second, the MLR is also designed to deter and defeat strategic competitors through strengthening crucial relationships with allies and partners, reassuring them of U.S. security commitments, and to foster access in times of crisis or conflict. The MLR is designed to be capable of interoperability with joint or coalition forces in the contact and blunt layers. In crisis, the MLR's forward posture and access enable it, in coordination with coalition forces, to hold adversary assets at risk, contribute to coalition forces' sea denial and sea control operations via organic lethality, and to close coalition kill webs and provide other critical enabling actions. The MLR is purpose-built and designed to rapidly transition from competition, to conflict, and back to competition as escalatory dynamics dictate in support of either a joint or coalition force.

47. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, was the Marine Corps involved in the execution of this CSIS war game?

General SMITH. The Marine Corps did not participate in the planning or execution of this event. Additionally, no personnel from the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab's Wargaming Division, which is responsible for our force design wargaming, were asked to participate or were otherwise involved.

48. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, has the Marine Corps discussed this war game with CSIS?

General SMITH. No personnel from the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab's Wargaming Division, which is responsible for our force design wargaming, were asked to participate or were otherwise involved.

49. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, how does the Marine Corps respond to this CSIS assessment of the MLR's effectiveness? Please do not contend that the Marine Corps has access to classified information and CSIS does not.

General SMITH. The CSIS assessment of the MLR is largely based on using it to provide kinetic fires. While the MLR has the capability to provide these fires, its strongest contribution to the Joint Force is its ability to find, fix, and track adversary ships and aircraft, make sense of what will likely be a confusing and cluttered operating environment, and provide targeting information to other elements of the Joint Force to increase their effectiveness, efficiency, and survivability. At the same time, the MLR will contribute to denying or degrading an opponent's ability to do the same.

The MLR's small operational footprint and mobility will allow it to survive in this highly contested and information saturated environment. If the enemy wants to expend an exquisite munition on a small number of marines—only to find they moved in the time it took the missile to arrive at its planned target—then that is one less exquisite missile bound for an aircraft carrier or key base. These forces will provide targeting-level information to the rest of the Joint Force, so that the 200 missiles a bomber squadron can carry are directed against the right targets in the right place, even though those targets may have moved hundreds of miles during the interval between launch of the aforementioned bombers and their arrival at their weapons release points.

The CSIS report notes the difficulty associated with deploying an MLR to Taiwan after the start of hostilities. While an MLR could certainly be employed on the island of Taiwan, in the context of a western Pacific conflict it provides more value to the Joint Force by positioning on key pieces of maritime terrain and limiting an opponent's freedom of maneuver, east of the first island chain. When other targeting systems are degraded or denied, the MLR will leverage multi-domain communications pathways to provide targeting information to the Joint Force. In turn, this will limit other critical asset's exposure to threats while leveraging their larger weapons magazines and capabilities to attrite enemy forces. The MLR further supports the Joint Force by conducting sea denial operations through the prosecution of enemy forces with their own organic fires capabilities.

Additionally, the MLR is intended to be partially deployed at all times, conducting exercises with allied and partner nations, bolstering their capabilities and interoperability. This creates uncertainty for potential adversaries as they will not know what they will be forced to contend with, should they choose to engage in armed conflict. Further, the MLR's partial deployment reduces the portion of the MLR that will need to be re-positioned in the event armed conflict commences. The Marine Corps recognizes that strategic lift is a vulnerable resource, and that it will be heavily employed by other Services in the event of significant U.S. force deployments. This is a large part of the reason the Marine Corps is seeking a light amphibious ship capability to deploy and sustain portions of the stand in force.

It is also worth noting that the MLR tends to be perceived as a unit that is only useful in a western Pacific conflict. This is not the case. The capabilities of the MLR have proven useful in the Baltic during multi-lateral exercises, tracking real-world unfriendly contacts in multiple domains and providing that information to combined forces. There are numerous other maritime chokepoints around the world where the MLR can provide utility in ensuring friendly freedom of maneuver, while denying the opponents ability to maneuver. Mindful of your request to not reference classified information, it is critical to point out that the systems which the joint force commander would use to enhance MLR survivability are classified and were not available to CSIS for their use.

50. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, what is the Marine Corps doing to assure access to terrain where MLRs are likely to operate in a contingency involving China or Russia?

General SMITH. During competition, crisis, and conflict, the ability for the Joint Force to gain and maintain access, basing, and overflight from our partners and allies is critical to projecting combat power in support of the combatant commanders. This is one of the significant advantages that the Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) / Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) provides to combatant commanders in terms of Flexible Response Options (FROs) and Flexible Deterrence Options (FDOs). However, it is necessary to build and sustain our key relationships during competition.

The Marine Corps, as part of a Stand-In Force (SIF), supports the National Defense Strategy by being forward postured with our partners and allies. With the latest change to the international agreement with the Government of Japan, 12th MLR will provide a ready and capable formation in the First Island Chain. The combina-

tion of presence and capability reassures our allies and ensures the Marine Corps' ability to respond to regional crisis, further reinforcing our future access.

Access for unit employment is largely within the purview of combatant commanders. However, the Marine Corps works with those combatant commanders and our allies and partners to establish relationships that are the foundation for future access. Some examples of this include bilateral and multilateral exercises like Balikatan and Nordic Response (formerly Cold Response), key leader engagements, and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR) support. Security agreements also play an important role in providing the legal and administrative framework for Marine Corps presence, while respecting the sovereignty and interests of U.S. allies and partners.

51. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, the Marine Corps has previously conducted its own war games as part of the Force Design 2030 development effort. Will the Marine Corps release classified or unclassified versions of these war game conclusions to my office?

General SMITH. Below is a list of the reports available for those with the appropriate clearances. Future results may also be made available to those with appropriate clearances.

MAGTF Warrior 17, 12–16 June 2017 (*pre-FD 2030*)

- Purpose: Define Marine Corps capabilities required to conduct sea control and power projection within a joint campaign against a peer adversary.
- Reports available: Secret final report.

Expeditionary Warrior 18, 2–6 April 2018 (*pre-FD 2030*)

- Purpose: Examine operational level logistics support to Marine expeditionary forces in the western Pacific in an anti-access/area denial environment.
- Reports available: Secret final report.

Naval Services Game 18, 9–12 July 2018 (*pre-FD 2030*)

- Purpose: Explore command relationships, tasking, capabilities, and employment implications of Marine Corps and Navy forces task-organized for littoral combat across the full range of naval missions.
- Reports available: Secret final report.

MAGTF Warrior 18, 17–21 September 2018 (*pre-FD 2030*)

- Purpose: Inform future logistics operating concepts of support and how the MEF will be organized, trained, and equipped to support and sustain operations as part of an inside force.
- Reports available: Secret final report.

POM22, 7–11 October 2019

- Purpose: Identify capability roadmap changes required to support Force Design 2030.
- Reports available: Unclassified summary.

Strategy 2030, 16–17 October 2019

- Purpose: Inform CMC Force Design 2030 construct and identify potential service-level risks associated with directed force reductions and reorganizations.
- Reports available: Unclassified summary.

Pacific Surprise, 21–31 October 2019 (MLR-focused)

- Purpose: Operational level test of Force Design 2030 force in context of extended joint, maritime campaign against the pacing threat.
- Reports available: Unclassified summary, Secret final report.

Ghost Fleet 1, 14–17 January 2020 (MLR-focused)

- Purpose: Examine the extent to which proposed FD 2030 MLR and MEU can support a given sea denial mission within the context of JFOS 2.2
- Reports available: Unclassified summary, Secret final report.

Black Sheep Squadron, 31 December 2019–28 January 2020

- Purpose: Explore concepts of employment and capabilities for manned and unmanned Marine Corps aviation assets to inform future force design and development.
- Reports available: Unclassified summary.

Ender's Shadow, 15 April and 21 August 2020 (MLR-focused)

- Purpose: Inform FD 2030 decisions and the development of the Tentative Manual for Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (TM-EABO) through tactical employment of and MLR capabilities as part of a joint maritime campaign conducted in the SCS.
- Reports available: Unclassified summary, two Secret final reports.

Ghost Fleet 2, 20–24 July 2020

- Purpose: Examine the value of proposed sustainment vessels and existing Military Sealift Command ships in sustaining the Joint Force during a joint maritime campaign.
 - Reports available: Unclassified summary.
- Provident Forge, 23 September–6 October 2020
- Purpose: Evaluate the FD 2030 infantry battalion against selected mission requirements to assess capability when executing global crisis response and contingency missions.
 - Reports available: Unclassified summary, Secret final report.
- Naval Services Game 20, 18–23 October 2020
- Purpose: Explore fleet integration of Navy and Marine Corps force design initiatives to inform command and control relationships to fight effectively.
 - Reports available: Unclassified summary, Secret final report.
- Crown Jewel, 2 February–23 April 2021
- Purpose: Evaluate proposed FD2030 MEU construct and concept of employment against selected missions to gauge the formation's ability to execute proposed mission essential tasks.
 - Reports available: Unclassified summary, Secret final report.
- ENIGMA, 21 February–18 April 2021
- Purpose: Explore design and development considerations of Marine Information Detachments in support of forces operating in the information environment.
 - Reports available: Unclassified summary, Secret final report.
- Stand-in Force, 29 March–2 April 2021 (MLR-focused)
- Purpose: Inform design of a Stand-in Force that is optimized to conduct reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance as part of a Joint Force campaign in SCS that can transition seamlessly between competition and conflict.
 - Reports available: Unclassified summary.
- Ender's Rise, three-game series between Feb–25 July 2021 (MLR-focused)
- Purpose: Inform revisions and enhancements to the TM-EABO and recommend DOTMLPF-P actions to support organizing, training, and equipping Marine Littoral Regiments and Littoral Maneuver Squadrons in preparation in competition.
 - Reports available: Unclassified summary, Secret “quicklook” report.
- Littoral Logistics (Expeditionary Warrior 21), 9–13 August 2021
- Purpose: Inform the development of concepts required to posture and sustain a naval force-in-readiness executing theater-level expeditionary advanced base operations in a contested environment.
 - Reports available: Unclassified summary, Secret final report.
- Littoral Maneuver, 30 August–3 September 2021
- Purpose: Develop and assess boat capabilities and concepts of employment in order to inform requirements documents.
 - Reports available: Unclassified summary, Secret final report.
- Ground Warrior 22, 7 October 2021–17 February 2022
- Purpose: Refine and clarify the concept of employment for, and examine the composition of, the FD 2030 infantry battalion set against global mission requirements.
 - Reports available: Unclassified summary, secret “quicklook” report.
- Aviation Wargame, 13–17 December 2021
- Purpose: Review and refine Marine aviation requirements in support of the Stand-in Force of 2030 and beyond.
 - Reports available: Unclassified summary, TS/SCI final report.
- Expeditionary Warrior 22.1, 7–11 March 2022 (MLR-related)
- Purpose: Explore Marine Corps means of contributing to naval, joint, and national objectives in competition below the threshold of major armed combat.
 - Reports available: Unclassified summary, Secret “quicklook” report.
- Expeditionary Warrior 22.2 / Global 15, 16–20 May 2022 (MLR-related)
- Purpose: Examine Navy and Marine Corps afloat and ashore integration opportunities which enable a Joint Task Force scheme of maneuver and scheme of fires in a high-end conflict against a peer threat.
 - Reports available: Unclassified summary, TS/SCI report (under classification review)
- MLR Game 2022 Agile Competition/Agile Response (collaboration w/SAW), 23–27 May 2022 (MLR-focused)

- Purpose: Assess concepts related to the employment of Stand-in Forces and the Marine Littoral Regiment at the operational level of war during transition from competition to conflict.
 - Reports available: Unclassified final report published in US Naval Institute journal Proceedings
- MLR Game 2023 (collaboration w/Krulak Center), 17 January and 24 March 2023, (MLR-focused)
- Purpose: Identify alternative COAs to the current Littoral Combat Team construct.
 - Reports available: Secret
- Azure Dragon, 9–13 January 2023 (MLR-related)
- Purpose: Explore III MEF ability to transition from day-to-day operations to major armed combat operations and explore MEF Major Subordinate Commands' ability to serve as Naval Task Group Headquarters.
 - Reports available: Secret "quicklook" report, Secret final report (final review).
- Ground Warrior 23, 13 December 22–6 January 23
- Purpose: Explore employment of the FD2030 infantry battalion in offensive operations and assess the sufficiency of the battalion's composition.
 - Reports available: Secret final report (in review).
- Reconnaissance/Counter-reconnaissance (RXR), 8–12 May 2023
- Purpose: Examine Maritime RXR functional concept, inform other related concepts, and examine critical technologies that enable successful naval task group operations.
 - Reports available: Secret "quicklook" report.

MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT CAPABILITIES

52. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, the most visible component of the Marine Corps' crisis response capability is the MEU. The 2,200 marines on a MEU, divided between a Battalion Landing Team (BLT), a Composite Helicopter Squadron, and a Combat Logistics Battalion, bring organic capabilities that a combatant commander can employ. Force Design 2030 changes the type and amount of equipment available to the MEU as well as the structure and composition of units assigned to the command element (CE), the ground combat element (GCE), the aviation combat element (ACE) and the logistics combat element (LCE). Can you provide a detailed breakdown of the composition of the 31st MEU and the 13th MEU in 2018 and 2023, including any changes to their mission essential tasks and the number of marines assigned to the CE, GCE, ACE, and LCE?

General SMITH. Force Design 2030 has not changed the number of Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs) the Marine Corps can field; in fact, Force Design 2030 reinforces the need for the continued global employment of this versatile and highly capable unit. The Marine Corps continues to have capacity for seven MEUs

13th MEU Summary. The Service has increased its number of F-35s from 6 to 10. This is only feasible in a 2x LPD class ship composition as executed in 2023 unless other aviation assets are reduced. The divestment of heavy main battle tanks has resulted in an increase in ashore mobility of personnel and cargo via additional All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), 7-tons, and Joint Light Tactical Vehicles (JLTVs). The temporary reduction in AAVs has allowed additional engineer equipment and containerized cargo to be embarked. The vertical takeoff and landing—unmanned aerial system (V-BATs) have begun fielding, placing an additional aviation capability with the medium deck ships during disaggregated operations. Personnel composition remains similar across the MAGTF.

31st MEU Summary. F-35s were slated to deploy in 2018, however were land-based for operational considerations. The homeport shift of LHA-6 USS AMERICA replacing LHD-1 USS WASP in Forward Deployed Naval Forces—Japan (FDFN-J) has brought an F-35 certified flight deck into 7th Fleet resulting in regular 5th Gen TACAIR presence with the MEU. Some traditional towed artillery has been replaced with HIMARS rocket artillery. As with 13th MEU, V-BATs have begun fielding with very positive feedback from our commanders, and personnel composition remains consistent.

Detailed composition of MEU capabilities in 2018 and 2023 is provided below and is displayed in two columns (column 1 represents 2018 and column 2 represents 2023).

13th MEU Aircraft and UAS: MV-22:

- 10/10. CH-53: 4/4. AH-1: 4/4. UH-1: 3/3. F-35: 6/10. V-BAT: 0/3.

13th MEU Vehicles and Equipment:

- M777: 6/4. M1A1 Main Battle Tank: 4/0. M88 Tank Retriever: 1/0. AAV: 15/0. LAV: 20/20. 7-Ton: 41/45. HMMWV/JLTV: 84/94. ATV: 7/17. Engineering equipment: 5/7. Containerized cargo: 468/548.

31st MEU Aircraft and UAS:

- MV-22: 10/10. CH-53: 4/4. AH-1: 4/4. UH-1: 3/3. F-35: 0/6. V-BAT: 0/3.

31st MEU Vehicles and Equipment:

- M777: 6/4. HIMARS: 0/2. AAV: 15/0. LAV: 5/11. 7-Ton: 37/30. LVSR: 3/0. HMMWVs/JLTV: 85/49. ATV: 11/15. Engineering equipment: 5/2. Containerized cargo: 367/357.

The Mission Essential Task List (METL) for both the 31st and 13th Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs) have experienced some changes between 2018 and 2023. These changes included the removal of four METs:

- Conducting Theater Security Cooperation Activities
- Conducting Aviation Operations from Expeditionary Shore-Based Sites
- Performing Enabling Operations
- Conducting Airfield Seizure Operations

While adding one new MET: Establishing and Operating Expeditionary Advanced Bases.

Now, both MEUs are expected to be capable of the following:

- Establishing an expeditionary site to support naval operations, which may include ports, airfields, Forward Arming and Refueling Points (FARPs), forward operating bases, and firing areas
- Conducting enabling operations as required for naval operations
- Establishing and maintaining operations at a site until it is either disestablished or control is transferred to another entity
- Reducing pockets of resistance, securing the area, and defending the site against company-level threats.

While the METL for the 31st and 13th MEUs are identical, there is a minor difference in the baseline and advanced standards for Maritime Interception Operations (MIO). The primary difference is the specified ability to conduct daytime bottom-up entry, which is a baseline standard for the 13th MEU, but is an advanced standard for the 31st MEU.

It is important to note that each MEU commander in coordination with the MEF Commander, determines this specific load out of their MEU based on current conditions and threat assessments. Multiple MEUs over the past two decades have chosen not to take main battle tanks due to their size and relatively low utilization rate. As an example: the 22d MEU in 1996 chose not to take tanks but rather other vehicles in their place. This MEU conducted multiple allied and partner exercises and conducted two real world NEO's in Liberia and the Central African Republic, while still providing a TRAP force for operations in Bosnia Herzegovina.

53. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, the MEU GCE is based on a BLT with three rifle companies. The standard attachments to form the BLT have been an artillery battery (6 x M777 lightweight howitzers), an assault amphibious vehicle (AAV) platoon (18–21 AAVs), a light armored reconnaissance platoon or company (6–25 LAV variants), and engineer platoon, and a reconnaissance platoon. The composite squadron in the ACE traditionally deploys with the following mix of airframes and detachments: medium tiltrotor (VMM) squadron (10–12 x MV-22s), heavy helicopter squadron (HMH) detachment (4 x CH-53E/K), light attack helicopter squadron (HMLA) detachment (4 x AH-1Z and 3 x UH-1Y), Marine attack squadron (VMA or VMFA) detachment (6 x AV-8B or F-35B), aerial refueler transport squadron (VMGR) detachment (2 x KC-130's), Marine Air Control Group (MACG) detachment, Marine Wing Support Squadron (MWSS) detachment, and a Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron (MALS) detachment. Typical MEU LCE equipment includes 15 MTRV, 18 HMMWVs, 2 M36 wreckers, 2 D-7 bulldozers, 3 forklifts/front-loaders, 4 bulk fuel vehicles, 2 water vehicles, 1 recovery AAV, and 1 noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO) tracking system. Are MEUs deploying in 2023 deploying with organizational structures like that described above?

General SMITH. The organizational structure described above remains similar across all Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs), except for the use of assault amphibious vehicles (AAV), and HIMARS. Currently, the force is transitioning to the Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) and divesting of AAVs. The Service is currently on track to deploy the first ACV platoon via an ARG/MEU in fiscal year 2024 to fiscal year 2025, which is a change to the above organizational structure as described. MEUs will task organize based off assessments conducted by the MEF Commanders and the MARFORs. In some cases, a MEU may deploy with HIMARS (MEU

HIMARS Platoon has 2x Launchers) versus deploying with an artillery battery (6x M777 lightweight Howitzers). In this case, the Service's 31st MEU deploys with HIMARS as opposed to East and West Coast MEUs. Task Organization is driven by many factors such as the deployment schedule, forces available, pre-planned partnered exercises, and adversarial actions. The stated changes to Task Organization (T/O) and Table of Equipment (T/E) do not prevent the execution of any assigned Mission Essential Tasks (METs).

54. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, if MEUs deploying in 2023 will be organized differently that described above, please provide a detailed comparison of how they deviate from the standard MEU load out, including the number of personnel assigned to each unit within the CE, GCE, ACE, and LCE.

General SMITH. The structural organization of our MEUs also remains the same and will be comprised of a Command Element (CE), a Battalion Landing Team (BLT) as the Ground Combat Element (GCE), a Composite Aviation Squadron as the Aviation Combat Element (ACE), and a Combat Logistics Battalion (CLB) as the Logistics Combat Element (LCE)

The composition of how the MEU is spread across the three ship Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) and what capabilities are within it will be tailored to the threat environment and historical trends of combatant commander mission assignments to the ARG/MEU team. Prior to deployments, the ARG/MEU will conduct a 9-month pre-deployment training period (PTP) with various at sea exercises that allow the two commands to build and work on Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for assigned Mission Essential Tasks (METs). During at sea periods the ARG/MEU commanders, staff, and major subordinate commands will execute a variety of full mission profile exercises such as amphibious raids, amphibious assaults, non-combat evacuation operations (NEO). The two commands will also coordinate with Fleet and Joint headquarters in the combatant commands that the ARG/MEU is expected to be assigned to during the deployment to coordinate Theatre Security Cooperation (TSC) exercises and receive intelligence briefs to understand the threat environment. Through the combination of the at sea training periods, development of SOPs, understanding of anticipated assigned missions, and the threat environment, the ARG/MEU team tailors what assets are assigned to each amphibious warfare ship within the ARG to be appropriately organized for operational deployment. As such, MAGTFs can and will vary in size and capability according to their assigned or likely missions.

Currently, the 26th MEU is conducting their Pre-Deployment Training Period (PTP) with the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) in preparation for their upcoming deployment this Summer. The Artillery Battery within the BLT for the MEU will be organized with a traditional M777 Howitzers platoon and a Force Design 2030 incorporated High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) platoon. Prior to the 26th MEU, HIMARS platoons have deployed with the 31st MEU and with West Coast MEUs beginning in 2019.

FORCE DESIGN 2030 TRANSPARENCY

55. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, it has been reported that senior Marine officers were required to sign non-disclosure agreements after working on Force Design 2030. Is this accurate?

General SMITH. Yes.

56. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, if senior Marine officers were required to sign non-disclosure agreements after working on Force Design 2030, why was that necessary?

General SMITH. Prior to the public release of information and decisions made, regarding Force Design 2030, the Marine Corps provided Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDA) to a select number of officers and staff. These NDAs were provided in an effort to minimize incorrect information and guidance from being publicly shared while Force Design 2030 was in its developmental stage. These officers and staff were members of a select, core group who were instrumental in the decisionmaking process. The NDAs were provided and signed on a voluntary basis, whereby if a member of the group did not desire to sign the NDA, they were not forced to sign and participate. NDAs have been commonplace for any force structure review groups and force level structure reviews over the past two decades.

57. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, you indicated that the Marine Corps has conducted over 400 engagements with Congress to discuss Force Design 2030. Can you provide a list of those engagements specifying whether they were meetings,

briefs, or hearings with Members of Congress to discuss Force Design 2030 or other issues within the Marine Corps?

General SMITH. When General Berger stated at the April 2023 Senate Armed Services Committee Department of Navy posture hearing that the Marine Corps had conducted over 400 engagements with Congress regarding Force Design 2030, he had summarized nearly 4 years of consistent general officer and staff engagements with personal offices and committees. I am committed to continuing this open and regular communication if confirmed as the 39th Commandant of the Marine Corps.

When the Marine Corps first undertook Force Design 2030, we sought congressional oversight from the start to capitalize on the invaluable perspective of Congress. We assessed that the Congress would be a key partner in the development and execution of our modernization. They were an essential source of information on our Campaign of Learning—where we sought to rapidly inject lessons learned, wargaming and experimentation into our decisions.

In 2019, General Berger released the Commandant's Planning Guidance, setting forth the Marine Corps' intent and direction for the Force Design 2030 initiative. The document emphasized the need to reallocate resources and shift the Marine Corps' focus toward future conflict scenarios, such as great power competition and naval integration. Marine Corps leadership recognized the need to provide regular updates, engage in briefings, and seek congressional feedback to ensure that the Force Design 2030 aligned with national security objectives and received appropriate oversight.

Following the release of the 38th Commandant's Planning Guidance, the Marine Corps actively engaged with Congress to facilitate a robust and ongoing dialog. Marine Corps leaders conducted multiple office calls and briefings to provide in-depth insights into Force Design 2030, be available to address any concerns, and solicit feedback from Members of Congress, as well as personal and professional staff. As the Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration at the time, I personally attended several of these briefs and office calls. From 2019 until the release of Force Design 2030 in March 2020, the staff conducted 31 engagements (office calls, breakfasts, briefings, phone calls, and events) with Members of Congress, committee personnel, and personal.

During these interactions, marines executed a wide range of presentations that encompassed both classified and unclassified information. The topics covered various aspects such as alterations in force structure, plans for acquisitions, projected budgets, and expected timelines. The program briefs were especially detailed to ensure projected investments remained on cost, on schedule, and within performance parameters. Throughout the interactions, Marine briefers welcomed rigorous scrutiny and worked closely with congressional committees, so as to take full advantage of their experience.

As the Marine Corps moved into implementation, the Service remained committed to transparency by sharing progress reports, conducting site visits, and facilitating access to classified and unclassified information related to the Force Design 2030. Regular updates and consultations with relevant committees were established to maintain a continuous flow of information, enabling Congress to effectively exercise its oversight responsibilities. We were also diligent in providing Congress with physical and electronic copies of Force Design 2030 Updates and other Force Design concepts as they became available to the public.

Since 2020, the Service has increased congressional engagements upon the release of Force Design 2030 and in subsequent years.

**Each item listed reflects a separate, distinct engagement.*

2020

Office Calls with Members: 35
Briefings to Members: 13
Briefings to Professional or Personal Staff: 37
Other (breakfasts, etc.): 6
Total Engagements: 91

2021

Office Calls with Members: 56
Briefings to Members: 19
Briefings to Professional or Personal Staff: 39
Other (breakfasts, etc.): 13
Total Engagements: 127

2022

Office Calls with Members: 69
Briefings to Members: 19

Briefings to Professional or Personal Staff: 64
 Other (breakfasts, etc.): 29
 Total Engagements: 181

2023

Office Calls with Members: 32
 Briefings to Members: 10
 Briefings to Professional or Personal Staff: 26
 Other (breakfasts, etc.): 6
 Total Engagements: over 70 to date

Hearings and QFRs: Separately (and not counted in the above totals), the Marine Corps' Force Design 2030 concept was addressed on the record (either during testimony or questions for the record) in over 41 hearings from March 2020 until February 2023 and responding to Questions for the Record from all defense committees.

58. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 provides Service Chiefs the responsibility to man, train, and equip personnel for the unified commands. Did you consult with any combatant commander prior to embarking on Force Design 2030 in 2019 or during initial Force Design efforts in 2020?

General SMITH. The overarching Force Design 2030 modernization effort was communicated to a wide audience of potentially affected commanders, specifically in the Indo-Pacific region. However, due to my assignment CD&I, I did not have access to the executive level communications between service leadership and the combatant commanders during the initial planning and implementation of Force Design.

59. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, if you did consult with combatant commanders, can you provide details about which combatant commanders and when you consulted with them?

General SMITH. As stated in response to question 58, I was not in a billet designed for direct communication with combatant commanders. If confirmed, I will ensure robust communications with all combatant commanders. Combatant commanders are a part of all Joint Chiefs of Staff meetings where service capabilities are discussed in detail. Their integrating priority lists are always considered as services develop capabilities. Combatant commanders' needs are also addressed in the Joint Requirements Oversight Council and the Deputy's Management Action Group and various other departmental level meetings. Senior Marine representatives attend each of these events and relay pertinent information on combatant commander needs to Headquarters Marine Corps.

Marine Corps service component commanders regularly brief combatant commanders and engage in extensive dialog about future Marine Corps capabilities.

60. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, General Berger and Lieutenant General Heckl have testified that the Marine Corps is fully capable of meeting all global commitments. Were Force Design 2030 related divestments coordinated with the Commander, United States Forces—Korea before they were implemented? Please provide the documentation in support of your answers.

General SMITH. The Commander, United States Forces—Korea is subordinate to the Commander, United States INDOPACOM. As stated above, engagement with United States INDOPACOM has been robust and if confirmed, I will continue to have those robust conversations.

MARINE CORPS AS A STAND IN FORCE

61. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, it will be many years before the Marine Corps has sufficient missiles to engage in a prolonged fight with the PLA. How will Stand-in Forces operate after they have exhausted their missile inventories?

General SMITH. The magazine depth of different elements within the SIF will vary depending on element size, location, munition, and mission. Numerous studies have identified that, for a prolonged fight with the PLA and depending on the scope of such a conflict, missile inventories will be a cause for concern across the entirety of the joint and combined force.

However, the employment of kinetic fires is not the sole function of Marine elements of the Stand-in Force (SIF). By combining Marine Corps sensors with joint kinetic and non-kinetic fires and effects, stand-in forces can hold key adversary assets at risk and disrupt adversary decisionmaking, thereby enabling the rapid deployment of naval, joint, and coalition forces in theater. The Marine Corps' forward presence within a potential adversary's weapons engagement zone enables the service to emplace an integrated and redundant network of expeditionary sensors on key

maritime terrain to provide situational awareness, targeting data, and Command & Control (C2) for naval, joint, and coalition forces.

62. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, why is the Marine Corps redesigning and restructuring itself to conduct sea denial operations that can already be performed by other Services, for example, Navy attack submarines, Air Force long-range missiles, and Army Multi-Domain Task Forces?

General SMITH. Part of the Marine Corps' Title 10 responsibilities are to "provide Fleet Marine Forces of combined arms, together with supporting air components, for service with the fleet in the seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and for the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign." It is inherent in the Marine Corps' Title 10 responsibilities to provide an expeditionary force in readiness that can provide combat credible forces that can operate across the conflict continuum in support of naval campaigns. We are modernizing the force to enhance the Marine Corps' ability to support naval campaigns and fleet commanders by equipping formations with the necessary capabilities to enable sea control and denial operations as required to seize or defend advanced naval bases.

Furthermore, the Force Design process is not seeking to restructure the Marine Corps to be solely responsible for sea denial and control operations. These capabilities will be inherent in our Marine Littoral Regiments (MLRs) and other elements of the Stand-in Force, and are complementary to other Service's capabilities, within the joint warfighting construct. Moreover, the Marine Corps' sea-denial capabilities are not redundant to joint and coalition force capabilities but are a complementary collection of combined arms capability options for combatant commanders.

63. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, the Marine Corps has stated that the key to sustaining Stand-in Forces is the Landing Ship Medium augmented by aviation support, buying from local inhabitants, and "foraging" for food. The decision to divest critical logistics capabilities was made several years ago, but testimony by Marine leaders has also admitted that the logistics support concept has not been solved. If marines are deployed today under the SIF concept, how would they be sustained with all classes of supply, medical/casualty evacuation, and required maintenance capabilities?

General SMITH. As stated in our recently released I&L 2030, we clearly recognize that "the Marine Corps Installations and Logistics Enterprise is not yet organized, trained, or equipped to sustain expeditionary forces across all domains as envisioned by A Concept for Stand-In Forces (SIF), Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment, and Expeditionary Advance Base Operations, nor in traditional crisis response scenarios." I concur with this assessment. Exercises, wargames, and experiments have similarly demonstrated and validated this assessment. Until modernization progresses, Stand-In Forces will rely on a mix of legacy and new capabilities.

The Marine Corps understands that enabling flexible and responsive sustainment in a contested environment requires a broad mix of ashore and afloat platforms and an integrated logistics network to support the SIF. Through modernization, we intend to transition our logistics from a capability optimized for supporting sustained operations ashore to a maritime capability capable of supporting operations in austere, expeditionary, and littoral environments that are contested across all domains. The centerpiece of this concept of support is the development of an integrated ashore and afloat sustainment network that can support Marine forces globally. This network would be capable of generating multiple logistics webs that provide options to commanders, creates resiliency, contributes to deterrence, and overcomes the precision lethality of the modern battlefield. To do this, this network would seek to integrate naval, joint, Allied and Partner capability based on the operational requirement.

From a resourcing perspective, this network requires four critical capabilities: multi-capable distribution platforms, increased and diversified forward positioning of sustainment, installations that are prepared for operations in a contested environment, and improved logistics command and control. As noted previously and as seen in the activation of the new Marine Aerial Refueler/Transport Squadron in Hawaii, the Marine Corps is working to establish multi-capable distribution platforms to enable our modernized logistics efforts. As for increasing and diversifying the forward positioning of sustainment—we will achieve this through the Global

Positioning Network (GPN) which consists of a dynamic, integrated, afloat and ashore networks, to support the Stand-in-Force and global crisis response.

The Marine Corps will make our installations ready for the contested environment by transforming our Indo-Pacific installations into advanced bases capable of serving as vital nodes in the logistics network, while our CONUS-based installations

are made more efficient, resilient, and capable. Last, the Marine Corps will enhance its logistics command and control to enable better logistics decisionmaking.

MARINE CORPS AVIATION UNDER FORCE DESIGN 2030

64. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, approximately 2 months ago Lieutenant General Heckl affirmed that the Marine Corps was not diminishing a single aviation program of record (POR). That just means that the Marine Corps is going to buy the amount of aircraft it planned on buying. There is a delta between the number of aircraft the Marine Corps will require in each POR and the number of operational aircraft in the Total Force based on the number of squadrons and the number of aircraft per squadron. Can you provide a detailed accounting of this delta, including any aircraft that will be in storage, inventory management, available for foreign military sales, or otherwise divested from the Marine Corps inventory?

General SMITH. When the service determines a Program of Record (POR), they need to solve for three primary variables to ensure the service precisely procures the exact number of aircraft needed to support the operational forces for the program's lifetime. This number provides a full complement of aircraft for operational missions (done by review of congressional statutes and mandates as detailed in the National Security Strategy (NSS) and National Defense Strategy (NDS)), training, testing, and Reserve squadrons on a day-to-day basis (Primary Aircraft Authorization, PAA), scheduled and unscheduled maintenance, modification, inspection, and repair (Backup Aircraft Authorization, BAA), and loss of aircraft due to a mishap or damage (Attrition Reserve, ATT).

The Services determine how many squadrons, training, testing, and Reserve squadrons they require to determine PAA. This is done through analysis of assigned missions (done by review of congressional statutes and mandates as detailed in the National Security Strategy (NSS) and National Defense Strategy (NDS)).

Aircraft inventory management for the Marine Corps is defined by SECNAVINST 5442.3, which provides the framework for how the service determines the appropriate quantities of BAA and ATT aircraft. Each airframe type uses different percentages based on historical data to calculate BAA and ATT. In a fiscally constrained environment, leadership can make a decision to accept risk in BAA and ATT numbers, not typically realized until late in the procurement lifecycle, to free up resources for competing priorities.

The following answers the implied question relating to 'operational aircraft' (or PAA) changes as the result of Force Design (FD), as well as a detailed accounting of any aircraft that will be in storage, inventory management, or available for Foreign Military Sales (FMS). The Marine

Corps POR for F35 is 420; the POR for CH-53K is 200; the POR for MV-22 is 360 (final procurement in fiscal year 2023); the POR for H-1s is 389 (procurement completed in fiscal year 2019).

While this answer will focus on the four platforms listed above, it does not include the additional one KC-130J squadron being stood up in the Pacific, as well as the additional three squadrons of UAS. As a point of fact, prior to FD, the Marine Corps planned to have 1,415 aircraft in the mid-2030's; post FD changes, the Marine Corps plans to have 1,453 aircraft, an additional 38 aircraft in support of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF), Joint Force Maritime Component Commander (JFMCC), and Joint Force.

F-35 Inventory Management:

The POR for F-35 is 420 (353xB / 67xC). Pre-FD, there were three organizational constructs for the number of squadrons over the past 15 years. The last of those three constructs called for 9 squadrons of 16 aircraft and 9 squadrons of 10 aircraft. Utilizing DoN approved models for BAA and ATT, the correct POR should have been 510 for that construct. A 90-plane deficit (510 requirement—420 POR) is high risk and would manifest itself over 2–3 decades. Specifically, if the Pre-FD construct was followed, the Marine Corps would begin losing a squadron every 5 years beginning in 2040, and the Marine Corps would be unable to fly the F-35B out to 2067.

Post-FD TACAIR Transition Plans call for a PAA for 18 squadrons of 10 aircraft. When you combine the PAA, BAA, and ATT for 18 squadrons of 10 aircraft, the POR should be 425. Five aircraft short (420 vice 425) is low risk and manageable. To say "changing to 18 squadrons of 10 aircraft reduces "operationally available aircraft" by 54 aircraft (Pre-FD PAA total is 324 and post-FD PAA is 270) is misleading. An organizational construct change was required because the old construct was high risk and unsustainable for the following reasons:

1. All pre-FD organizational constructs centered around 16 plane F-35B squadrons supporting the MEU (6 to the MEU, 10 Remain Behind). THIS IS NO LONGER A CONSTRAINT. Through the Campaign of Learning we discovered we can—and are—deploying 10 F-35Bs aboard our MEUs. The post-FD

construct allows us to deploy the entire squadron aboard our MEUs (compared to the old 6 x AV-8B contingent) and provides COCOMs a 66 percent INCREASE in 5th GEN TACAIR aircraft with our MEUs forward deployed and globally engaged all the way out to 2067.

2. The Marine Corps did not plan to flush out the pre-FD PAA in squadrons to 16 aircraft until around 2030. We will have less than the required PAA aircraft from 2040 to 2067. Under the old construct, because the organizational construct called for a POR of 510, that means we begin to lose a SQUADRON of F-35s every 5 years beginning in 2040. It reduces the lifespan of the F-35 by about 15 to 20 years. The post-FD organizational construct allows the Marine Corps to maximize the service life of the F-35, thereby maximizing its availability to the MAGTF, JFMCC, and Joint Force.

F-35 Storage and Preservation:

The Marine Corps F-35 POR has been steady at 420 aircraft for almost two decades. How many, and where we place our BAA and AR F-35 aircraft is yet to be determined since we have not finished buying out the POR. Until then, thoughtful inventory management is the key to Marine Corps TACAIR readiness and capability, and we are very good at doing that.

The Marine Corps has no intention of placing F-35s into FMS, or of divesting of any F-35s. The 18 squadron by 10 F-35 aircraft supports all MEU, UDP, TAI and COCOM GFM requirements at a 1:3 deployment to dwell. The post-FD construct is unquestionably the swiftest, most lethal, fiscally responsible, and long-term sustainable construct of the three constructs the Marine Corps has had over the past 15 years.

CH-53K:

The CH-53K POR is 200. This is reflected in our President's Budget 2024 submission and is supported throughout the FYDP. Pre-FD, the Marine Corps planned to field 8 squadrons of 16 aircraft; POR should have been 220.

Post-FD, we plan to field 5.25 squadrons of 16 aircraft; POR could be 168; however, a January 2022 Marine Requirements Oversight Council (MROC) reaffirmed our POR remains at 200, for reasons listed below:

Changing the Approved Acquisition Objective (AAO) of major programs like the CH-53K and F-35B today will not produce resources for investment elsewhere and would be premature decision.

Maintaining the POR provides the Marine Corps and opportunity to assess the arrival timeline for other connectors and mobility assets (LSM, AMPHIBS, ship to shore connectors, etc.), and determine if we need additional squadrons or to increase the PAA of our squadrons. If we did determine we needed additional squadrons, we offer two possibilities:

1. The Marine Corps could increase our CH-53K squadrons to 6, calling for a POR of ~190+.
2. Or we could place 20 CH-53Ks in our 5.25 squadrons, leading to a POR of ~190+.

The Marine Corps POR remains 200. It will be determined later how we manage the BAA and ATT aircraft.

MV-22: POR is 360 aircraft. As of 1 May 2023, the Marine Corps plans to have a total of 48 MV-22 in an inventory management between fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2026. The inventory management program is designed to provide aircraft capability modernization, manage the lifecycle and airframe flight hours, and ensure enough aircraft with the required capability are available to satisfy PAA requirements at all times. Aircraft may be inducted and reconstituted at any time, with the total inventory management quantity fluctuating periodically.

H-1: POR is 349 (189 AH-1, 160 UH-1) aircraft. With reduction of 2 Active Duty squadrons, current requirement is 284 (158 AH-1, 126 UH-1Y). Of the remaining 65 aircraft, 15 aircraft that have been attritted, 8 aircraft have been offered to support Czech Republic FMS Excess Defense Article (EDA) case; 11 aircraft have been deemed 'delayed Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group (AMARG) inductions' to be utilized in support of flight line modifications, 29 aircraft are preserved in AMARG section two (future uncertainty, FMS and Security Assistance Program (SAP)—19 aircraft) and section five (stricken aircraft awaiting final reclamation and disposition—10 aircraft), and 2 aircraft remain in the Fleet for final disposition. Aircraft transferred to inactive inventory were selected after analysis of utilization, poor readiness, higher Cost Per Flight Hours, and total flight hour metrics to ensure the healthiest aircraft remained in active inventory.

In sum, FD has expanded, optimized, and enhanced Marine Aviation's ability to continue to deliver more lethal, effective, and survivable capabilities to enable naval and joint campaigning in all domains across the continuum of conflict.

65. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, in responses to requests for information from my office, the Marine Corps indicated that varying numbers of aircraft in the Marine Corps inventory would go into storage or inventory management extend the service life of MV-22s, AH-1Zs, UH-1Ys, CH-53Ks, and F-35s. In fact, according to the information the Marine Corps provided me, a significant amount of aircraft—as many as 60 MV-22s, 30 AH-1Zs, 24 UH-1Ys, 48 CH-53Ks, and 54 F-35Bs will go into storage, or inventory management as the Marine Corps calls it, by 2030. When I read you these numbers at a closed session following the April 18, 2023 hearing, you said they were not accurate even though they had been provided to my office by the Marine Corps. What are the accurate numbers of aircraft the Marine Corps is putting into storage or inventory management?

General SMITH. When the Service determines a POR, three primary categories are calculated to ensure the Service procures the exact number of aircraft needed to support the operational forces over the aircraft's lifetime. The three primary categories are:

- Primary Aircraft Inventory (PAI). PAI ensures operational, training, testing, and Reserve squadrons maintain their full complement of aircraft (defined as Primary Aircraft Authorization (PAA)) on a day-to-day basis.
- Backup Aircraft Inventory (BAI). BAI are backup aircraft that ensure when operational, training, testing, and Reserve squadrons aircraft undergo long-term planned maintenance or modification pipelines; there is no degradation in readiness on our flightlines (defined as Backup Aircraft Authorization (BAA)).
- Attrition Reserve (ATT). ATT aircraft ensure that if an operational, training, testing, or Reserve squadron loses an aircraft due to a mishap or damage, we can immediately replace it to ensure there is no degradation in readiness of the Marine Corps' ability to respond to crises.

Aircraft inventory management for the Marine Corps is defined by SECNAVINST 5442.3, which provides the framework for how the Service determines the appropriate quantities of BAI and ATT aircraft. Each airframe type uses different percentages based on historical data to calculate BAI and ATT. The Marine Corps, like every other Service, manages aircraft inventory through a variety of means; we place BAI and ATT aircraft in our Fleet Replacement Squadrons (FRS), into storage at the Aerospace Maintenance Aircraft Regeneration Group (AMARG), or into preservation on the flight line, depots, or contracted facilities. For the purposes of answering this question, we will cover storage and preservation.

Storage:

Aircraft storage occurs primarily at the 309th AMARG and at the Depots. In 1964, the Secretary of Defense designated AMARG as the sole storage, reclamation, and disposal manager for the DOD. Naval aircraft stored at 309th AMARG fall under six sections.

- Section 1—War Reserve and Force Level Assurance Storage. Aircraft designated for retention in Section 1 shall not have any components removed from them without HQMC/OPNAV approval. Aircraft in section 1 are not stricken from the inventory and are counted in TII.
- Section 2—CNO Special Program Storage. Stricken aircraft held in storage as a *hedge against future force structure and procurement uncertainties*. Aircraft designated for retention in this section may be re-preserved every 4 years as determined by the strike board.
- Section 3—FMS. Stricken aircraft are on hold for FMS and SAP are CNO inviolate.
- Section 4—Museum. Stricken aircraft identified for donation to service museums. The “maintain-in” storage fees for these aircraft are borne by the museums.
- Section 5—Reclamation and Disposition. Stricken aircraft awaiting final reclamation and disposition.
- Section 6—Identified for Disposal. Stricken aircraft, fully reclaimed, and being prepared for final disposal.

Preservation:

There are four levels of preservation in inventory management.

- Level I. Conducted at the organizational level of maintenance. Aircraft may be maintained in Level I preservation for a maximum of 90 days.

- Level II. Conducted at the depot level of maintenance. Level II is similar to Level I. Level II preservation provides minimum protection for up to 1 year.
- Level III. Conducted at the depot level of maintenance requiring dehumidification. Level III preservation provides optimum protection for an indefinite period of time.
- Level IV. Level IV preservation is used as an umbrella term to designate the partial preservation of aircraft undergoing depot-level maintenance actions. The aircraft systems and components are preserved to the maximum extent possible; however, systems and components may be in various levels (Level I, II, or III) of preservation.

MV-22, H-1, CH-53K, and F-35 preservation numbers, along with a review of those same platforms in storage, as follows:

MV-22: POR is 360 aircraft. There are no MV-22Bs entering inactive inventory. The Inventory Management program is designed to provide aircraft capability modernization, manage the lifecycle and airframe flight hours, and ensure enough aircraft with the required capability are available to always satisfy Primary Aircraft Inventory (PAI) requirements. The aircraft in the Inventory Management program is contracted to be reconstituted within 30 days of notification, providing a rapid response capability to adjust to changing fleet needs. Beginning in fiscal year 2025, the MV-22 Inventory Management program will be resourced for the induction and maintenance activity requirements of 48 planned aircraft. The anticipated annual cost for the program is approximately \$600,000 per aircraft.

H-1: POR is 349 (189 AH-1, 160 UH-1) aircraft. There are 37 aircraft that have been transferred to inactive inventory, including 19 aircraft for future uncertainty (section 2), eight aircraft for Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and Security Assistance Program (SAP), and ten stricken aircraft awaiting final reclamation and disposition. Section 2 storage is planned to increase from 19 aircraft to a total of 32 aircraft, which would result in a total of 50 aircraft in storage. The cost to store the H-1 aircraft is less than \$125,000 per aircraft every 4 years. There are no reoccurring costs until the aircraft is removed from inactive inventory.

CH-53K: POR is 200 aircraft. During the transition from CH-53E to CH-53K between now and 2030, there are no plans to place any CH-53Ks into preservation and storage.

F-35: POR is 420 aircraft. The Marine Corps F-35 POR has been steady at 420 aircraft for more than two decades. How many and where we place our BAI and ATT F-35 aircraft is yet to be determined since we have not finished buying out the POR. Until then, thoughtful inventory management is the key to Marine Corps TACAIR readiness and capability.

In sum, the Marine Corps is not “divesting” of any aircraft. The Marine Corps has historically made changes in organizational construct and composition to meet mandates. Without appropriate inventory management and a backup inventory, our operational squadrons would consistently operate with fewer ready aircraft for training and tasking.

66. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, the Marine Corps is reportedly buying new aircraft and putting them directly in storage. Is it a good use of tax payer dollars for the Marine Corps to have a plan to purchase dozens of aircraft that it has no intention of using and will immediately put into storage?

General SMITH. The Marine Corps is not buying new aircraft and putting them into storage or preservation.

67. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, in responses provided to my office by the Marine Corps following an April 14, 2023 brief on section 1023 of the Fiscal Year 2023 NDAA, the Marine Corps reported that 50 aircraft will be transferred into the inactive inventory, along with an unknown number of MV-22s. What is the cost associated with the procurement and storage of these aircraft?

General SMITH. H-1: There are 37 aircraft that have been transferred to inactive inventory, including 19 aircraft for future uncertainty (section 2), eight aircraft for Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and Security Assistance Program (SAP), and ten stricken aircraft awaiting final reclamation and disposition. Section 2 storage is planned to increase from 19 aircraft to a total of 32 aircraft, which would result in a total of 50 aircraft in storage. The cost to store the H-1 aircraft is less than \$125,000 per aircraft every 4 years. There are no reoccurring costs until the aircraft is removed from inactive inventory.

MV-22: There are no MV-22Bs entering inactive inventory. The Inventory Management program is designed to provide aircraft capability modernization, manage the lifecycle and airframe flight hours, and ensure enough aircraft with the required capability are available to always satisfy Primary Aircraft Inventory (PAI) require-

ments. Further, an aircraft in the Inventory Management program is contracted to be reconstituted within 30 days of notification, providing a rapid response capability to adjust to changing fleet needs. Beginning in fiscal year 2025, the MV-22 Inventory Management program will be resourced for the induction and maintenance activity requirements of 48 planned aircraft. The anticipated annual cost for the program is approximately \$600,000 per aircraft.

68. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, can you provide any after action reports, war game analysis, or other evaluation or assessment mechanism that informed assault support requirements for infantry units under the Force Design 2030 force structure?

General SMITH. The Marine Corps assault support requirements are based on current and forecasted Global Force Management tasking to include Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU), maintaining a Crisis Response Force, sustained service level training exercises, Marine Air Ground Task Force training, and Weapons and Tactics Instructor support, at a minimum. As the Marine Corps continues to assess the future operating environment, further adjustments in line with our campaign of learning may be necessary. We have already seen this with our MV-22 squadrons. An analysis of airframe lifecycles combined with an assessment of training and operational requirements resulted in the determination that our MV-22 squadrons needed to be restructured from 14 squadrons of consisting of 12 aircraft to 16 squadrons consisting of 10 aircraft.

The addition of two MV-22 squadrons allows the Marine Corps to maintain its desired deployment-to-dwell ratio for pilots and crews, while simultaneously optimizing a given squadron's Primary Aircraft Authorization for deployment as the MEU Aviation Combat Element. We will continue to assess our assault support posture to determine the most effective construct to deliver capability and capacity through wargames, service level exercises, and other analytical initiatives.

While the Force Design process has laid the foundation for a modernized roadmap for Marine Aviation, it also sets Marine Aviation on the path to look to the future. For example, as part of a broader effort with the United States Navy, Marine Aviation is developing the Marine Air Ground Task Force Unmanned Expeditionary family of systems (FOS). These efforts include acceleration of prototyping and experimentation of TACAIR Collaborative Combat Aircraft and building a common interoperable system control architecture for control of joint assets. In parallel, Marine Aviation is also exploring the Vertical Takeoff and Landing FOS, where the logistics connector is the first major effort to support the execution of the stand-in force through airborne logistics in a contested environment. This portfolio also includes air loitering munitions and a future assault support capability to replace our extant platforms.

69. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, can you provide any after action reports, war game analysis, or other evaluation or assessment mechanism that informed close air support requirements for infantry units under the Force Design 2030 force structure?

General SMITH. Force Design efforts have modernized Marine aviation capabilities, increased readiness, and enhanced lethality across all platforms to meet current and future demands of global force management (GFM) requirements in support the joint force and combatant commanders (CCDRs), rapidly changing technology, and the ever-changing operating environment. One of the many mission essential tasks that Marine aviation performs is offensive air support. As part of force modernization, Marine aviation conducts significant integrated analysis of both weapon systems and aircraft employment techniques to ensure Marine aviation meets sortie requirements with appropriate munitions for the best weapon-to-target match.

This analysis is captured in virtual, simulated, and live wargames and exercises throughout Headquarters Marine Corps as well as the operational fleet not only to inform and develop capabilities, but to capture and refine tactics, techniques, and procedures for current and emerging weapon systems. As the Marine Corps continues to assess the operating environment, further adjustments in line with our campaign of learning will occur to gain and maintain the edge in lethality, readiness, while simultaneously optimizing our F-35 and H-1 fleet to support the joint force and combatant commanders (CCDRs).

As we have always done, we will continue to assess and evolve our organizational construct and composition through wargames, service level exercises, and analytical initiatives to ensure the Marine Corps continues to deliver lethal capability to support the Joint Force and CCDR demands now and into the future.

MARINE AIR-GROUND TASK FORCE SELF-SUSTAINABILITY

70. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) enables marines to deliver rapid, powerful, and sustainable response on a global scale. Sea-to-shore, air-to-ground, door-to-door, there is not an organizational model more capable of quickly putting marines where they need to be in order to fight and win for our country. From the MEU to the MEF, marines are capable of self-sustaining for 15–60 days, operating without ports, airfields, or civilian infrastructure. Force Design 2030 changes the equipment and personnel available to the MAGTF, particularly the ACE. Using specific references to types and numbers of equipment and personnel, describe how the MAGTF's ability to sustain itself at the MEU, Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB), and MEF level differs between 2018 and 2023.

General SMITH. The sustainment characteristics of our scalable and task-organized Marine Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs) remain the same: Marine Expeditionary Unit (15 days), Marine Expeditionary Brigade (30 days), and Marine Expeditionary Force (60 days) today as they were in 2018. But while the characteristics have remained the same, it is important to note that our force has evolved to face the challenges of the modern, operational environment. The following are notable differences in sustainment capabilities that have been fielded or are in the process of being fielded:

- Our MEUs are going out with 10 F-35Bs compared to 6 AV-8Bs. This is a significant increase in capability to support not only contingency operations but also enable the sustainment of our forces. The F-35B provides enhanced situational awareness by sensing and making sense of the operational environment ensuring freedom of movement and flexibility for sustainment operations.
- Reduction in the numbers of MV-22s per squadron from 12 to 10 has increased the number of operational aircraft from 57 percent to 66 percent since 2018. While we are deploying fewer MV-22s, we are increasing the number of aircraft available to sustain and support expeditionary forces.
- We are now transitioning from the CH-53E to the new CH-53K. The CH-53K will provide greater payload capacity than any current or emerging rotorcraft. Achieving Initial Operational Capability (IOC) in April 2022, the CH-53K was approved for full rate production in December 2022. We plan to deploy the first CH-53K MEU detachment in fiscal year 2025.
- To sustain our equipment readiness, we are now using additive manufacturing at the battalion level to enable the manufacturing of critical parts when and where they are needed most. Marine Corps Logistics Command now has an industrial additive manufacturing capability and is manufacturing critical parts to meet needs across the Navy and Marine Corps.

A NICHE FORCE?

71. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, the Marine Corps divested significant components of its traditional combined-arms capability to develop capabilities specifically designed to counter China in the United States Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) area of responsibility (AOR). Does tailoring III MEF to fight China in the INDOPACOM AOR reduce the Marine Corps' ability to respond to contingencies around the globe? Provide specific examples in your response.

General SMITH. From the outset of our current modernization efforts, we directed the Marine Corps to design and develop a force focused on our pacing threat. Through these efforts and changes we must also retain the flexibility to adapt to changes in the operating environment. Where feasible, we are constantly looking for opportunities to sustain or expand existing strategic competitive advantages over our adversaries. There are constraints and restraints associated with modernization. Specifically, our assumption is we must continue to modernize under the existing topline budget. Additionally, we are beholden to industry's capacity to manufacture equipment as well as the maturation of certain technologies. In the case of the latter, regardless of how many resources you align to a new technology, it won't necessarily speed up its development.

There is a misperception by some that Force Design efforts will result in a gap in Marine Corps capabilities because of the time needed for the divestment and fielding of new capabilities. The reality is that the fielding and employment of new capabilities associated with Force Design is already well underway. Six examples from 2022 are highlighted below:

TF 61.2 and Reconnaissance and Counter-reconnaissance: In March 2022, United States Sixth Fleet partnered with II MEF to create Task Force (TF) 61.2. The purpose of TF 61.2 was to command and control naval forces supporting contingencies in Europe and Africa. This force was delegated tactical control of amphibious forces

(ARG/MEU) in theater, allocated Marine forces (Marine Rotational Force—Europe), and a task organized reconnaissance/counter-reconnaissance force. Simultaneously, II MEF and 2d Marine Division were tasked with “accelerating experimentation with maritime, multi-domain reconnaissance constructs and activities to enhance the ability of the stand-in force to dominate the information environment, sense and make sense of the situation, and win the reconnaissance vs. counter-reconnaissance competition.” Commander, Sixth Fleet, immediately volunteered TF 61.2 to support these broader, service-level experimentation efforts.

Over the course of several weeks, TF 61.2 conducted training aboard both the USS Woody Williams (ESB-4) and USS Georgia (SSGN-729), and engaged in combined-arms training in both Greece and Turkey. Those initial exercises demonstrated that maritime expeditionary forces could increase surface, subsurface, and aerial domain awareness for the fleet commander—regardless of theater—and allowed us to focus on the information web required to create domain awareness in a contested space. TF 61.2 then transitioned these experimental capabilities to the Baltics, where it participated in bilateral training on maritime domain awareness with the Estonian Navy in the Gulf of Finland. During this period, TF 61.2 and 16 NATO allies participated in an amphibious landing in Estonia and Exercise BALTOPS with 47 ships and 7,000 personnel. This new organization has been so successful the previous Commander, United States European Command (EUCOM) chose to highlight the value of the task force during his spring 2022 annual testimony. The bottom line is that your marines’ ability to conduct reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance is a current force capability that directly contributes to competition and deterrence in any environment.

Multifunction Air Operations Center (MAOC): In March 2022, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW) conducted the service’s first operational deployment of a MAOC. In Lithuania, under the command of United States Air Forces Europe, the MAOC conducted air surveillance and multi-domain awareness in support of NATO operations. This is a transformational, expeditionary capability that can serve as a hub for Marine Corps, naval, and joint kill webs. The MAOC enables the control of aircraft and missiles and expedites decisionmaking. It also offers the ability to gain and maintain custody of adversary targets and hold those targets at risk via fires with its organic TPS-80 Ground/Air Task-Oriented Radar (G/ATOR), Common Aviation Command and Control System (CAC2S), and highly proficient aviation C2 marines. The MAOC is scalable to units small enough to support distributed teams or large enough to support a MEF or Corps-level fight. The 3d MAW MAOC employed this capability as part of Marine Rotational Force—Darwin (MRF-D), integrating C2 and sensor services for 16 allied and partner nations during Exercise PITCH BLACK. From these initial efforts, 3d MAW has matured the MAOC, creating a persistent hub to enhance the common tactical picture for I and III MEF.

Marine Corps Information Command (MCIC): In October 2022, we streamlined and simplified much of the coordination required for space and cyberspace operations at the headquarters level by realigning current relationships and structure at Headquarters, Marine Corps (HQMC) from a staff officer to an operational commander, to create the MCIC. The MCIC is a service-retained command designed to integrate global Marine Corps capabilities in information, intelligence, cyberspace, and space to support Fleet Marine Forces (FMF) resulting in decision advantage. This two-star command operates under Marine Forces Command (MARFORCOM) and provides critical linkages across operational level planning. It also provides task organized detachments to support the FMF commander’s campaigning objectives. This allows the commander to leverage the authorities needed to synchronize global cyber, space, influence, and intelligence effects and generate multi-domain advantages in support of the commander’s objectives. The MCIC achieved initial operational capability (IOC) in January 2023.

VMGR-153 and HMH-461: In January 2023, we activated Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 153 (VMGR-153) in Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. By 2026, VMGR-153 will bring 15 KC-130J aircraft to the region, building on the organic mobility available to marines responding to crisis or conflict in the region. We are also approaching 1 year since the CH-53K program achieved IOC and are well underway transitioning Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 461 (HMH-461) into our first fully operational CH-53K squadron.

MARINE LITTORAL REGIMENTS

72. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, have any combatant commanders asked for an MLR to deploy to their theater?

General SMITH. Yes. In testimony before Congress, the former and current EUCOM commanders have expressed a desire for an MLR in EUCOM. The current

INDOPACOM commander has testified that he desires accelerated fielding of MLRs and other Stand in Forces.

The first of three planned Marine Littoral Regiments, 3d MLR was activated on 3 March 2022, on Marine Corps Base Hawaii. This MLR (and the other 2) will be assigned forces to

INDOPACOM and will be registered as an INDOPACOM assigned force demand in the Global Force Management process.

73. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, can MLRs conduct amphibious assaults, raids, or other missions that a MEU would conduct?

General SMITH. While highly capable, the MLR is not optimized for amphibious assaults, raids, or other missions, more common to a MEU. The MLR does not operate from or train with an ARG comprised of three Amphibious Warfare Ships, which allow it to conduct said operations. It is designed to disrupt the adversary in a contested littoral environment through reconnaissance, counter-reconnaissance, and sea denial operations to support the Naval Expeditionary Force's maritime campaign. Its tasks are below:

- Conduct Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations
- Support Maritime Domain Awareness
- Conduct Reconnaissance in the Maritime Domain
- Support Littoral Targeting
- Conduct Littoral Transportation Operations
- Conduct Air Direction in Support of Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations
- Command and Control Distributed Maritime Operations
- Plan and Direct Littoral Maneuver
- Plan and Direct Sea Denial Operations
- Support Sea Denial Operations

74. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, in General Berger's first two directives upon assuming the position of the 38th Commandant of the Marine Corps he stated in the 38th Commandant's Intent and the 38th Commandant's Planning Guidance, "the Marine Corps will be trained and equipped as a naval expeditionary force-in-readiness and prepared to operate inside actively contested maritime spaces in support of fleet operations." This guidance in part served as the foundation for the creation of MLRs under Force Design 2030. The Army currently possesses a similar capability to the MLRs through its Multi-Domain Task Forces (MDTF). What is your reaction to the contention of some that the MDTFs exist to support the Joint Force and the MLRs to support the Navy?

General SMITH. The Marine Corps' Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR) and the Army's Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF) represent innovative and thoughtful approaches to compete and win on the modern battlefield, against peer adversaries. Both formations offer unique, yet complementary, capabilities that present multiple dilemmas for adversaries and generate options for the Joint Force commander in both competition and conflict.

The MLR is distinguished by its forward posture, its ability to rapidly deploy with organic Marine Corps and Navy assets, and its capabilities to persist within an adversary's weapons engagement zone. These capabilities are underpinned by naval concepts to include Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment, Distributed Maritime Operations, Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations, and the Concept for Stand-In Forces.

The MDTF provides complementary theater-level maneuver elements focused on anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) networks through the conduct of multi-domain operations (MDO). The MDTF does not possess organic mobility, rather it relies on strategic lift and commercial vessels for inter-theater mobility within a distributed maritime environment, such as the Indo-Pacific region.

In the expansive Indo-Pacific region, a clear necessity exists for the MLR and the MDTF, particularly in time of conflict. Both units leverage a similar multi-domain approach, in some cases using like systems. However, the MLR has a unique mission requirement to operate forward postured in the Indo-Pacific region within a contested area

75. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, as so much of the success of MLRs depend on the prepositioning of forces, what steps is the Marines Corps currently taking to ensure partner nations will allow these units to operate in their territory?

General SMITH. Security cooperation is a key means of enhancing access and increasing the likelihood that this access will be permitted during a crisis. Key vehicles that facilitate our security cooperation include visits by deployed Marine Corps

forces, key leader engagements, bilateral and multilateral exercises, and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR) support.

Examples of key engagements the Marine Corps supports includes:

Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI): In the post-2001 era, both the United States and Japan recognized the need to adjust United States force posture to effectively fulfill the requirements of the Alliance. The DPRI laid out a future path to realign United States forces across the Indo-Pacific to meet the challenges of the future and included significant repositioning of forces from Okinawa to Guam and other locations. As a result of the 2021 Global Posture Review, the Department of Defense is engaged with our A&P across the region to advance initiatives that contribute to regional stability. Posture changes announced on January 11, 2023, by the United States and the Government of Japan Security Consultative Committee (2+2) ensures that the Marine Corps remains ready to address evolving regional and global security challenges. Specifically, a mutual agreement was reached that the 12th Marine Regiment will remain on Okinawa and will be reorganized into the 12th Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR) by 2025 in accordance with Marine Corps modernization efforts. The 12th MLR will provide a ready and capable Stand-In-Force within the first island chain, prepared to support the U.S.-Japan Alliance, bolstering our ability to support deterrence efforts, and respond to contingencies.

Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) sites in the Philippines: In 2014, the United States and the Philippines signed the EDCA, which bolsters the bilateral alliance by allowing extended rotational presence of United States Forces and the establishment of facilities for joint use—these facilities are known as “EDCA sites.” Marine Corps Forces, Pacific (MARFORPAC) and the Philippine Marine Corps (PMC) signed the 5-Year Integrated Readiness and Deterrence Plan 2022–2026 to advance integrated deterrence and enable the maintenance and sustainment of combat readiness. The goal is to integrate and posture PMC-MARFORPAC forces and capabilities by 2026, including persistent MLR engagement. The United States-Philippine joint development and investment within EDCA locations exemplify the necessity of the Marine Corps and United States Forces in the Philippines in order to develop Philippine bases and locations to bilaterally respond to HA/DR situations and enable combined training through scheduled exercises, like Balikatan, and other engagements.

Marine Rotational Force-Darwin (MRF-D) in Australia: Per the 2023 Australian Defence Strategic Review, the Australian Army is developing a highly capable, modern amphibious fighting force. The Marine Corps and the Australian Army maximize integration, capability development, and training with MRF-D, the rotational Marine Corps presence in Australia. MRF-D, supported by the Ground Equipment Staging Program (GESP) participates in recurrent multilateral exercises like Talisman Sabre and bilateral engagement opportunities like Pitch Black. Additionally, Marine Corps support for the Australian Army’s amphibious capability development which bolsters the second pillar of the enhanced trilateral security partnership “AUKUS.” This continual support to Australia’s defense development and modernization strengthens longstanding bilateral ties thus enhancing ongoing operational access.

Marine Rotational Force-Southeast Asia (MRF-SEA): Since 2022, MARFORPAC has forward-deployed forces to Southeast Asia to achieve maritime security objectives with A&P in the region. MRF-SEA reassures A&P in region by consistently and reliably executing agreed-upon security cooperation activities. This contributes to regional stability by increasing MARFORPAC’s responsiveness to crises and contingencies. MRF-SEA conducts bilateral and multilateral security cooperation engagements with partners such as Singapore and Indonesia. This modular rotational force exercises distributed command, control, logistics, and transportation nodes supporting multiple, sometimes simultaneous, regional engagements. The exact composition of the force, locations, and schedules vary each year according to agreed-upon security cooperation engagements with host countries. This concept also operates within existing access, basing, and overflight agreements with Southeast Asian partners and allies to mutually support posture initiatives and reduce inter-theater transportation requirements for not only the Marine Corps but also partner and allied forces.

Task Force Koa Moana (TF KM): TF KM is the primary Marine Corps force to counter the People’s Republic of China (PRC) influence and access in Oceania. Through TF KM’s modest investments, the Marine Corps obtains excellent access to key sea lines of communication and achieves outsized effects that are mutually beneficial to A&P and the U.S. In fiscal year 2022 TF KM primarily engaged in Palau and the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas Islands due to pandemic-induced travel restrictions. In fiscal year 2023, TF KM has returned to contested terrain such as the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Fiji, and Tonga. These engage-

ments supported maritime security and maritime domain awareness, as well as reinforce combined logistics hubs within contested environments. The development of multilateral maritime law enforcement, HA/DR response exercises, and climate change resilience continues to enhance multilateral security cooperation and accessibility throughout Oceania.

Marine Rotational Force-Europe (MRF-E) in Norway: The Marine Corps maintains a very close relationship with Norway that facilitates setting the theater—developing a profound understanding of the region and establishing conditions for Marine Corps success—through an exercise schedule that provides near-persistent presence of USMC forces in Norway and the High North. The United States—Norway Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Governing Prestockage and Reinforcement of Norway provides USMC access to the Marine Corps Prepositioning Program in Norway (MCPN). MCPN facilitates prepositioned stocks, which are available for global operational requirements in support of any geographic combatant commander. In addition to the NATO Status of Forces Agreement, which allows USMC forces to move into, through, and transit out of Norway, the United States and Norway share a Defense Cooperation Agreement and Supplemental Defense Cooperation Agreement, assure United States Forces additional access to Norwegian and United States-built infrastructure in Norway.

III MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

76. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, title 10 states that, “[t]he Marine Corps, within the Department of the Navy, shall be so organized as to include not less than three combat divisions and three air wings, and such other land combat, aviation, and other services as may be organic therein.” Can you explain the difference in III MEF’s structure pre-Force Design 2030 and once Force Design is complete?

General SMITH. The Marine Corps still possesses three combat divisions, three air wings, three logistics groups, and three information groups.

Historically, the Marine Corps relies on supplying approximately one-fifth of III Marine Expeditionary Force’s (III MEF) combat power via the Unit Deployment Program (UDP). Pre-Force Design, III MEF’s structure consisted of just over 27,000 marines. At the conclusion of Force Design 2030, III MEF’s structure will consist of just over 22,100 marines, however 89 percent of III MEF’s combat power will be organic, reducing the requirement to source unit deployment-based marines to the MEF. This reduction in constant troop rotations adds to unit readiness as units spend less time transiting back and forth to CONUS and more time training and staying prepared to fight.

III MEF	Pre-FD (2019)	2023	2030 (4th/ 12th MLR)
MEF CE	3218	3174	3207
1st MAW	6418	7072	7281
3d MARDIV	6334	4358	4759
3D MLG	5288	4705	4517
Wing UDP	663	663	663
Div UDP	3732	3743	339
MEF CE UDP	120	120	120
31st MEU UDP	1235	1235	1235
Total UDP	5750	5761	2357
Total	27008	25070	22121
Share UDP	21%	23%	11%
Share non-UDP	79%	77%	89%

77. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, what was the structure of the 3d Marine Division pre-Force Design 2030 and what will it be in 2030?

General SMITH. Marine Corps Reference Publication (MCRP) 1-10.1 Organization of the United States Marine Corps defines the composition of a division. As the MCRP provides the high-level overview of the current structure of the Marine Corps at the time of publication, it is not a prescribed document. Thus, the three MEFs and the subordinate divisions, wings, and logistics elements will not be identical across the service. 3d Marine Division has always been organized differently than the other divisions (pages 5-2 through 5-4 of the 2015 publication). In this document, 3d Marine Division is composed of only two infantry regiments, one of which is filled by units throughout the Marine Corps under the unit deployment program (UDP).

This reference publication is currently in the final stages of update. At the completion of Force Design 2030 modernization efforts, 3d Marine Division will have three operational MLRs, the 3d, 4th, and 12th MLRs. Going forward, 3d Marine Division will retain a similar structure but with a different organization of the units within it.

78. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, by table of organization, how many infantry marines were in the 3d Marine Division pre-Force Design 2030?

General SMITH. 4,548.

79. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, how many infantry marines will be in 3d Marine Division when Force Design 2030 is fully implemented?

General SMITH. 2,403.

The planned 2030 force includes the infantry marines from the 31st MEU, 3d, 4th, and 12th MLR. 3d and 12th MLR have permanently stationed littoral combat teams consisting of 572 infantry marines, while 4th MLR and the 31st MEU will rotate infantry battalions in through the Unit Deployment Program.

The raw data depicted above does not provide the necessary context to understand the increased lethality these infantry formations have gained by investments in capabilities such as precision fires, advanced sensor assets, and critical communications equipment to synthesize targeting. There are more killing assets per infantry marine in 2030 than in 2019. Infantry battalion lethality, as measured by share of crew-served weapons per marine assigned to infantry battalion, increased by 28 percent from 2019 to 2030.

The increased lethality of the core infantry battalion is improved through increased staffing. From 1995 until now, Battalion T/Os have gotten slightly smaller, but the staffing percentage has increased, and the unit-to-unit variances have decreased. The higher staffing level allows commanders to train as they will fight. For Infantry battalions, the staffing as a percent of T/O is 97 percent now; up from 89 percent in 1995 (all battalions aggregated). In 1995, 5 of 24 battalions were staffed above 100 percent of T/O while 12 were below 90 percent of T/O; compared to 2023, where 10 battalions are above 100 percent and only 5 are below 90 percent.

80. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, in 2030, will III MEF be able to conduct humanitarian/disaster relief operations on the scale that it did during Operation Unified Assistance, the response to the tsunami in Southeast Asia in 2004?

General SMITH. Yes.

While our operations are dependent on amphibious fleet size, the Marine Corps will be able to conduct humanitarian/disaster relief operations on a scale heretofore achieved.

However, in the next two to 5 years, many of our amphibious ships will reach the end of their service life and will cause delays in ARG/MEU deployments. These platforms are critical to providing HA/DR. When there are gaps in global ARG/MEU coverage, the Nation risks not having the right assets capable of getting to the crisis in time.

81. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, beyond its role to operate in the contested littorals, is III MEF today currently capable of meeting its requirements for other regional war plans?

General SMITH. Yes, III MEF can meet its requirements for other regional war plans.

MARINE CORPS MINE CLEARANCE

82. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, in responses provided to my office by the Marine Corps following an April 14, 2023 brief on section 1023 of the Fiscal Year

2023 NDAA, the Marine Corps reported that the anti-personnel obstacle breaching system (APOBS) and M58 Mine Clearing Line Charge (MICLIC) enabled the clearance for a 100m-long path through minefields for foot-mobile and vehicle movement. When either of these capabilities are employed, how will the minefields be “proofed” to ensure it supports foot-mobile or vehicular movement?

General SMITH. Breaching consists of four sequential activities: detect, reduce, mark, and proof mined areas and obstacles. The Marine Corps can detect and mark explosive hazards by hand and still explosively create lanes through minefields and mark those lanes. Marine engineer battalions remain equipped with the man-portable Anti-Personnel Obstacle Breaching Systems (APOBS) for clearing 45m lanes for foot-traffic, as well as with the trailer mounted M58 Mine Clearing Line Charge (MICLIC) for clearing up to 100m vehicle-capable lanes.

Currently, the Marine Corps is investing in the development of lighter route clearance capabilities; using unmanned air, littoral and ground platforms intended to detect and neutralize landmines and IEDs from safe distances (i.e., outside the serious injury zone around the mine/IED). Between fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2028, \$80 million will be invested into these emerging capabilities. One of these capabilities is the Littoral Explosive Ordnance Neutralization (LEON) program of record designed to provide an initial organic Marine Corps counter-mine capability from shallow water through the beach zone. Derived from a 2019 Rapid Statement of Need (RSON), the program fields a family of systems (FoS) that enables Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) marines to detect and neutralize underwater explosive hazards from standoff distances with robotic and autonomous platforms. When fully operationally capable, this FoS complements Navy Mine Countermeasure (MCM) capability and capacity, enhances multi-domain awareness, and ensures the maneuver, protection, and sustainment of the Naval expeditionary force. In the interim, Marine engineers will continue to use hand-held detectors and sickle sticks to execute route sweeping operations and use combinations of emplaced charges and remote detonation techniques to sympathetically detonate explosive hazards to clear routes for smaller, light maneuver forces.

MARINE CORPS ARTILLERY

83. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, senior Ukrainian military leaders have praised the addition of the High-Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) rocket system to their forces, but also add that the most important fire support system for their forces has been cannon artillery. How does the present, real world example comport with the significant reductions in marines’ cannon artillery?

General SMITH. We have retained two cannon artillery battalions in the Active component, which provides capacity to support MEU deployments and to provide close support fires for a Marine Brigade-sized unit. Two additional cannon artillery battalions are available in the Reserve component to support surge requirements.

Ukraine is heavily dependent on 155 cannon artillery and mortar systems due to the nature of warfare being conducted across the forward line of troops. When Ukraine wants to prosecute long range, high value targets with precision, they rely on the HIMARS. Currently, the vast majority of Ukrainian and Russian forces fighting inside Ukraine are in close contact; oftentimes the distance between Russian and Ukrainian lines are a few hundred meters. Further, small pockets of territory are captured and recaptured by Ukrainian and Russian forces accentuating the war’s relative closeness. From the Ukrainian perspective, the closeness of combat operations suggests that cannon artillery is the optimum fires required to support Ukrainian forces in contact with the Russians.

How the Ukrainian military is defending its homeland is a different problem set as to how the Marine Corps will integrate with the joint force in a future conflict and fulfill its Title 10 responsibilities of conducting “land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign” against a near peer adversary.

Cannons and rockets are complementary fire support systems, but provide unique advantages and disadvantages depending on mission, enemy, targets, and terrain. The Ukrainians have effectively employed both cannons and rockets to defend and retake territory with a lack of aviation fires. As a part of our combined arms doctrine, the Marine Corps integrates artillery, aviation, naval, and non-kinetic fires to achieve effects that enable maneuver. We have carefully assessed the current and future capabilities of our peer adversaries, as well as the capabilities required to support naval maneuver. Through that analysis, we are retaining some cannon artillery for land-based contingency operations while transitioning to precision fires platforms with extended ranges (e.g., rockets and missiles) and further development of loitering munitions technology. In addition to providing greater range and accuracy, these new systems provide an anti-ship capability that is critical to supporting

naval campaigns. We will continue to assess the right mix of artillery systems to compliment the other fires components within the MAGTF.

MARINE CORPS LAW ENFORCEMENT CAPABILITIES

84. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, the Marine Corps is divesting of three law enforcement (LE) battalions and consequently capabilities like policing, crime scene processing, mobility/route security, detention operations and enemy prisoner of war (EPW)/detainee handling, biometrics and evidence handling, military working dogs, sensitive site exploitation, and police advising and training. Have combatant commanders been made aware that assigned or allocated Marine Corps forces will no longer possess these operational units and their associated capabilities?

General SMITH. Yes, combatant commands are informed via the annual Global Force Management Allocation Plan process. During this process, the Joint Staff validates combatant command requirements and determines which Services have the necessary capabilities to fulfill these requirements. The Joint Staff then determines a sourcing solution for such requirements based on the Services' capability and capacity.

85. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, does the Marine Corps intend to retain law enforcement capabilities in other units, and if so, which specific units and in what capacities?

General SMITH. With the divestment of the Active component Law Enforcement Battalions (LE Bn), the USMC continues to retain law enforcement capabilities within the installation and the Marine Corps Reserves within 4th LE Bn. Installation Law Enforcement capabilities reside within Marine Corps Installation Command (MCICOM), Training and Education Command (TECOM), and Marine Corps Reserve Headquarters, New Orleans LA. Installation Law Enforcement is comprised of Provost Marshal Offices and Marine Corps Police Departments (PMO / MCPD). These formations provide Law Enforcement capabilities to installation commanders that include, but are not limited to, Incident Response, Criminal Investigation, Special Reaction Teams (SRT), Military Working Dogs, Accident Investigation, Corrections, Physical Security, and Administrative Services. 4th LE Bn is organized to support operational requirements, by training to standards such as maneuver and mobility support, policing, and detainee operations.

Installation PMO/MCPD Locations:

- MCICOM
 - o MCLB Albany, GA
 - o MCSF Blount Island, FL
 - o MCB Camp Lejeune
 - o MCAS Cherry Point
 - o MCB Cam Pendleton
 - o MCAS Miramar
 - o MCAS Yuma
 - o MCLB Barstow
 - o MCB Quantico
 - o MCAF (HMX-1)
 - o MCB Camp Butler
 - o MCAS Futenma
 - o Camp Fiji
 - o Camp Mujuk
 - o MCAS Iwakuni
 - o MCB Hawaii
 - o MCAS Hawaii

TECOM:

- MCAGCC 29 Palms, CA
- MCMWTC Bridgeport
- MCRD San Diego
- MCRD Parris Island

Marine Forces Reserve:

- NOLA HQ
- 4th Law Enforcement Battalion Units/Location
 - o Military Police Company A
 - o Lexington, KY
 - o Military Police Company B
 - o North Versailles, PA
 - o Military Police Company C

- o Dayton, OH
- o Military Police Company D
- o Billings, MT
- o Anchorage, AK
- o Headquarters Support Company
- o Albuquerque, NM

SCOUT SNIPERS

86. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, in late February 2023, the Marine Corps issued a memo announcing the immediate transition of scout sniper platoons to scout platoons. The reason given was that scout sniper platoons did not provide battalion commanders with sufficient “continuous all-weather information gathering.” These new scout platoons of 26 marines, which is larger than the traditional scout sniper platoon size of 18, will “provide the commander with relevant, reliable, accurate and prompt information.” While Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC) and reconnaissance battalions will continue to train their own snipers, infantry battalions will no longer have an organic sniper capability. Instead they will rely on some type of less capable and specialized designated marksman for precision shooting. I believe efforts to increase the information available to a battalion commander are worthwhile but I am concerned about the tradeoff. What exercises and experiments informed this decision?

General SMITH. In Spring 2020, the Commandant of the Marine Corps approved the Force Design 2030 plan, divesting the preponderance of weapon-specific military occupational specialties within the infantry battalions in favor of highly trained marines more capable of employing a variety of weapons and equipment. Included in this decision was divesting Scout Sniper Platoon structure, believing that rifle squads with advanced equipment and training could provide suitable ground-based sensing in support of the infantry battalion. (Today’s basic infantry rifle with integrated scope is considerably more accurate than earlier versions, and infantry company “arms rooms” also include precision rifles for designated marines to employ as directed for specific missions.)

Infantry Battalion Experimentation (IBX) Phase I determined the redesigned infantry battalions lacked sufficient all-weather intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. Based on these findings, the Commandant approved establishing a Scout Platoon in each infantry battalion, providing timely, organic ISR capability in support of the battalion commander’s Priority Intelligence and Commander’s Critical Information Requirements.

Infantry companies retain their precision rifle capability, and the Marine Corps will maintain school-trained snipers within Reconnaissance and Marine Special Operations units. Reconnaissance Marines will attend the Service-run Reconnaissance Sniper Course, training in precision marksmanship and weapons employment standards in multiple environments, focusing on distributed small unit operations. Marine Raiders attend the U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command-run special operations sniper courses.

The Marine Corps no longer awards the 0317 (Scout Sniper) MOS. Beginning in fiscal year 2024, all infantry battalions will add a Scout Platoon, divest of the sniper platoon, and move the precision rifles to the infantry companies’ arms rooms.

Experimentation is a core component of Force Design 2030, and the Service will continue testing concepts and equipment to ensure infantry battalions are properly structured, trained, and equipped to meet Joint, naval, and service requirements. In this spirit, experimentation is currently underway (IBX Phase II) to study how the new Scout Platoon best supports battalion-level organic all-weather ISR requirements and the Service’s enduring requirements for precision marksmanship capabilities.

87. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, will recon snipers be employed and assigned differently to provide the missing sniper capability if a battalion commander wants it?

General SMITH. No.

Reconnaissance snipers will be employed to meet the missions assigned to their units. Within the restructured infantry battalions, the precision rifle capability now resides within an “arms room” in the infantry companies to be employed by infantry marines as deemed necessary for specific missions. Infantry marines designated by their commanders will attend the additional training necessary to become proficient in the employment of precision rifles. Marines in the Scout Platoon will provide an organic ISR capability.

LIFT CAPABILITY IN UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND

88. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, maintenance issues and amphibious ship retirements have prevented the Navy from deploying Amphibious Ready Groups when MEUs have been ready to deploy. The Navy's 30-year shipbuilding plan never achieves the legal requirement to have at least 31 amphibious ships in the fleet. The Landing Ship Medium, which is critical to realizing the full capability of the MLR, will not be fielded in sufficient numbers to satisfy the requirements for even one MLR in the next 5 years. With these significant challenges in amphibious lift, the Marine Corps is posed to reduce the organic aviation lift available to the MAGTF over the next several years, including putting MV-22s and CH-53Ks into storage. Please explain how the changes to Marine Corps aviation with Force Design 2030 do not decrease the Marine Corps' organic lift capability in the INDOPACOM AOR.

General SMITH. The Marine Corps is not reducing organic aviation lift through the storage or preservation of aircraft; however, we are conducting active inventory management, a proven concept used since the beginning of Marine Aviation. Inventory management is designed to provide aircraft capability modernization, manage the lifecycle and airframe flight hours, and ensure enough aircraft with the required capability are always available to our operational forces.

MARINE CORPS INNOVATION

89. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, in your answers to the congressional advance policy questions you stated "the ability to rapidly develop concepts for victory, wargame, experiment, and modify those concepts is vital to ensure the Marine Corps stays ahead of our adversaries." Do you intend to change the way the Marine Corps develops new doctrine and concepts?

General SMITH. The Marine Corps has a process to harmonize capstone and subordinate operating concepts, functional concepts, experimentation, and legacy and new Marine Corps doctrine and training publications. While the process to rapidly develop doctrine based on concepts, wargames, and experiments is in place, it requires constant collaboration between stakeholders to maintain a common focus on the goals of concepts and experiments and socialization of what is being learned during the efforts. If confirmed as Commandant, I do not intend to change the way the Marine Corps develops new doctrine and concepts.

NAVY AND MARINE CORPS COOPERATION

90. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, you stated in your answers to the congressional advance policy questions, that "[i]f confirmed, I anticipate being assigned the duty of coordinating Marine Corps modernization efforts with those of the Joint Force." The Navy's 30-year shipbuilding plan fails to meet the 31 amphibious warfare ship requirement and does not meet the requirement for 35 Landing Ship Mediums. How will you work with the Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) and Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) to ensure the Marine Corps and Navy's modernization efforts are synchronized?

General SMITH. I want to thank Congress for providing these statutory requirements that strengthen the relationship between the Navy and the Marine Corps team. The Marine Corps is a naval expeditionary force committed to supporting the Navy and combatant commanders with maritime forces capable of contributing to naval and Joint campaigns.

If confirmed as Commandant, I remain committed to exercising these authorities to further strengthen the relationship between the Marine Corps and Navy within the Department of the Navy. Together, we are working to establish the formal procedures in which the Marine Corps will integrate amphibious warfare ship requirements into the 30-year shipbuilding plan. We must also develop a plan that achieves an inventory of no fewer than 31 amphibious warfare ships, consisting of at least 10 LHAs/LHDs and 21 LPDs and provides the necessary funding for 35 Medium Landing Ships. The Navy and Marine Corps are in unique positions regarding the amphibious fleet as one service chief owns the requirement, while the other owns the resources. Notwithstanding, I commit that, if confirmed, I will cooperate and work tirelessly with the SECNAV, CNO, and their staffs to ensure the Nation possesses the most capable amphibious fleet in the world in line with statutory requirements.

I will also creatively work with the Secretary of the Navy and the Chief of Naval Operations to pursue acquisition authorities granted in the fiscal year 2023 NDAA to maintain the required number of amphibious warfare ships in the future. Multi-ship procurement can achieve cost savings of 10 percent, or greater if maximized

by procuring five ships or more. Moreover, amphibious warfare ship affordability is maximized with multi-ship buys that stabilize the industrial base and improve buying power. If confirmed, I am fully committed to working closely with the Navy and this Committee to champion the necessity of providing shipyards with sustained and predictable funding lines to create industrial stability.

91. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, the Marine Corps has publicly commented on supporting the Navy in Force Design 2030; however, the Navy appears not to have reciprocated, most notably in the 30-year ship building plan which never gets to 31 amphibious ships or 35 LSMs. What is your plan to work with the SECNAV and CNO to ensure that Navy publications and senior leader statements reflect support for Marine Corps modernization efforts, specifically 31 amphibious ships and 35 LSMs?

General SMITH. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) and Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) to establish formal procedures in which the Marine Corps will integrate amphibious warfare ship requirements into the 30-year shipbuilding plan. Additionally, I commit to working with the SECNAV and CNO to develop a shipbuilding plan that achieves and maintains an inventory of no fewer than 31 amphibious warfare ships, consisting of at least 10 LHDs/LHAs and 21 LPDs and provides the necessary funding for 35 Medium Landing Ships.

As a naval expeditionary force in readiness, it is critical that the Navy and Marine Corps leadership continue to maintain maritime dominance. To effectively achieve this goal and adhere to the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS), we must prioritize maritime mobility and maneuver. As a part of the naval, joint, and combined force, the Marine Corps generates value by its ability to respond to crises, seize and hold key maritime terrain, and effectively campaign. Amphibious warfare ships (AWS) have historically played a major role in maintaining an Active forward presence with credible combat power, providing combatant commanders flexible response and deterrence options, which contribute directly to integrated deterrence.

ALLIES AND PARTNERS

92. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, in your answers to the congressional advance policy questions you said the Marine Corps' responsibility to respond to crises outside of existing guidance will "require closer integration with Allies and partners." What ideas do you have to strengthen relationships and deepen integration with Allies and partners?

General SMITH. The best way to build trust, strengthen alliances, and develop new partnerships is to maintain a forward presence, thereby enabling substantive interactions with our Allies and partners. Marines must be forward deployed—particularly in the INDOPACOM Command's Area of Responsibility to strengthen relationships and counter adversary malign influence in the region. We maintain positive military-to-military relationships with many countries throughout this region, and we need to continue making the investments necessary to sustain and improve those relationships. In addition to increasing our forward presence, we should expand our participation in various shared activities to include the international professional military education program in which dozens of senior military leaders from allied and partner nations attend our military schools and war colleges. We also send more of our officers to foreign professional military education programs. Through the personnel exchange program, United States marines integrate into billets in select foreign militaries, and select foreign officers integrate into Marine Corps billets. If confirmed, I pledge to continue, and where appropriate, expand these valuable programs.

ACCESS AND BASING AND OVERFLIGHT

93. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, MLR employment in the Indo-Pacific and SIF execution rely on access, basing, and overflight (ABO) access from allies and partners. From the Marines Corps perspective, can you prioritize the countries in the Indo-Pacific where ABO rights are required to employ MLRs and conduct SIF and EABO operations?

General SMITH. ABO is a critical requirement for any Stand-in Force. However, all Joint Forces are dependent on ABO from our allies and partners to maneuver throughout the battlespace. Each of our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific is crucial to ability of the Marine Corps and joint force to succeed in competition and conflict. The Commander, USINDOPACOM has prioritized country engagements in keeping with his authorities.

94. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, is the Marine Corps currently working on a strategy to mitigate any challenges stemming from countries not allowing access and basing in the event of a conflict with the PRC?

General SMITH. Yes. Accessing, basing, or overflight (ABO) during conflict is never guaranteed. However, steps can be taken prior to conflict in order to increase the likelihood of ABO. The Marine Corps actively participates in joint and interagency efforts to increase the likelihood for access. These efforts include frequent interactions with Allied and partner senior military leaders, forward positioning of forces, robust and regular engagements with combined forces, and our continuous rotational presence in the Indo-Pacific. Additionally, the Marine Corps has and will continue to mitigate the challenges of not having ABO. We remain uniquely postured with agile amphibious forces, capable of freely maneuvering through the commons, and if necessary, capable of limited-scale forcible entry. Marine forces afloat provide immense flexibility and optionality that mitigate the risks stemming from limited ABO. This is why it is so vital to maintain a minimum of 31 amphibious warships.

UNIT DEPLOYMENT PROGRAM IN ALASKA

95. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, the Stand-in Forces concept, designed to deter China by keeping Marine Littoral Regiments within the First Island Chain, where they can conduct sea denial operations and provide the joint force with targeting and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) data, is a component of Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations. In the Indo-Pacific, SIF and EABO rely on access to land, sea, and airspace of allied and partner nations. In the event of a conflict with the People's Republic of China (PRC), access, basing, and overflight (ABO) rights from allied and partner nations are not guaranteed. If such access is denied by Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Papua New Guinea, the Solomons, the Philippines, Japan, or South Korea, flowing forces into a fight against the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in INDOPACOM will be incredibly difficult. The PRC knows this and has the economic, political, and military tools to leverage neutrality from these countries. Prepositioned equipment in places like Australia, the Philippines, Japan, and South Korea may be inaccessible or have to be relocated to United States territory like Guam for distribution. United States Forces in Australia, Singapore, the Philippines, Japan, and South Korea may all be prohibited from deploying into combat from those locations. Our Forces on Guam, more densely packed by the day on an island that offers limited training opportunities for the Marine Corps, are almost certain to be targeted by the PLA early and often as they seek to neutralize or degrade that power projection platform.

General SMITH. Four years ago, the Marine Corps was poised to alter its Indo-Pacific force laydown to account for the inherent risk of ABO denial and limited training opportunities on Marine Corps bases across the Indo-Pacific. The 37th Commandant, General Robert Neller, sent several teams to Alaska to assess infrastructure and training opportunities to support a Unit Deployment Program (UDP) and prepositioned assets the Marine Corps would need to surge forward in the event of conflict with the PLA. Alaska's benefits were as obvious then as they are now: year-round, cost-effective training in almost every climate and terrain; the Nation's best sea, air, and land ranges necessary to train SIF and execute EABO; access to the largest and most advanced Air Force-Army training complex in the United States at the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC); proximity to potential conflict areas in the Indo-Pacific like the Korean peninsula, Japan, and Taiwan (not to mentioned access to EUCOM); and, incredibly supportive American citizens and local governments whose decision to continue to support the training of American military forces would not be impacted by Contingency Command Post (CCP) pressure campaigns as they are in other parts of the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility.

Unlike Darwin, where marines deploy for 6 months each year, Alaska provides year round training for the MAGTF in nearly every clime and place found on the globe. This training comes at a reduced cost compared to the expensive rotations through Darwin, which are reported to cost \$50 million, with the added benefit of also being in theater. Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER)-based military forces are closer than Darwin to South Korea (2,274 vice 3,467 miles), and Japan (2,063 vice 3,395 miles).

While Guam does not have Darwin's temporal restrictions, it provides such limited access to training ranges that marines will have to go off-island to conduct SIF and EABO operations, despite the \$8.6 billion investment to activate the facility. For example, the current Jungle Warfare School on Okinawa, which is 8,900 acres, will relocate to Camp Blaz on Guam, where it will shrink to 2,031 acres. Access to training in nearby countries is constantly threatened by PRC economic coercion.

Should it be successful, we will have 5,000 marines on an island where they cannot train to the standard necessary to win that will surely be targeted early and often in a fight, especially if Chinese coercion against allies and partners is successful and United States Forces have to redeploy to Guam because of ABO restrictions before they get into the fight.

Alaska's cold weather training opportunities are cheaper than Norway and permit significantly larger forces to train simultaneously than at Bridgeport. Alaska is the only place on the planet where marines can conduct large-scale, combined arms training in winter/mountainous conditions that is also joint and combined. Army and Air Force units stationed in Alaska provide a ready force to train with and against.

Perhaps most importantly, Alaska is in the INDOPACOM AOR. The strategic port of Anchorage provides deep-water access and railheads that connect to nearby Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, where the Air Force maintains two runways between 7,500 and 10,000 feet. The advantages for naval and air transport of prepositioned material and equipment are obvious. Further, the Aleutian Islands and the Bering Strait present the exact type of key maritime terrain that Marine Littoral Regiments are designed to dominate. China and Russia operate naval and air forces off the coast of Alaska regularly, giving marines the opportunity to practice the reconnaissance/counter-reconnaissance techniques SIF requires and gauge the Chinese and Russian reactions.

Given the rationale outlined above, do you agree that the Marine Corps will expand its permanent and rotational presence in Alaska?

Senator, I concur with the benefits Alaska brings as outlined above. Exercise Northern Edge provides some of the best high-end, realistic training available with a focus on Joint, multi-national, and multi-domain operations. The Marine Corps is always looking for multi-domain training ranges where we can exercise the entire spectrum, and we will continue to utilize the vast training capabilities in Alaska. If confirmed, I will continue to pursue opportunities to expand our permanent and rotational presence in Alaska.

96. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, given the rationale outlined in question #95, can you explain what the Marine Corps is doing to preposition material and equipment in Alaska?

General SMITH. As captured in our recently released I&L 2030, our current supply chains prioritize efficiency—not effectiveness. One broken link in the supply chain can result in an untethered force. Our MAGTFs remain designed to be self-sufficient, although not indefinitely. Instead of relying on a singular, vulnerable chain, we must build a more resilient supply web that can adapt to temporary broken links or obstructions. By generating a logistics web, we seek to provide options to commanders, create resiliency, contribute to deterrence, and overcome the precision lethality of the modern battlefield.

Consequently, the Marine Corps is developing the Global Positioning Network (GPN) as a recognition that we need to think differently about how to preposition equipment, materiel, and capabilities around the globe to support our Stand-in Forces across the full range of military operations. The centerpiece of this concept of support is the development of an integrated ashore and afloat sustainment network that is globally responsive, yet regionally aligned with a focus toward our pacing threat.

As you point out, the GPN requires us to consider access, basing, and overflight across the spectrum from competition to conflict; its strategic impacts in strengthening our relationships with partners and allies; and the return on investment in terms of responsiveness with the right capability at the time and place of need. We are actively assessing the opportunities and risks with multiple sites particularly in the INDOPACOM AOR, and we are certainly considering the opportunities available in Alaska. The vast multi-domain training opportunities of Alaska are outstanding, and we will continue to seek opportunities to leverage them. As we build and expand our new GPN, the strategic positioning of our equipment and supplies in INDOPACOM and ensuring access, availability, and responsiveness of theater lift for our Stand-In Force remain our highest priority. If confirmed, I am committed to working with you and the Committee to explore further prepositioning opportunities to ensure the Marine Corps remains our Nation's most ready force. My recent trip to Alaska demonstrated to me that Alaska remains a critical staging base for sustainment flowing to certain areas of the Indo-Pacific.

97. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, will you commit to brief me within 60 days of confirmation on your plan to increase the numbers of marines stationed in and rotating through Alaska?

General SMITH. If confirmed, I commit to brief you within 60 days.

98. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, will you commit to brief me within 60 days of confirmation on your plan to establish a Unit Deployment Program (UDP) in Alaska like the Marine Corps was looking at under General Neller's leadership?

General SMITH. If confirmed, I commit to brief you within 60 days.

99. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, will you commit to brief me within 60 days of confirmation on your plan to expand the Marine Corps' participation in the Red Flag Alaska, Northern Edge, and Arctic Edge exercises, particularly with Marine Corps aviation?

General SMITH. If confirmed, I commit to brief you within 60 days.

RESERVE MANPOWER END STRENGTH

100. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, since 2019 the total Marine Forces Reserve (MARFORRES) end strength has decreased from 38,000 to 33,000. At the same time, MARFORRES has joined II Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) as the non-INDOPACOM global response force. Is this end strength the optimal number given this new responsibility?

General SMITH. MARFORRES provides augmentation to the Active component of the Marine Corps, not a specific combatant commander. In the last 5 years, MARFORRES units have deployed in support of global missions to include missions in SOUTHCOM, AFRICOM, CENTCOM, INDOPACOM, and EUCOM.

The total Selected Reserve (SelRes) end strength is 33,000 for fiscal year 2023 and will reduce to an achievable 32,000 in fiscal year 2024. The MARFORRES portion of the SelRes was disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the associated vaccine mandate and recruiting challenges faced by all the Services.

We are requesting an authorized Selected Reserve end strength of 32,000 in fiscal year 2024 as it meets projected mission requirements while enabling modernization. This is consistent with our current Active Duty force, the realities of modernizing the capabilities of units, the recruiting environment, and comes with a plan for deliberate growth toward a 36,800 objective Reserve component force in the following years.

101. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, if the previously reference number of an end strength of 33,000 is not optimal, what is your plan to increase if you're confirmed as the next Commandant?

General SMITH. The service is undertaking multiple efforts regarding its Reserve strength.

- First is a shift from a recruit and replace model to an invest and retain model. The Direct Affiliation Program seeks to ensure marines "stay Marine" after the end of their Active service contract by providing opportunities to transition directly to the SMCR.
- We are also aggressively exploring Active/Reserve permeability to provide service options that better conform to 21st century career patterns.
- Acknowledging population shifts, we are adapting recruiting and unit geography.
- Last, we have employed a robust Reserve incentives program that is designed to incentivize continued Reserve service.

If confirmed, I will ensure the service continually evaluates Reserve structure and measures it against requirements of the future operating environment.

BALANCING FUTURE GLOBAL CONTINGENCIES

102. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, under Marine Corps Force Design 2030, I Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) and III MEF focus solely on INDOPACOM while II MEF and MARFORRES assume the crisis response mission for the rest of the globe. Aside from Marine Littoral Regiments under III MEF, will there be any differences in manning and capabilities across the MEFs and MARFORRES?

General SMITH. All three Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEF) and Marine Forces Reserve (MARFORRES) are organized, trained, equipped, and postured to conduct a variety of missions in support of Marine Corps Title 10 responsibilities. The Marine Corps maintains all organic crisis response capabilities that enable the forward posture and rapid deployment of flexible and tailorable forces to the needs of the Combatant Commanders (COCOMs). The Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) and Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU) are the most common Navy-Marine Corps tactical units that are forward deployed at the operational level and can accomplish strategic level engagements—these MEUs are resident in all MEFs. At the direction and

request of COCOMs, units, such as the Marine Littoral Regiment, can be organized, trained, and equipped to conduct missions not normally assigned as core task.

The Marine Corps' Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) and Stand-in Forces (SIF) concepts meet the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) intent and are theater agnostic. The plan for light, lethal, and distributed forces would be successful in other Combatant Commands (COCOMs), such as European Command (EUCOM) or Central Command (CENTCOM)—and have shown to be successful. For example, Task Force 61/2—led by II MEF—executed a proof of concept during 2022 in which they provided 6th Fleet Headquarters with real-time Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA). TF 61.2 was designed as a joint task force crisis response capability to command and control naval forces supporting contingencies in Europe and Africa. In that effort, Marine forces tested, refined, and validated concepts of employment for MDA and closing kill webs, while also conducting real-world, time sensitive reconnaissance-counter reconnaissance missions. These efforts continue to support 6th Fleet operations as nested within EUCOM and Africa Command (AFRICOM) priorities and have sense turned into a rotational force.

The service will continue to organize, modernize, and equip MARFORRES using II MEF as a baseline. The overall modernization will be complementary with II MEF to seamlessly integrate Reserve and Active Forces. We will seek to retain or build critical, congruent Reserve-unique capabilities while also fielding capacity that fully enables the USMC Service Retained Forces (SRF) to be the global crisis response force of choice. At the unit of employment level, we will modernize similar AC/RC units to maintain parity across the SRF. Furthermore, parity across the SRF maximizes operational flexibility and continues the Reserve component's long history of augmenting, reinforcing, and sustaining the Active component.

103. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, do you believe the responsibilities outlined in question #102 are the appropriate balance?

General SMITH. Yes, at this time we are striking an effective balance. As we experiment and learn, we will refine and adjust our approach to deliver the optimal mix of total force capability and capacity.

[The nomination reference of General Eric M. Smith, USMC follows:]

NOMINATION REFERENCE AND REPORT

PN691

AS IN EXECUTIVE SESSION,
SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,
May 30, 2023.

Ordered, That the following nomination be referred to the Committee on Armed Services:

The following named officer for appointment as Commandant of the Marine Corps and appointment in the United States Marine Corps to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., sections 601 and 8043:

To Be General

Gen. Eric M. Smith, 9379

_____, 2023.
(Date)

Reported by Mr. Reed _____
(Signature)

with the recommendation that the nomination be confirmed.

□ The nominee has agreed to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

[The biographical sketch of General Eric M. Smith, USMC, which was transmitted to the Committee at the time the nomination was referred, follows:]

Resume of Career Service

Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps
Assigned: 8 Oct 2021

Source of Commission

Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC)

Educational Degrees

Texas A&M University BS 1987

Marine Corps War College MSS 2007

Military Schools

Basic Officer Course 1987

U.S. Army Airborne Course 1987

Infantry Officer Course 1988

Marine Corps Command and Staff College 1993

Amphibious Warfare School 1995

U.S. Army Command and General Staff College 2001

High Risk Personnel Course 2001

Commanders Course 2009

Brigadier General Select Orientation Course 2012

General Officers Warfighting Program 2012

Capstone 2015

Joint Qualification

Level IV/General Officer Joint Tour Complete

Foreign Language

Spanish



**Gen Eric M. Smith,
USMC**

Date of Rank: 8 Oct 21

Date of Birth: 2 Jun 65

Age: 57

Date Commissioned: 9 May 87

MRD for Age: 1 Jul 29

MRD for Yrs Svc: 1 Jun 27

<u>Promotion</u>	<u>Date of Appointment</u>
2ndLt	20 May 87
1stLt	20 May 89
Capt	1 Oct 91
Maj	1 Jun 97
LtCol	1 Jan 03
Col	1 Aug 08
BGen	10 Jul 13
MajGen	3 Jul 17
LtGen	2 Aug 18
Gen	8 Oct 21

Summary of Assignments

<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Oct 21	Present	Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps (Gen)
Jun 19	Oct 21	Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command / Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration (LtGen)
Aug 18	Jun 19	Commanding General, III Marine Expeditionary Force / Commander, Marine Forces Japan (LtGen)
Jun 17	Jul 18	Commanding General, 1st Marine Division (MajGen/BGen)

Jan 17	May 17	Assistant Deputy Commandant, Plans, Policies, and Operations, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps (BGen)
Jan 16	Jan 17	Senior Military Advisor to the Secretary of Defense (BGen)
Nov 15	Jan 16	Temporary Additional Duty as the Senior Military Advisor to the Secretary of Defense (BGen)
Jun 15	Nov 15	Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces South (BGen)
May 13	May 15	Senior Military Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense (BGen/BGen frocked)
Apr 12	Jun 13	Director, Capabilities Development Directorate, Marine Corps Combat Development Command (BGen frocked / Col)
Jan 10	Apr 12	Regimental Commander, 8th Marine Regiment, 2d Marine Division (Col)
Jun 09	Jan 10	Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, 2d Marine Division (Col)
Jun 08	May 09	Director, Fires and Maneuver Integration Directorate, Marine Corps Combat Development Command (Col/LtCol)
Jun 07	May 08	Senior Aide to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps (LtCol)
Jun 06	Jun 07	Student, Marine Corps War College, Marine Corps University, Quantico, VA (LtCol)
Feb 06	Jun 06	Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, 1st Marine Division (LtCol)
Oct 04	Feb 06	Battalion Commander, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment (LtCol)
May 04	Oct 04	Executive Officer, Regimental Combat Team 1, 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division (LtCol)
Jul 03	May 04	Operations Officer, 1st Marine Division (LtCol)
Jul 01	Jul 03	Naval Section Chief, U.S. Military Group, Caracas, Venezuela (LtCol/Maj)
May 00	Jun 01	Student, U. S. Army Command and General Staff Officer College (Maj)
Jul 98	May 00	Marine Officer Instructor, Texas A&M University, Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps Unit, College Station, TX (Maj)
May 98	Jul 98	Company Commander, Company G, Officer Candidates School, Training Command (Maj)
Jun 97	May 98	Marine Officer Instructor, Texas A&M University, Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps Unit, College Station, TX (Maj)
May 95	May 97	Company Commander, 2d Battalion, 2d Marine Regiment (Capt)
Jun 94	May 95	Student, Amphibious Warfare School, Marine Corps University, Quantico, VA (Capt)
May 91	Jun 94	Officer Selection Officer, U.S. Marine Corps Recruiting Station San Antonio, 8th Marine Corps District, San Antonio, TX (Capt/1stLt)
Feb 88	May 91	Company Executive Officer; Platoon Commander, 2d Battalion, 3d Marine Regiment (1stLt/2ndLt)
Nov 87	Feb 88	Student, Infantry Officers Course, The Basic School, Quantico, VA (2ndLt)
May 87	Nov 87	Student, The Basic School, Quantico, VA (2ndLt)

Summary of Joint Assignments

	<u>Date</u>	<u>Grade</u>
Senior Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense	Nov 15-Jan 17	BGen
Senior Military Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense	May 13-May 15	BGen/ BGen (Frocked)
Naval Section Chief, United States Military Group, Caracas, Venezuela	Jul 01-Jul 03	LtCol/Maj

Summary of Participation in Combat and Contingency Operations

	<u>Date</u>	<u>Grade</u>
Regimental Commander, 8th Marine Regiment, 2d Marine Division Operation Enduring Freedom	Jan 11-Jan 12	Col
Battalion Commander, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division Operation Iraqi Freedom	Feb 05-Oct 05 Dec 04-Dec 04	LtCol

Operations Officer/Executive Officer, Regimental Combat Team 1, 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division Operation Iraqi Freedom	Feb 04-Oct 04	LtCol
Company Commander, 2d Battalion, 2d Marine Regiment Operation Assured Response	Apr 96-Aug 96	Capt
Company Executive Officer, 2d Battalion, 3d Marine Regiment Operation Desert Storm	Jan 91-Mar 91	1stLt

Decorations

Defense Distinguished Service Medal
 Legion of Merit
 Bronze Star Medal
 Purple Heart Medal
 Defense Meritorious Service Medal
 Meritorious Service Medal
 Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal
 Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal
 Combat Action Ribbon
 Joint Meritorious Unit Award
 Navy Unit Commendation
 Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation
 National Defense Service Medal
 Southwest Asia Service Medal
 Afghanistan Campaign Medal
 Iraq Campaign Medal
 Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal
 Global War on Terrorism Service Medal
 Armed Forces Service Medal
 Humanitarian Service Medal
 Sea Service Deployment Ribbon
 Navy and Marine Corps Overseas Service Ribbon
 Marine Corps Recruiting Ribbon
 NATO Medal (ISAF)
 Kuwait Liberation Medal (Saudi Arabia)
 Kuwait Liberation Medal (Kuwait)

[The Committee on Armed Services requires certain senior military officers nominated by the President to positions requiring the advice and consent of the Senate to complete a form that details the biographical, financial, and other information of the nominee. The form executed by General Eric M. Smith, USMC in connection with his nomination follows:]

118th CONGRESS, 2023 -- 2024
UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
ROOM SR-228
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510-6050

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE QUESTIONNAIRE
INFORMATION REQUESTED OF NOMINEES
FOR CERTAIN SENIOR MILITARY POSITIONS

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE NOMINEE: Answer all questions and provide all requested information. If more space is needed, attach an additional sheet of paper to the Questionnaire and cite the part of the Questionnaire and the question number (e.g., A-9, B-4) to which the continuation of your answer applies. Unless otherwise required, an answer of "yes", "no", or "not applicable" is appropriate.

QUESTIONNAIRE, PART A

NOTE: Information furnished in this part of the Questionnaire will be made available in Committee offices for public inspection prior to the hearing, if any, and will be entered in the hearing record, also available to the public.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION TO BE MADE PUBLIC

1. **Name (Include any former names you have used):**
Eric Matthew Smith
2. **Position to which nominated:**
Commandant of the Marine Corps
3. **Date of nomination:**
2023
4. **Government experience (List any advisory, consultative, honorary, and other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments, other than those listed in the service record extract provided to the Committee by the applicable agency/department/board):**
None
5. **Business relationships (List all positions currently held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of**

any corporation, firm, partnership, or other business enterprise, and of any educational or other institution):

NONE

6. Memberships (List all memberships and offices that you currently hold, as well as any memberships and offices you have previously held, in professional, fraternal, scholarly, civic, business, charitable, and other organizations):
Member: Marine Corps Association (No role. Receive Monthly Magazine)
Member: Texas A&M Corps of Cadets Association (No role. Receive Monthly Magazine).
7. Honors and awards (List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, and any other special recognition received for outstanding service or achievements, in addition to those listed in the service record extract and biographical provided to the Committee by the agency or department):
NONE

COMMITMENTS IN FURTHERANCE OF CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

NOTE: In order to exercise their legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress timely receive testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information from the executive branch. A simple “yes” or “no” response is appropriate.

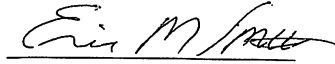
8. Do you agree, if confirmed, and on request, to appear and testify before this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate Committees of Congress?
YES
9. Do you agree, if confirmed, and when asked before this Committee, its subcommittees, or other appropriate Committees of Congress to give your personal views, even if those views differ from the position of the Administration?
YES
10. Do you agree, if confirmed, to provide this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information, as may be requested of you, and to do so timely?
YES

11. Do you agree, if confirmed, to consult with this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you?
Yes
12. Do you agree, if confirmed, to keep this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided?
Yes
13. Do you agree, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this Committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request?
Yes
14. Do you agree, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this Committee?
Yes
15. Do you agree, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this Committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress?
Yes

[The nominee responded to Parts B-E of the committee questionnaire. The text of the questionnaire is set forth in the Appendix to this volume. The nominee's answers to Parts B-E are contained in the committee's executive files.]

SIGNATURE AND DATE

I hereby state that I have read and signed Parts A and B of the foregoing Senate Armed Services Committee Questionnaire, and that the information provided therein, and in any document appended thereto, is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, current, accurate, and complete.



This 22^d day of May, 2023

[The nomination of General Eric M. Smith, USMC was reported to the Senate by Chairman Reed on June 21, 2023, with the recommendation that the nomination be confirmed. The nomination was confirmed by the Senate on September 21, 2023.]

