

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2026

HEARINGS

BEFORE A
SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION

SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE

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NOTE: Under committee rules, Mr. Cole, as chairman of the full committee, and Ms. DeLauro, as ranking minority member of the full committee, are authorized to sit as members of all subcommittees.

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and MAXWELL MORGAN
Subcommittee Staff

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2026

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14, 2025.

OVERSIGHT OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY AND MARINE CORPS

WITNESSES

**ADMIRAL JAMES W. KILBY, ACTING CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS,
UNITED STATES NAVY**

THE HONORABLE JOHN PHELAN, SECRETARY, UNITED STATES NAVY

**GENERAL ERIC M. SMITH, COMMANDANT, UNITED STATES MARINE
CORPS**

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN CALVERT

Mr. CALVERT. Good afternoon. The subcommittee will come to order.

Today, the subcommittee will receive testimony from the Honorable John Phelan, Secretary of the Navy; Admiral James Kilby, Acting Chief of Naval Operations; and General Eric Smith, the Commandant of the United States Marine Corps.

Mr. Secretary, congratulations on your appointment. We have already had several productive engagements, and I look forward to continuing to work with you.

Admiral Kilby, General Smith, thank you for joining us today. We greatly appreciate your service.

Today, we meet at a time of increasing global instability. The Navy and Marine Corps are under extraordinary operational demand, responding to threats across every domain.

For the past 19 months, Naval forces have engaged in daily combat operations in the Red Sea to protect international shipping from Iranian-backed Houthi attacks. These actions underscore the critical role our fleet plays in maintaining freedom of navigation and the security of global commerce.

At the same time, we face a rising near-peer challenge in the Indo-Pacific. China continues to build the world's largest Navy, surpassing the U.S. Navy in both ship count and shipbuilding capability. China is on pace to surpass the United States Navy in fire-power in the coming years. Already today, the Chinese far outnumber us in hypersonic weapons.

In any potential conflict with China, the Navy will be the linchpin of our ability to project power across the vast Indo-Pacific region. The sheer scale of that theater demands a capable and ready fleet, and I remain deeply concerned that we are not building

or sustaining our Naval forces at the pace required to meet that challenge.

Years of delay, cost overruns, and workforce challenges have slowed production across critical shipbuilding programs, including the Virginia- and Columbia-class submarines, Ford-class aircraft carriers, and the Constellation-class frigates. At the same time, the demand for capable, survivable platforms is only increasing.

Delays in construction of the lead Columbia-class submarine presents a significant risk to strategic deterrence. I understand that the delivery schedule has continued to slip since the 45-day shipbuilding review that was completed last spring, and the Columbia program is now looking at an 18- to 24-month delay in delivering the lead ship. How has this happened to the Navy's priority program?

Further, I fear the delays in the Virginia-class program will only be compounded by delays in Columbia-class submarine construction. The Virginia-class program continues to hover at the construction cadence of 1.2 submarines a year versus the necessary cadence of two per year.

Congress has invested significantly in the submarine industrial base. I want to know when these investments will prove out. While my optimism is waning, I am hopeful that the recent award of funding for wage and productivity enhancements at the prime shipyards will help turn the tide.

Ship maintenance and repair is another significant problem. Too many ships are stuck in yards too long, impacting readiness and deployment schedules.

The Navy continues to face serious challenges in sustaining fleet readiness due to persistent maintenance delays across both public and private shipyards. A shortage of skilled labor, aging infrastructure, and inconsistent planning are undermining our ability to execute timely maintenance availabilities.

The problem carries operational consequences that are immediate and strategic. Delays ripple through deployment schedules, degrade crew morale, strain already-overtasked platforms. These readiness shortfalls directly impact the Navy and the Marine Corps's ability to respond to global crises and surge forces where needed. Without decisive improvements in maintenance execution, we risk building a fleet on paper that cannot meet operational demands in practice.

This brings me to the Navy's requirement around amphibious warfare ships. While the Navy is required to maintain a fleet of at least 31 amphibs, the current state of the fleet raises serious doubts about whether that requirement is being met in an operationally credible way. Aging hulls, maintenance delays, and lack of sustained investment have eroded the operational availability of our amphibious fleet, putting real pressure on the Marine Corps's ability to train, deploy, and respond globally.

Amphibious ships are not operational assets; they are central to our ability to project power, reassure our allies, and deter adversaries. The committee expects a plan not just to meet the letter of the law but to ensure that the amphibious fleet is truly capable and ready.

We must get shipbuilding back on track and strengthen the industrial base that supports it. That includes looking to expand international cooperation, particularly with close partners like Japan and South Korea, who are developing advanced naval technologies and regional shipbuilding expertise that may present a collaborative opportunity. We need to create solutions to increase throughput, expand capacity, and leverage private-sector partnerships where possible.

Now, I have questioned the Navy's future investment in aircraft carriers, and I think we have seen a valuable discussion as a result. We shouldn't be afraid to have these debates. But I want to be clear today that aircraft carriers serve a critical role in power projection and will most certainly continue to provide the joint force with extraordinary strike warfare and unrivaled air superiority as we enter the Davidson window and beyond.

That said, we cannot effectively operate carriers without aircraft. I am alarmed by the downward trend in Navy's procurement in strike fighter aircraft over the last several years. Today, the Navy faces a growing shortfall in strike fighter aircraft as our carriers sustain a grueling and intense operating tempo in the Red Sea and around the globe.

Admiral Paparo, the Indo-Pacific Commander, recently testified that China is outproducing the U.S. in advanced fighters and is now positioned for the first time to surpass the United States in air superiority in the Pacific.

I will not parse my words here: We need sixth-generation fighters. The U.S. Navy needs sixth-generation fighters. I am concerned that any hesitancy on our part to proceed with the planned procurement of the sixth-gen fighters for the Navy will leave us dangerously outmatched in a China fight. We cannot wait.

Further, we cannot expect to grow the defense industrial base by undermining it. Aviation programs that rely on highly specialized supply chains and skilled labor cannot be turned on and off like a switch. If we continue sending mixed signals through delayed buys, program instability, or shifting requirements, we risk hollowing out the very industrial base we need for future readiness. We must treat this sector as a strategic asset, not as an afterthought.

Over the past year, the Navy has operated under intense and sustained combat conditions in the Red Sea, the most active maritime conflict zone in a generation. Daily missile and drone engagements against Iranian-backed Houthi forces have turned theoretical warfighting concepts into real-life execution under fire. These operations are yielding invaluable insights into missile defense, unmanned system integration, and command and control in a high-threat environment.

But this persistent operational tempo comes at a cost. Ships and crews are being pushed hard, deployments are being extended, and readiness for other global contingencies is being strained. The Navy must balance the urgency of today's fight with the imperative to reset, repair, and prepare for tomorrow's challenges. We look forward to hearing how this experience is informing tactical development, force posture, and long-term fleet health.

The conflict in Ukraine continues to demonstrate how low-cost, autonomous systems, especially drones, can deliver outsized battle-

field effect against far more expensive platforms. These conflicts are reshaping our understanding of warfare, where speed, scale, and adaptability often outweigh traditional measures of strength.

Our ability to capitalize on these emerging technologies will depend on how effectively we partner with the private sector. Many of the tools we need—artificial intelligence, autonomy, and edge computing—are being developed outside the traditional defense environment.

To keep pace with the rapidly evolving threat environment, the Navy must do more than experiment; it must reduce barriers to entry for commercial innovation and field successful concepts quickly and at scale. I look forward to continuing to partner with you on supporting and promoting innovation.

Over the last several years, the Marine Corps has undergone a significant transformation. This shift to a lighter, more agile, and distributed force capable of operating inside contested maritime spaces is both bold and necessary.

As the Marine Corps pursues new capabilities to support force design, it is essential that its acquisition programs are grounded in rigorous analysis and supported by fulsome, validated requirements to ensure systems are relevant, sustainable, and delivered on time.

The future of the Marine Corps depends on getting this right, and we are committed to providing the resources and the oversight to make that happen.

Before we hear from our witnesses, I would like to recognize the distinguished ranking member, Ms. McCollum, for any opening comments.

Thank you.

OPENING REMARKS OF MS. MCCOLLUM

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Secretary, Admiral Kilby, this is your first time appearing before the committee. Welcome. I look forward to working with both of you.

General Smith, it is a pleasure to see you again, and congratulations on a second-year clean audit. Go, Marines. The Marine Corps continues to be the premier example to the rest of the services for responsible budgeting, and I thank you and my constituents thank you for that.

As I said in our hearings last week, the fiscal year 2026 budget process is off to a very rough start. We just have over 4 months left until the end of 2025. To date, only the skinny budget for the next year has been released, and there are rumors that the full budget may not be released until June.

And that is why we have not been able to discuss with any of the services the budget priorities in detail. And that is going to be true for this hearing, unfortunately, as well. It is disappointing, because the Department of the Navy programs face long delays and other setbacks, and our committee must have a better understanding of your fiscal year 2026 priorities.

I hope that each of you will reach out to the chair, myself, and to all the members of this committee as soon as details are released.

Mr. Secretary, I continue to be concerned about the ability of the Navy and the industry to provide ships and submarines we purchase on time, on budget. And this is something the chair and I, as you heard from his statement, totally agree on.

This has been a challenge for several years, and now the responsibility has fallen to you. We cannot continue to pay for vessels that cost one amount at the start of construction and end up costing dramatically more in later years.

I appreciate addressing both the delays and the reinvigorating of the maritime industrial base. That was a focus during your Senate confirmation hearings. You spoke directly to this, and I appreciate that. So I look forward to working with you to ensure that the industry and the government can find solutions to get back on track.

I was also pleased to hear during your confirmation hearings that you prioritize the health and safety of our sailors and marines under your watch. Extended deployments cannot only hurt the sailors or the marine but can also have the possibility of harming their families.

Part of the reason for these extended deployments are the delays at the maintenance facility yards in getting our subs and our service vessels in and out of the water. And that, too, needs to be addressed.

In last week's hearing with the Army, we discussed the Army's transformative innovative—excuse me, I have a catch in my throat—we discussed the Army's Transformation Initiative. Part of the initiative is the Army's decision to end the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle program.

I have to say, I was dismayed when the Army made this decision and did not consult with the Marines. That is beyond disappointing. "Joint" means "joint." That is what the "J" stands for. Joint decisions should be informed together as part of joint programs if they need to change.

So I look forward to working with you, General Smith, in determining the next steps for this vehicle, which your marines rely upon.

And, finally, as I said when the Air Force and the Army were before us, I am alarmed at the number and the manner in which the Department has decided to implement cuts of civilian personnel.

Public shipyards are of personal concern to me. Losing shipyard workers with experience and failing to replace them will only lengthen the problems we are now seeing at these shipyards. Delays will worsen, and maintenance schedules will not be executed on time.

So, Mr. Secretary, I would like to hear from you how you will address these personnel cuts in relationship to the public yards.

These cuts will also affect the execution of contracts and other vital paperwork. We are already living with the impacts of what happens when civilians take a buyout and stop working on contracts. The contract isn't signed, the mission doesn't get done, and the program falls behind, and it costs the taxpayers more money.

I am also concerned that these cuts will shift responsibility of completing these tasks to the same military personnel that you would like to see most at work at sea or on the training field.

So, once again, I welcome you all to the committee, and I look toward to hearing your testimony.

Thank you for the courtesy, Mr. Chair. I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.

I would now like to turn to the chairman of the full committee, my good friend, Chairman Tom Cole.

OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN COLE

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum.

It is always a pleasure to be joined by the ranking member of the full committee, my good friend from Connecticut, Ms. DeLauro.

And let me go off my script for a second and just say, I appreciate Ranking Member McCollum's remarks about the budget, because she is spot-on. We absolutely need it sooner. That is not your fault. I am not directing that at any of the three of you. But this is one where OMB needs to pick up the pace if we are going to have any chance of getting our work done on time.

So thank you, my good friend from Minnesota, for pointing that out.

I want to welcome all three of you.

Mr. Secretary, delighted to have you confirmed and here with us for the first time.

Admiral Kilby, General Smith, again, it is an honor to have both of you with us today.

I want to extend my gratitude to you and to your commendable and continuing service to our country and to the men and women in uniform that you collectively lead.

Today, our Navy's mission has never been more consequential or expansive. From the contested waters of the Indo-Pacific to the turbulent Red Sea, our Navy and Marine Corps are on the front lines of deterring aggression, projecting power, and upholding the rules-based international order.

We are all deeply grateful for the bravery and professionalism shown by our sailors and marines, especially those operating today in harm's way in the Middle East. The Navy's persistent operations in the Red Sea under extremely dangerous and demanding conditions have prevented countless attacks on international shipping and ensured the continued flow of commerce.

These missions have not come without cost, and they are a stark reminder that our Naval forces must be ready to respond decisively across the full spectrum of conflict.

While we await the full details of the White House budget request for the Department of Defense, this hearing will serve as an opportunity to address a range of issues that face the Navy and the Marine Corps.

One area of particular concern is the state of our shipbuilding enterprise. We continue to see troubling delays in the delivery of key platforms, including the Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine, the Constellation-class frigate, and the Virginia-class attack submarines. These delays not only impact operational readiness but they also create a growing strategic risk at a time when China is expanding its fleet at an unprecedented pace.

This is not a new concern. The Trump administration rightly recognized the importance of recapitalizing our fleet, with its executive order aimed at revitalizing American shipbuilding to better position the force to achieve a 381-ship Navy. While that goal remains aspirational, it should continue to guide our efforts as we consider how to strengthen our industrial base capacity, streamline procurement timelines, and demand greater accountability in program execution.

And we will also want to hear more about the Navy's evolving posture in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in light of China's coercive actions near Taiwan, in the South China Sea, and beyond. Maintaining a forward, flexible presence in the region is essential to deterring conflict and reassuring our allies and partners.

The growth of unmanned systems, which my friend Chairman Calvert referred to, on the surface, under sea, and in the air is another area of intense interest. The Department has made strides in experimentation and prototyping, but the path toward large-scale integration remains unclear. We will want to know how unmanned platforms are being incorporated into the fleet, what operational value they are expected to provide, and on what schedule they will be delivered.

Turning to the Marine Corps, we appreciate the continued implementation of Force Design 2030, which reflects a bold and forward-looking approach to modernizing the Corps for distributed operations in contested environments. We look forward to hearing from General Smith about how Force Design is progressing, what challenges remain, and how the Corps is adapting to lessons learned from the exercises and real-world operations.

Strategic deterrence is also a key focus of this hearing. In addition to its role as the steward of the sea-based leg of the nuclear triad, the Navy is also responsible for maintaining the TACAMO mission, our survivable airborne communications link between national leadership and nuclear forces.

As the Navy moves forward with the recapitalization of this critical capability through the E-XX aircraft program, it is essential that the Department stay on track and avoid the cost and schedule issues that have plagued other major acquisitions.

We are also aware of recent discussions about potentially transferring elements of the TACAMO mission to the Air Force. This subcommittee will want to understand the rationale behind such a move, its impact on operational effectiveness, and what it could mean for program stability going forward.

Of course, none of these platforms, strategies, or technologies matter without the people who bring them to life. Recruiting and retention remain pressing challenges across the force, although I know certain progress has been made in recent months. Both the Navy and Marine Corps have had to grapple with difficult operational tempos, quality-of-life issues, and a competitive labor market. We will continue to support efforts to improve housing, family support programs, and the healthcare of our servicemembers.

I want to close by thanking each of you again for being here and for your service. I also want to thank the dedicated men and women of your branches, uniformed and civilian alike, who con-

tinue to operate in every corner of the world on behalf of the American people.

We look forward to your testimony and a frank discussion about the challenges you face and the resources you need to meet them.

Again, thank you for being here today.

And, with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the chairman.

And I would now like to turn to the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, Ms. DeLauro, for any opening comments.

OPENING REMARKS OF MS. DELAURO

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. I thank you and Ranking Member McCollum and Chairman Cole for holding this hearing on the plans for the Department of the Navy in the coming year.

And thank you to the witnesses—Secretary Phelan, General Smith, and Admiral Kilby—for your appearing before us today and for your dedicated service to our Nation. You keep our Nation safe. You keep our sailors and marines safe. You ensure that our allies are supported wherever democracy and freedom are threatened around the world.

Today, I look forward to learning about what the Navy is doing to get our shipbuilding back on track, especially with regard to submarines. It is critical for our national security that the Navy returns to a regular production of two Virginia-class submarines per year and that the Columbia-class gets as close to schedule as possible.

We need to understand how the administration plans to work with Congress to ensure that that happens. Our ability to deter and respond to threats around the globe is counting on it.

I also am eager to hear more about how the Marine Corps will utilize the CH-53K program, how it will evolve into the future. We must always work to ensure our servicemembers have the best possible equipment to defend our Nation, and American-made Sikorsky helicopters are the best in the world. I want to ensure the CH-53 platform continues to serve as the backbone of the Marine Corps's heavy-lift fleet.

Additionally, I want to hear about what we are doing to modernize the Navy's workforce. I am very concerned to hear that the Department of the Navy will be losing about 16,000 civilian workers, including workers at our public shipyards. The Navy must work with the Congress and with our industry partners to ensure that we have a highly trained workforce that is ready to get the job done and respond to constantly evolving threats.

And we all know that when you destroy the infrastructure and hollow out the agencies, we cannot bring that back with how quickly we would need to do that. So we should not be in the business of destroying our infrastructure.

Also pertaining to the workforce, it is deeply regrettable that the administration is choosing to inject culture-war debates into the Department of Defense funding process. And I am concerned with how that may hurt further recruitment efforts, especially among women.

We must do all that we can to ensure that any American who wants to bravely serve in the United States Armed Forces, defend our Nation, feels that they belong and that they are not going to be drawn into political warfare while confronting legitimate threats to freedom, to democracy, and our national security.

I thank you again, all of you, for being here today. I look forward to listening to you.

And I yield back.

Mr. Chairman, I am going to dash to Homeland Security for a portion of that. Will be back for questions.

Mr. CALVERT. I look forward to it.

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you very much for your indulgence. Appreciate it. Thank you.

Mr. CALVERT. Gentlemen, your full written testimony will be placed in the record. Please give a brief summary of your statements.

Secretary Phelan, the floor is yours.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SECRETARY PHELAN

Secretary PHELAN. Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you alongside General Smith and Admiral Kilby to discuss the posture of the Department of the Navy.

I am grateful to President Trump for the trust he has placed in me to lead the nearly 1 million sailors, marines, and civilians who make up our maritime force.

My North Star, or number-one priority, as Secretary is the readiness of our sailors and marines. I will leave this Department with three focus areas that will guide our Navy and Marine Corps: strengthen shipbuilding and the maritime industrial base; foster an adaptable, accountable, and innovative warfighter culture; improve the health, welfare, and training of our people.

In my first 30 days as SECNAV, I have visited the Indo-Pacific, the southern border, the Gulf of America, several of our installations, and eight public and private shipyards to see our operations and challenges firsthand. I look forward to sharing my observations with you today.

The United States commands the most powerful maritime force in the world, but that dominance is under threat. China continues to expand its fleet, build more advanced submarines, and operate more provocatively and aggressively in contested waters.

In the Red Sea, our warfighters are leading Operation Prosperity Guardian, defending freedom of navigation. They are doing an excellent job. At CENTCOM headquarters, I have witnessed these operations and saw firsthand the professionalism and expertise of our forces operating in this area.

Closer to home, our maritime forces are working with Federal agencies to disrupt drug and human trafficking, helping to further secure our borders. On my second day in office, I visited the USS Gravelly in the Gulf of America and flew surveillance missions with Patrol Squadron 26.

While our forces remain steady, rebuilding our hollowed-out maritime industrial base is a national-security imperative, as outlined

in the “Restoring America’s Maritime Dominance Executive Order” signed by President Trump on April 9th.

Over the past month, I visited those eight shipyards across the Nation’s East Coast and the Indo-Pacific. I spoke directly with shipyard leaders and the hardworking tradesmen essential to our maritime operations. I now have a clear picture of where our shipbuilding dollars have been going and am developing a plan to fix what is broken.

As the Nation’s first line of defense, the Navy and Marine Corps play an indispensable role in securing national interests and protecting our way of life. However, to truly strengthen our defense posture, we must first ensure that the Department of the Navy is accountable to the American taxpayer. Accountability is not just a regulatory requirement; it is the bedrock upon which we will build a stronger, more efficient Navy and Marine Corps.

To instill an environment of adaptability in warfighting culture, we must first demonstrate sound business practices and financial discipline. Under my leadership, the Department of the Navy will achieve a clean audit, following the example set by the Marine Corps, which has completed two consecutive unmodified audits.

We will leverage technology to drive smarter decision-making, adopting lean management practices to eliminate unnecessary overhead, and building relationships with private industry to access cutting-edge solutions.

As we confront the mounting challenges of shipbuilding and warfighting readiness, it is clear that our greatest asset is the extraordinary men and women who serve: our sailors and marines. We will continue to invest in recruiting, training, and retaining the highest-caliber personnel. We will prioritize quality-of-life and quality-of-service initiatives to ensure that our sailors, marines, and their families have the resources available to succeed.

During my travels, I have visited a number of barracks, and although our new barracks are good, I was appalled by the condition of some of our older barracks. I will hold leadership and industry accountable until we deliver the standard of living our servicemembers deserve.

As former President and Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt once told Congress, “A good Navy is not a provocation to war. It is the surest guarantee of peace.” That guarantee begins with hard work, and I am committed to putting in the effort our warfighters deserve, while working alongside this committee to build and maintain a force strong enough to deter conflict and preserve peace.

I am honored to serve the Nation and guide the world’s greatest maritime force through these uncharted waters.

Thank you for your support, and I look forward to your questions.

[The information follows:]

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STATEMENT OF

THE HONORABLE JOHN C. PHELAN
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

ON DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY POSTURE

BEFORE THE
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

MAY 14, 2025

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE

Introduction

Chair, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you, alongside General Smith and Admiral Kilby, as the 79th Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) to discuss the posture of the Department of the Navy. Thank you for your continued support for our Department. I represent nearly one million Sailors, Marines, and civilians who honorably serve this Nation with unmatched dedication and resolve. I deeply appreciate this opportunity to share my priorities and approach to recruiting, training, equipping, and preparing our Sailors and Marines to fulfill President Trump's goal of peace through strength. I spent the majority of my first 30 days meeting Sailors and Marines, touring facilities, and evaluating readiness.

The good news is, the Department of the Navy stands ready—however, we must do more than simply tread water. We must rebuild, we must reform, and we must refocus on what matters—Readiness, Accountability, and Deterrence.

Our Nation finds itself at a critical crossroads, facing an increasingly hostile, volatile, and unpredictable global maritime security environment. Our forces face existential threats, ranging from strategic competition to regional instability. The Nation and our allies depend on the Navy and Marine Corps team to sustain a lethal, agile, and ready force capable of responding to these evolving challenges.

Our adversaries are not waiting. China is building a navy to challenge American dominance. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) continues to expand its fleet, build more advanced submarines, and operate more provocatively and aggressively in contested waters. If we fail to respond with urgency and resolve, we invite instability and risk ceding the seas to authoritarian influence. Our

Sailors and Marines have met these threats with professionalism and bravery. The question before us is whether this body and this government will match their determination with sustained support. Years of bureaucratic inertia, overseas combat commitments, misplaced priorities, and constrained defense spending have put our maritime superiority at risk, and the bill has now come due.

We cannot deter authoritarian regimes with red tape. We cannot win tomorrow's battles with a bloated procurement process that rewards inefficiency. We cannot credibly project strength abroad while ignoring fiscal sanity at home.

In the Indo-Pacific, the CCP is pursuing rapid and concerning growth, particularly in its naval capabilities. By 2030, the CCP is projected to have nearly 1,000 nuclear warheads, with a significant portion carried by its growing fleet of ballistic missile submarines. By the end of this calendar year, the CCP is projected to surpass a significant milestone with nearly 400 ships in its naval fleet—a dramatic expansion. This growth greatly enhances its strategic reach and power projection capabilities, and one must ask why the CCP is pursuing these offensive capabilities with such rigor. Regionally, the CCP's aggressive actions in the South China Sea pose a direct threat to freedom of navigation, continuing to challenge international law and disrupt the rights of coastal nations like the Philippines. We remain committed to supporting the Philippines and other regional allies to uphold a free and open Indo-Pacific. We must take decisive action to deter the CCP's assertiveness, and uphold peace through strength, ensuring the United States remains preeminent and fully prepared to defend its interests in every domain.

In April, I traveled to the Indo-Pacific to visit our forward-deployed units in Guam, Japan and the Republic of Korea, and I saw firsthand how our Sailors and Marines operate on the front

lines of deterrence. Aboard USS George Washington (CVN 73)—the Seventh Fleet’s premier forward-deployed aircraft carrier and a powerful symbol of America’s commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific—I witnessed their resolve up close. Whether at sea, in the air, or ashore, our Sailors and Marines demonstrate the warrior ethos in everything they do. Nowhere is that more evident than in the Indo-Pacific.

In the Red Sea, we have successfully defended maritime shipping from Houthi rebels. Our Sailors and Marines are the backbone of Operation PROSPERITY GUARDIAN, not only countering Houthi missile and drone strikes with precision and professionalism but also providing essential protection to commercial vessels. Recently, we launched targeted strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen, reaffirming our unwavering commitment to defending American economic and security interests. I witnessed one of these strikes during my visit to U.S. Central Command headquarters and was extremely impressed by the Sailors and Marines who made it happen. Our actions in the region stand as a testament to the readiness of our Navy and Marine Corps and send a clear message to the world that the United States will uphold international law and maintain freedom of navigation.

Closer to home, our Sailors and Marines are supporting our Nation’s homeland defense at the southern border through Operation SOUTHERN GUARDIAN, specifically Task Force Sapper. Since January 2025, Marines from 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, 1st Marine Division, and 7th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group, have been tirelessly working alongside members of other Federal agencies to fortify border security and provide vital surveillance, logistics and manpower support to the enforcement of our immigration laws. Their presence strengthens national defense and protects the homeland.

The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Thomas Hudner (DDG 116), USS Gravelly (DDG 107), and USS Spruance (DDG 111), along with the Freedom-class littoral combat ships USS Marinette (LCS 25) and USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul (LCS 21), have operated alongside Patrol Squadrons (VP) 26 and 46 to strengthen maritime security across the Caribbean and the Gulf of America. These crews are working hand-in-hand with the U.S. Coast Guard to deter and disrupt illegal activity, including the smuggling of drugs, migrants, and other contraband. Early in my tenure, I visited USS Gravelly in the Gulf and flew with the Sailors of VP-26 aboard a P-8A as they conducted surveillance operations in support of the Joint Task Force–Southern Border, helping stop illicit activity before it reaches our shores. Their presence and capabilities make it clear: the Department of the Navy is protecting our borders and can respond rapidly to emerging threats.

While the Navy stands ready to protect the seas, the challenge of rebuilding our Nation's hollowed out shipbuilding industry is a major national security imperative and President Trump's top priority for the U.S. Navy. We are aggressively seeking to improve and accelerate ship construction, prioritizing modernization, and expanding the capacity of our maritime industrial base, forged by a new path that enhances our naval capabilities at the speed of relevance. These efforts include increasing the production of advanced ships, submarines, and vital support infrastructure while strengthening partnerships with the private sector and international allies to ensure we maintain a competitive edge in a rapidly evolving maritime environment.

Over the past month I have visited eight shipyards across the Nation's East Coast and the Indo-Pacific. I assessed their operations, capabilities, and progress. Each visit provided invaluable insight into the current state of our shipbuilding efforts and allowed me to engage directly with the workforce delivering our maritime readiness. I spoke directly with shipyard leaders and the

hardworking tradesmen essential to our Navy's operations. The discussions were insightful and highlighted the dedication and skill of their workforce. I now have a clear picture of where our shipbuilding dollars have been going and am developing a plan to fix what is broken in our funding and contracting processes. We invest billions of dollars, and yet we continue to face delays, cost overruns, and capacity shortfalls. This not only impacts our readiness but is an unacceptable waste of taxpayer funds.

Despite the challenges posed by an aging fleet and limited resources, I am particularly impressed by the commitment of the shipyard teams to meet the increasing demands of ship maintenance and modernization. These visits reaffirmed the critical role shipyards play in maintaining our readiness, and this continued investment in their infrastructure and workforce will be vital to our national security. I am committed to working with Congress to ensure our Nation's shipyards are fully supported as they continue their invaluable work.

Whether operating in the Gulf of America or across the Indo-Pacific, our Navy and Marine Corps team is on watch. Our ships, aircraft, and personnel are a reminder that America will defend its borders, its people, and its principles. We will make the appropriate investments to increase our readiness in a prudent and financially responsible way.

I have made it a personal priority to visit shipyards, meet the welders, talk to the deckplate workers, and assess the real-world readiness of our shipbuilding industry. These Americans are patriots, and they deserve our full support. As we recently did in the renegotiation of the FY24 Virginia Class submarine contract, we will continue to prioritize American workers by cutting red tape, reducing administrative burdens, and allowing them the flexibility to do what they do

best—build the world’s greatest Navy. We will continue to pursue a more balanced and shared risk philosophy with our private sector partners.

Priority of the Department of the Navy

I have not spent my career in the Pentagon or Beltway bureaucracy, and that’s precisely why President Trump nominated me to serve as SECNAV—to challenge the status quo, to bring a fresh perspective to the Department, to bring a reformer’s mindset, and to restore the core mission of our Navy and Marine Corps.

The Department of the Navy has suffered from years of suboptimal management decisions, inefficient and burdensome bureaucracy, and poor capital allocation resulting in delayed shipbuilding and huge cost overruns. Too often, taxpayer dollars are wasted, while maintenance backlogs grow and vital modernization efforts lag. This is a result of poor decision-making by the Navy, budget uncertainty, huge expenditures in prior conflicts, and lack of a clear warfighting vision. We owe it to our warfighters—and to the American taxpayer—to fix it.

Under President Trump’s leadership, we are beginning to right the ship. His executive order to Restore America’s Maritime Dominance is not just a policy shift—it is a wake-up call. We must rebuild our maritime industrial base. We must modernize our infrastructure. We must secure Arctic waterways. And we must ensure every dollar is spent on a fleet ready to deter and, if necessary, defeat any threat.

Readiness is my north star, and every decision we make must meet the test of enhancing our readiness. I intend to lead this Department with three focus areas that will guide our vision for the United States Navy and Marine Corps:

1. Strengthen Shipbuilding and the Maritime Industrial Base.
2. Foster an Adaptive, Accountable and Innovative Warfighter Culture.
3. The Health, Welfare and Training of Our People and Their Families.

These three priorities will steer our department and shape the future of our fleet and force. As we commemorate the 250th anniversary of the founding of our Navy and Marine Corps later this year, our focus will be on maritime warfighting dominance far into the future.

Strengthen Shipbuilding and the Maritime Industrial Base

We allowed our industrial base, installations, and physical infrastructure to decay for decades, and the bill is now coming due. We must rectify this and make much needed investments which will pay off in the long run. The Navy and Marine Corps' ability to maintain maritime dominance is increasingly being challenged. Our department urgently needs to maintain, modernize, and expand the fleet to counter emerging threats and uphold our national security interests.

Significant challenges in the shipbuilding industrial base—stemming from decades of underinvestment and neglect—have resulted in delayed shipbuilding programs, inadequate sustainment of our in-service vessels, systemic inefficiencies, and an inexperienced maritime workforce. Taken together, these compounded problems undermine operational readiness and the capacity to build and sustain the Navy and U.S-flag shipping fleets.

The United States must not allow a single point of failure in our industrial base to jeopardize our warfighting capabilities. This is not just a readiness issue—I consider this a national security crisis. The President's call to rebuild our Nation's shipbuilding industry was heard loud and clear and is my top priority as Secretary. A robust and reliable naval fleet is essential to projecting

power, ensuring freedom of navigation, and controlling the sea to maintain peace and stability in key regions around the world. It is crucial that the Department of the Navy collaborates closely with Congress and the shipbuilding sector to take swift, decisive action in support of new and creative solutions for current and future naval operations.

Make no mistake, shipbuilding delays challenge our department. Inability to meet established ship construction and maintenance timelines—whether due to supply chain disruptions, workforce shortages or technical hurdles—has placed the Navy in a precarious position. We cannot project power or guarantee freedom of navigation if our ships are not ready, or our fleet is not growing. Programs such as the Ford-class aircraft carriers and the Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines encounter delays that threaten to extend the gap between the planned retirement of older vessels and the delivery of their replacements. Compounded delays not only strain operational readiness but increase costs and reduce the fleet's overall capability. Such setbacks underscore our urgent efforts to address systemic shipbuilding issues. Thus, I will seek ways to streamline shipbuilding efforts and reduce the maintenance backlog so that the Navy can build and maintain the fleet required to safeguard national interests well into the future.

Recognizing these foundational gaps and needs, the Navy established the Maritime Industrial Base Program Office. It supports the strategic priorities outlined by the President to rebuild and expand shipbuilding capacity, invest in cutting-edge manufacturing technologies, and attract and develop a highly skilled maritime workforce. These investments are fundamental not only for economic resilience, but also for safeguarding America's maritime infrastructure and national interests.

Meeting our commitments and deadlines are non-negotiable. We are not only shipbuilding—we are building alliances, deterring adversaries and cementing America’s dominance at sea for decades to come. We will not throw money at the problem—we will fix it at the root.

President’s Budget 2026 (PB26)

The FY26 budget, when released, will do more than check boxes. It will revive the warrior ethos, rebuild the force, and reestablish deterrence—not by growing bureaucracy, but by getting results.

Restoring America’s Maritime Dominance Executive Order

On April 9, 2025, President Trump signed the “Restoring America’s Maritime Dominance” Executive Order (EO). We have ceded strategic ground for too long by allowing our commercial shipbuilding industry to atrophy, hollowing out the very capacity we need to maintain a credible naval deterrent. The EO aims to revitalize the U.S. maritime industry, addressing weaknesses in the commercial shipbuilding capacity and workforce shortages that have compromised national security.

One focus area of the EO is revitalizing our domestic shipbuilding capacity. For too long we have relied too much on foreign sources of certain components and materials critical to our fleet. By investing in shipyards with greater domestic and foreign capital, modernizing infrastructure and re-skilling the workforce, we will ensure that the United States has the capacity to build and maintain the most advanced naval vessels in the world. This effort will support national security, create high-quality jobs, strengthen the economy, and restore American leadership in maritime innovation.

Our Navy's strategic role is foundational to the protection of the U.S. homeland, securing global trade routes, the defense of allies, and the deterrence of adversaries. Ensuring that the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps team remains the world's preeminent naval force is critical advancing American interests.

Together, with Congress, we can deliver the resources and reform necessary to make American shipbuilding great again—and ensure that our Navy and Marine Corps remain the most capable force in the world.

Virginia/Columbia-Class Submarine Production

Strategic deterrence does not work if the systems behind it are aging, delayed, or unreliable. That is why the Columbia-class and Virginia-class submarines are not just big-ticket items—they are the critical backbone of our ability to deter war and project strength beneath the waves.

Columbia-class submarines are designed to replace the aging Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines, providing the Nation with a modern and advanced platform for continuous at-sea deterrence, which is critical to deterring nuclear conflict. These submarines will also ensure the effectiveness and availability of the Nation's sea-based strategic deterrent for the coming decades as the most survivable leg of the nuclear triad. Virginia-class submarines are designed for attack and reconnaissance missions and are more versatile and stealthier than their predecessors, the Los Angeles-class submarines.

Production of Columbia and Virginia-class submarines is critical to maintain and enhance the Navy's strategic deterrence and undersea warfare capabilities. Both classes of submarines play key roles in strengthening national defense and ensuring maritime superiority. However, the Navy must maintain a production capacity of one Columbia-class submarine and more than two

Virginia-class submarines per year to sustain the existing submarine fleet and also meet the United States' commitments to deliver Virginia-class submarines to Australia under AUKUS, a trilateral security agreement with Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. The Navy is providing rigorous oversight, supporting and increasing use of workforce development pipelines and leveraging supplier development funding to mitigate risks.

I recently had the opportunity to commission the Virginia-class submarine USS Iowa (SSN 797) in Groton, Connecticut. During that visit, I saw firsthand the hard work, precision, and attention-to-detail our industrial workforce puts into making a nuclear-powered submarine. I will ensure the same level of skill and workmanship happens on all new builds and that rigorous oversight ensures ships are being built on time and on budget. Their production cannot be allowed to fall victim to bureaucratic inertia or misplaced priorities.

Battle Force Ship Assessment and Requirement (BFSAR)

To compete and win in an era of peer military competition, the United States requires a balanced naval force capable of striking targets in all domains. Our warfighters must be adaptable, demonstrate presence, achieve sea control and be capable of projecting power by delivering precision effects at long ranges. This mission is achieved through a robust fleet and force. The most recent BFSAR report identified a future battle force structure objective of 381 ships—a significant increase from the current 295-ship battle force. This increase comprises specific force structure goals for each type of battle force spanning surface combatants, aircraft carriers, amphibious ships, submarines, logistics and support ships as well as unmanned vessels. The Navy will continue to grow ready, lethal, and survivable warfighting capacity at a rate supported by the fiscal guidance, industrial base capacity, and our ability to sustain the battle force. We

cannot build a fleet big on paper and weak in practice. Our target is clear, and our obligation is constitutional: provide for the common defense efficiently and effectively.

Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP)

To achieve the operational readiness required to support the demands of our nuclear fleet, the Naval Enterprise must be able to deliver aircraft carriers and submarines from depot-maintenance periods on time. SIOP is a meaningful attempt to improve submarine and aircraft carrier depot maintenance at the Navy's four public shipyards, measured primarily by capacity throughput and maintenance duration performance. SIOP will achieve these outcomes by expanding shipyard capacity, optimizing configuration and utilities, modernizing equipment and ensuring facilities meet modern codes. Amongst other key performance parameters, SIOP will reduce maintenance availability of submarines and aircraft carriers, ensuring shipyard facilities and dry docks meet modern code and increase the resiliency of their critical infrastructure to withstand any number of scenarios.

SIOP is beyond the study and analysis phase. It has tracked and modeled entire maintenance evolutions—22 at this time—to identify inefficiencies and choke points at our shipyards, utilized that data to build digital twins to identify optimal workflows and is generating development plans to implement them. It has standardized capital equipment investment plans to drive commonality across the shipyards. It will implement industry-standard business processes like the Navy's "next generation RFID tracking" to remove all manual reporting and drive security, accountability and auditability. It will add amenities to the shipyards to increase the quality of service of the over 37,000 shipyard workers the Nation relies on. The Navy's final development

plan is approved for Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, and the final plans across all shipyards will be completed in early 2026.

SIOP has completed one submarine dry dock retrofit, has three new submarine dry docks under construction, and will provide future capacity to meet class maintenance plans. One Ford-class dry dock is in construction, and the other is in design. Various pier and utility upgrades to meet new class requirements have been completed with additional upgrades in the construction and design stages. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in February 2025 to celebrate the opening of a waterfront production facility that collocates light machine shops, production shops, artisan support, engineering and project management teams. That project alone will save 5,800 man-days per submarine availability. 175-ton portal cranes are on contract for each shipyard—standardizing them—and the Navy reaped the benefits of economic order quantity procurements. These are just some examples of the 44 projects and 246 pieces of capital equipment that SIOP has completed to date and the 48 projects and \$6.0 billion of projects on contract.

The progress made under SIOP is what real reform looks like: an efficient, data-backed, and accountable investment in the people and infrastructure we depend on to keep our fleet afloat.

AUKUS

AUKUS is an opportunity to strengthen deterrence in the Indo-Pacific. AUKUS will bring our three countries closer together by reinforcing our collective diplomatic, economic, technological, and military strength. This partnership increases the stability of the Indo-Pacific region through improved deterrence. AUKUS Pillar I provides the United States a rotational submarine presence

in Western Australia and a strategically important location for re-arming and repairing our submarines.

All three nations are fully committed to the AUKUS “Optimal Pathway.” More than 100 Royal Australian Navy uniformed personnel are in the U.S. training pipeline or already serving aboard U.S. SSNs. Meanwhile, more than 120 Australian civilian submarine maintenance personnel are training at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility. On February 4, 2025, the Government of Australia deposited its first contribution of \$500 million into the U.S. Department of Treasury as part of its commitment to uplift the U.S. Submarine Industrial Base (SIB) and offset our AUKUS commitments. The Government of Australia is expected to deposit another \$500 million this month, along with an additional \$1 billion by the end of this calendar year. Australia’s investment in America’s SIB reflects our shared understanding that an interoperable and ready submarine force is essential to securing a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

AUKUS is what allied deterrence should look like: shared commitments, mutual investments and results that enhance—not burden—American readiness. We will hold to that standard as we build this partnership for the long haul.

Capabilities Supporting the Navy Nuclear Deterrence Mission

Peace through strength only works if that strength is credible—and in the modern age, that means a reliable, modernized nuclear deterrent. The Navy’s strategic deterrence capabilities are foundational to maintaining peace and stability. Key to this mission is the modernization of Nuclear Command, Control and Communications systems, along with the advancement of Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles and the Nuclear Sea-Launched Cruise Missile. However,

the industrial base supporting these critical programs faces challenges, including aging infrastructure and limited production capacity. The Navy is working diligently to address these gaps, particularly by replacing the E-6B Mercury aircraft with the E-130J while balancing conventional and nuclear missile demands with industry leaders. Timely investments and sustained resourcing are essential to ensuring the continued effectiveness of our nuclear deterrence capabilities and to counter emerging threats from our adversaries. We must modernize and recapitalize these critical assets to guarantee the Navy's readiness in the years ahead.

Arleigh Burke-Class Destroyer Upgrades

Flight III DDG-51s, the newest iteration of the surface fleet's workhorse, will provide enhanced Integrated Air and Missile Defense with the AN/SPY-6(V)1 radar and Aegis Baseline 10 combat system. These combat system enhancements meet the growing ballistic missile threat by improving radar sensitivity and enabling longer range detection of more numerous and increasingly complex threats. There are currently 23 Flight III ships on contract through FY27. The acquisition strategy is structured to provide continued, timely procurement of battle force surface combatants by leveraging current production lines at both Huntington Ingalls and Bath Iron Works as we prepare to transition a future large surface combatant. But let's be clear: these upgrades only matter if the ships are delivered on time, on budget and without bureaucratic delays. That's where oversight comes in. We're not writing checks for promises—we're demanding results.

Constellation-Class Frigates

The Constellation-class was designed to deliver a highly capable, multi-mission platform that bridges the gap between larger surface combatants and smaller, more agile vessels.

Unfortunately, the program is not without its difficulties. Due to post-contract design modifications by the government, we continue to navigate significant challenges in production.

We need to take a hard look at what we are building and how we are building it. I am committed to a full review of programs and platforms that focus on our future needs, not priorities of the past. Our focus is on delivering a reliable, cost-effective, and lethal ship that will serve as a cornerstone of distributed maritime operations for decades to come.

Unmanned Systems

If the last few years of conflict have taught us anything, it is that we will not win the wars of the future with the platforms of the past. Success in modern warfare will require the rapid, scalable production and integration of air, surface, and subsurface unmanned systems (UxS). Recent warfighting in Ukraine and the Middle East demonstrate that while UxS have not replaced manned systems, they effectively serve as force multipliers, amplifying intelligence and lethal capabilities at significantly lower cost and reduced risk.

The MQ-25 fuel tanker, prepared for deployment in 2026, will free up our fighters for strike capability. The Marine Corps' family of small UxS are attritable systems providing reconnaissance, target acquisition, and battle damage assessment, improving strategic planning while reducing personnel risk. Integrating rapid development of unmanned surface and subsurface systems into the shipbuilding industrial base is an important component of modernizing our fleet.

Our ability to deter future conflict or to prevail, if necessary, will benefit from high quantities of low-cost UxS for use in close-range reconnaissance or one-way strike missions with lower numbers of high-cost sophisticated UxS with surveillance and/or mid- to long-range strike

capability. The Navy is prototyping, experimenting, and integrating a variety of UxS into the fleet through efforts such as Replicator and in close collaboration with the Defense Innovation Unit.

As we expand our own UxS industrial base and production we must also continue to expand our capacity to effectively counter unmanned systems operated by our adversaries. We are investing in both ends of the spectrum: low-cost, high-quantity platforms for close-in reconnaissance and strikes and more sophisticated unmanned systems with long-range and surveillance capabilities. And we're not naïve—our adversaries are doing the same. That is why counter-unmanned systems capabilities must evolve just as quickly. We either lead the next wave of innovation—or pay the price of others doing it first.

Munitions

Continued engagements in the Red Sea have sharpened my focus on our stockpile of munitions. Since October 2023, Navy ships have engaged in combat operations against Houthi rebels, expending many air defense munitions that we are working with industry to replenish. These operations primarily targeted Houthi military equipment used to threaten shipping, aiming to degrade their capabilities. We performed exceptionally well in this extremely high-tempo hostile environment.

The backbone of kinetic ship defense has been our Standard Missile series of interceptors. While expensive compared to Houthi threats, the SM-2, SM-3, and SM-6 have performed well in this combat environment. In January 2024, the Navy successfully adopted much less expensive Sidewinders and Hellfire missiles in addition to air engagement layered defense tactics over the Red Sea. Further, we are striking Houthi training sites, weapons infrastructure and storage

facilities, degrading their capabilities left of launch. With the support of the supplemental funding bill, we were able to test and evaluate land-based counter-UAS systems for future use and improve the MK-45 (5") Gun weapon system to have a more active role in counter-UAS. I will work to ensure that our Navy can grow its munition stockpile in a timely, fiscally balanced way that does not degrade our security. We cannot afford to run out of ammunition during a fight. Growing the stockpile must be done with discipline—balanced against budget realities, but without compromising our security. Bottom line, we need to make sure we have the right ammunition in the right place on the right platform. That is the standard I will hold the Department to.

Amphibious Warship Readiness

The Amphibious Ready Group/Marine Expeditionary Unit (ARG/MEU) is a versatile, combat-ready force package. The Navy-Marine Corps team's amphibious warships deliver certified, combat-ready ARG/MEU teams to meet the needs of the Combatant Commanders and serve as the Nation's 911 crisis response force. The ARG/MEU remains one of the Department of the Navy's force offerings to combatant commanders for crisis response, deterrence, and warfighting. However, maintenance challenges have hindered the Department's ability to generate amphibious warships, negatively affecting Marine Corps training and ARG/MEU force generation. These persistent issues reduce ARG/MEU presence and leave Combatant Commanders without the capabilities needed for steady state operations and crisis response.

To address this, Navy and Marine Corps' uniformed leaders signed a joint letter to improve amphibious warship readiness. The Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Naval Surface Forces, and Naval Sea Systems Command are leading the Navy's efforts to improve its overall

amphibious maintenance performance. The truth is we are not doing a good enough job. We need to do more in this area, and this will be a priority of mine.

Littoral Mobility

If we expect our forces to operate forward, we must give them the tools to move, survive, and strike in contested terrain, particularly as they maneuver through the first and second island chains in the Indo-Pacific. Recognizing this capability gap, the Navy-Marine Corps team is pursuing the Landing Ship Medium (LSM) and the Littoral Maneuver Bridging Solution to fill this need in the priority theater. Separate and complementary to amphibious warships, the LSM will be a purpose-built platform designed for mobility, beach access, and sustainment in austere and contested environments, ensuring Naval Expeditionary Forces can campaign effectively.

Foster an Adaptive, Accountable and Innovative Warfighting Culture

As the Nation's first line of defense, the Navy and Marine Corps play an indispensable role in securing national interests and protecting our way of life. However, to truly strengthen our defense posture, we must first ensure that the Department of the Navy is accountable to the American taxpayer. Without a solid foundation of fiscal responsibility, transparency, and efficient resource management, we cannot expect to foster a culture of adaptability and warfighting excellence that is critical to our future success. Not just for appearance's sake—but because no military can sustain its edge without earning the trust of the American taxpayer every single day.

Accountability is not just a regulatory requirement—it is the bedrock upon which we build a stronger, more efficient Navy and Marine Corps. To instill an environment of adaptability and warfighting culture, we must first demonstrate sound business practices and financial discipline.

Under my leadership, the Department of the Navy will achieve a clean audit, following the example set by the Marine Corps, which has completed two consecutive unmodified audits. Financial transparency and audit compliance are essential to ensuring we operate with integrity, maximizing every dollar invested in our defense and holding ourselves accountable to the taxpayers we serve.

To build a more resilient and responsive force, we must embrace the principles of better business practices in all aspects of our operations. This includes fixing broken procurement processes, streamlining logistics, and optimizing the lifecycle management of assets. By applying proven business strategies and techniques, we can eliminate inefficiencies, reduce waste, and ensure that we deploy resources where they will have the most significant impact.

We must also foster a culture of continuous improvement, where we integrate innovation and forward-thinking into the way we do business. This means leveraging technology to drive smarter decision-making, adopting lean management practices to eliminate unnecessary overhead, and building relationships with private industry to access cutting-edge solutions. By embracing a disciplined, business-focused approach, we not only improve the effectiveness of our operations we also increase our ability to respond quickly to changing threats.

Once rigorous accountability and efficient management is established, we can turn our attention to building a truly adaptive and responsive force. An accountable organization can make informed decisions, pivot swiftly to meet emerging challenges and invest in the modernization needed to maintain a competitive edge. As we work to modernize our forces and implement a more agile warfighting culture, we must do so with a mindset that every resource is used

effectively, and every decision is backed by sound logic. Ultimately, agility is worthless without integrity—and readiness means nothing if the system behind it is hollow.

Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution Reform

If we're going to rebuild a lethal, responsive, and accountable military, our budget process must work for warfighters—not bureaucrats. The Department of the Navy's reform efforts will help rebuild our military by aligning resources to counter threats. As part of the overall DoD effort, the Department of the Navy has streamlined budget exhibit submissions to Congress and consolidated budget line items to enhance transparency and efficiency. We welcome continued engagement with our DoD partners, Congress, and other key stakeholders to identify additional opportunities to accelerate these reforms. Because when we align resources to mission—not politics—we give our Sailors and Marines the tools they need to succeed. The Department has leveraged the Navy Cost Agency to refine cost analysis, ensuring execution feasibility and operational priorities inform funding adjustments.

Taxpayer Advocacy Project and Promoting Individual Accountability

Accountability isn't a talking point—it's a requirement. Every dollar the Department of the Navy spends belongs to the American taxpayer, and we will treat it that way. That's why I have directed our acquisition teams to use every tool available to drive better value, develop and enforce better contract standards, and hold people—and companies—responsible when they fall short.

To ensure full accountability, we are working with the USDS Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) to leverage every available tool so that the Department obtains the best value in its contracts. We will provide Program Executive Officers, Program Managers, Contracting

Officers, and legal staff with strategies and authorities to improve and enhance negotiations with industry. This effort includes utilizing programs such as the Taxpayer Advocacy Project (TAP) which, through the efforts of attorneys and acquisition professionals, has focused on contractor refusal to deliver technical data despite statutes and regulations allowing for such delivery and contract clauses mandating delivery. It has also examined and considered public filings of major defense contractors, analyzed contractor performance, and engaged with other agencies and Congress.

Likewise, TAP and Promoting Individual Accountability (PINACL) initiative aim to hold any officer, director, shareholder, partner, or employee accountable for corporate misconduct. PINACL furthers the Department's policy to take vigorous action to deter and eliminate acquisition fraud, waste and other related improprieties whenever they occur. We will secure the best value for the taxpayer and ensure excellence in contract performance remains a central part of our business culture. I vow to use every means necessary to accomplish this. While we look forward to building closer and more collaborative relationships with industry, accountability remains a key priority.

I am not here to wage war on industry. I am here to demand excellence. That means fair partnerships built on transparency, performance, shared risk and value. It is time contractors know: the era of excuses and no accountability is over.

Better Business Practices

Modernizing Our Information Technology Infrastructure

Modernizing our information technology (IT) infrastructure ashore and afloat is a strategic imperative for the Department of the Navy as it ensures this essential backbone of our maritime

power remains secure, survivable, and capable of securely delivering the information needed anywhere at the speed of relevance to maintain decision advantage. The DoD's Technology and Program Protection (T&PP) seeks to help manage the risk of adversarial exploitation and technology compromise. Soon, I intend to sign the Department's first comprehensive policy for T&PP which will integrate cross-functional Department of the Navy and DoD policies, prescribe protection requirements, and define roles and responsibilities for unified implementation.

The Department's efforts are focused on optimizing our IT infrastructure ecosystem to an agile, organically digital state that can continuously evolve as technology and threats evolve. The Navy and Marine Corps have demonstrated measurable improvements in customer satisfaction, cybersecurity and operational resilience, decreasing user time lost and cost per user by migrating people to their cloud-based collaboration and productivity solutions. The Department is modernizing at all levels of the IT ecosystem, delivering core infrastructure services such as our digital work environment where users can securely access their data anywhere on any device with performance that will put them on the same level as best-in-class experiences in industry.

Counterintelligence and Insider Threat Management

Our Nation faces increasingly complex and aggressive threats from our strategic competitors including foreign intelligence services and proxies that target our information, personnel, technology, and operations. The scale of these challenges demands a comprehensive approach to ensure we effectively characterize and deter these behaviors to maintain our competitive edge. To protect our operations, programs and most critical technologies, the Department of the Navy's Counterintelligence (CI) and insider threat programs require an enterprise approach across our three CI components: 1) the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, 2) the Navy, and 3)

the Marine Corps. We have made great strides in dynamically engaging with a broader DoD enterprise, fostering greater adaptability and resilience against potential threats. Only through an enterprise approach can the Department of the Navy protect our operations, programs and critical technologies.

We have made real progress by collaborating more effectively across the DoD. But the work does not stop there. It is going to take continued adaptability and vigilance to protect our most critical assets—and we are committed to getting it right. We cannot defend freedom if we are asleep at the wheel.

Cyber Security

We can have the strongest fleet in the world, but if our networks are not protected, we are one cyberattack away from losing our edge. That's the reality of modern warfare—our systems are only as strong as the weakest firewall. In addition to kinetic attacks, the Department is committed to protecting the fleet from non-kinetic attacks, including cyber compromises. Shipboard weapons rely on networked systems; therefore, cyber protections cannot be ignored across our platforms. The Department is developing flexible, cost-effective, and robust security solutions that leverage commercial and government-furnished hardware and software, both of which can be tailored to any platform and in any operating environment.

We are also modernizing operational technology within the Navy's defense critical infrastructure. Doing so will enhance our ability to rapidly detect, respond to and mitigate cyber threats in our operational architecture. The Department is also creating a Cyber Security Protection Enclave and a security operations center for infrastructure. Combined, these endeavors seek to counter an adversary's ability to conduct cyberattacks.

We are not just playing defense. We are challenging our adversaries' ability to operate in this domain. As digital warfare evolves, our systems must evolve faster. Protecting our platforms, data, and infrastructure from cyberattacks is no longer a luxury—it is a battlefield imperative.

Cyberspace

Cyberspace assists the Navy and Marine Corps to project naval power and sustain maritime operations. The naval services must secure our enterprise networks, weapon systems, platforms, and critical infrastructure to enable mission assurance. We must present capable cyber forces that can maneuver in cyberspace and conduct both offensive and defensive operations.

Our adversaries are actively targeting our critical infrastructure with cyber capabilities. We rely on these installations to support naval operations, and we cannot allow them to be held at risk. Similarly, we must harden the weapon systems and platforms required to deliver warfighting effects. In response to growing cyber threats, the Department is deploying security solutions that enable enhanced situational awareness across our enterprise. Additionally, we will prioritize the security of critical supply chains that support naval operations and shipbuilding.

In partnership with the Chief Information Office (CIO), we are moving at speed to deploy “Zero Trust” capabilities that will improve the Department of the Navy’s cyber defenses afloat and ashore, reduce risks, and ensure we can fight through and win in a contested Information Environment. Importantly, we have achieved “Advanced Level” Zero Trust for the Navy’s unclassified enterprise IT environment. The Marine Corps is using the same architecture and approach to operate and defend their unclassified environment. These are excellent achievements.

The Navy and Marine Corps present cyber forces capable of meeting mission demands to counter adversaries. We are prioritizing recruitment, retention and training to strengthen operational readiness in accordance with US Cyber Command requirements. I look forward to supporting DoD's revised cyber force generation model and ensuring operational commands have the cyber personnel they need to increase lethality. Under my watch, the Department will stay focused on making prioritized investments in the cyberspace domain, as one of the most cost-effective ways of multiplying lethal battlefield effects and projecting power.

The Health, Welfare and Training of Our People and Their Families

As we confront the mounting challenges of shipbuilding and warfighting readiness, I recognize that our greatest asset is the extraordinary men and women who serve amongst us—the Sailors, Marines, and Department of the Navy civilians. We will continue to invest in the recruitment, training and retention of the highest caliber personnel. We will prioritize Quality of Life and Quality of Service initiatives to ensure that our Sailors, Marines and their families have the resources available to succeed when called upon to meet the mission.

Military Recruiting and Retention

Recruiting and retaining Service members is essential to the success of our department. To meet these challenges head-on, the Navy and Marine Corps have increased marketing, advertising, and recruiter manning investments. The Navy and Marine Corps are on track to exceed Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 recruiting and retention numbers; however, more must be done. We cannot lose track of our commitment to fully fund recruiting efforts and sustain investments in this program. Maintaining this momentum is more difficult under successive Continuing Resolutions.

We are leveraging our services' 250th Anniversaries as powerful recruiting tools to inspire the next generation of Sailors and Marines. Through high-visibility outreach and engagement events, we are connecting 250 years of naval legacy to the opportunity to serve today. The Department's substantial leadership focus on this issue and the ability to apply monetary and non-monetary incentives and programs is vital to recruit and retain Service members in undermanned or difficult to fill positions.

Reserve Force

The Department of the Navy Reserve Components (RC) are designed to be force multipliers that enhance strategic depth and provide critical operational support to contribute to the lethal capability of the Navy and Marine Corps. We must do more to make this a reality. Reservists bring key skills from the civilian world in fields such as business, medicine, logistics, and tech and are critical to how we operate and transform. Every effort is made to ensure reservists receive complete access to the full benefits they are entitled to with each mobilization or activation. The RC is focused on creating strategic depth by using a new "billet-based activation" dynamic. This effort aims to prioritize the mobilization of reservists based on the billets to which they are trained, which ensures their skillsets match the mobilization requirement. During the last two and a half decades of contingency operations, the Navy Reserve provided critical operational support to the Joint Force, in some cases augmenting ground combat units or providing key operational support not aligned with their primary Navy Reserve billet or training. As the Navy Reserve shifts its conflict in the Indo-Pacific, the RC is focusing on "billet-based activation," prioritizing the mobilization of reservists based on the billets to which they are trained, which ensures their skillsets match the mobilization requirement. The Marine Corps Reserve is restructuring units and modernizing capabilities to be a ready expeditionary force. A top priority

of mine is to reduce the administrative burden placed on our Reserve force so that they can focus on warfighting. The days of Reservists conducting weekend bureaucratic paperwork exercises will end on my watch. The Department will continue to leverage our reservists to ensure a total force approach for operational and strategic planning.

“Restoring America’s Fighting Force” Compliance

DoD’s mission is to win the Nation’s wars. To do this, we must have a lethal fighting force that rewards individual initiative, excellence and hard work based on merit. On January 27, 2025, the President issued an EO stating that diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies are incompatible with DoD’s values. To promote unity and cohesion across the fleet, the Department of the Navy is participating in the SECDEF’s Restoring America’s Fighting Force Task Force to oversee the DoD’s efforts to abolish DEI offices and any vestiges of offices that subvert meritocracy, perpetuate discrimination and divide our Sailors and Marines by promoting categories of race and gender. This effort includes conducting a departmental internal validation process using qualitative and quantitative data, including in-depth document reviews, comprehensive program and data analyses, site visits including class observations, and structured interviews.

COVID-19 Vaccine Refusal Reinstatement

Between December 2021 and January 2023, the Department of the Navy separated 1,878 Sailors and 3,748 Marines for refusing the COVID-19 vaccination, regardless of their years of service to our Nation. Now, the Department of the Navy is making things right for thousands of Service members who were discharged involuntarily or voluntarily for refusing to receive the COVID-19 vaccination. The Department is committed to supporting the direction of the President and

SECDEF to ensure that Service members separated for refusal to receive the vaccination are provided the opportunity for reinstatement, should they desire, or a return to service.

Mental Health

Mental health remains a top priority, and the Department of the Navy remains committed to ensuring the health, safety and well-being of all members within our military community. By providing a full continuum of services to promote mental wellness and address psychological, family, and personal challenges, the Department reinforces that there is “No Wrong Door” to get help. Mental health and substance abuse services are available worldwide through a range of in-person and virtual health platforms. The Department implemented the Brandon Act via ALNAV 054/23 in 2023 to reduce stigma and expand access to mental health support throughout the Navy and Marine Corps. The Brandon Act normalizes help-seeking behaviors by establishing a self-initiated command referral process.

The Department will continue to ensure 24/7 access to a wide array of crisis resources, including the Veterans Crisis Line, local Fleet and Family Centers, chaplains, and counseling centers. In doing so, we will better equip leaders across the Department with the right tools to foster healthy connections within their units. Mental health and behavioral health services are available worldwide from Navy installation counseling centers, on the waterfront, in operational units through embedded mental health providers, at military medical treatment facilities, and via virtual health platforms. We will also continue providing our Service members with non-medical mental health services through Navy chaplains, Fleet and Family Support Centers, Marine Corps Community Counseling Centers, and Military OneSource. We will endeavor to continue

programmatic investments in mental health, ensuring our Sailors and Marines stay resilient and mission-ready.

Installations

Our installations are the warfighting platforms from which we man, train, and equip our Sailors and Marines. I am committed to ensuring our Service members have the appropriate infrastructure support required to ensure operational readiness. Many of our critical facilities are beyond service life, in poor condition, inefficient, and insufficiently resilient. In April-May 2025, I visited with Sailors and Marines stationed at Camp Lejeune and across Guam, touring both new and decrepit barracks in both locations. Some of the living conditions are simply unacceptable! We cannot have Service members living in subpar environments here in the United States and its territories. The conditions of these facilities can adversely affect the physical health of our force and impact recruiting, training, deployments, and maintenance activities. We must also provide better housing, revisit our privatization contracts, and resolve parking issues. Shipyard workers have told me they are arriving at work up to two hours early just to have somewhere to park. The status quo is not sustainable.

Although the Department of the Navy has programmed funding for the most critical and aged infrastructure, much work remains in investments and resourcing to fully address the gaps. Critical infrastructure modernization and recapitalization are warfighting imperatives to enhance and maintain readiness.

We are also committed to military construction (MILCON) projects to enhance quality of life for families. The Navy and Marine Corps have 5 Child Development Center MILCON projects slated for completion within the next 3 years and an additional 12 MILCON projects funded

through the planning and design phases. Additionally, we must continue to invest in improving the infrastructure of schools onboard our installations. The Department must do its part as a strong partner to ensure that all 160 accredited Department of Defense Education Activity schools secure Congressional support to help drive funding, legislation, and policy improvements.

Closing

The mission of the United States Navy and Marine Corps has never been more vital—or more at risk. Around the globe, threats to liberty and stability are growing. But with the right priorities, the right reforms, and the right people in charge, we will rise to meet this moment.

Together, with the partnership of this committee, we will build and sustain a Navy and Marine Corps worthy of the American people's trust.

The opportunity to serve as the 79th Secretary of the Navy is the honor of a lifetime. It is a responsibility I carry with the utmost seriousness and respect. Meeting the challenges of this decade will require coordination across government, across industry, and across party lines. Your leadership—and your oversight—are essential to shaping the Navy and Marine Corps of the future.

May God bless our Sailors, Marines, civilians, and their families. And may God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.
I now recognize Admiral Kilby for your remarks.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL KILBY

Admiral KILBY. Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, Chairman Cole, subcommittee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the priorities of the United States Navy.

Your Navy provides the Nation with sea power and sea control needed to preserve our way of life and ensure our security and prosperity. Your oversight and funding ensure we are ready when the Nation calls.

I am pleased to testify alongside Secretary Phelan, who brings the needed and unique skill set and experience to help us accelerate the work of our Navy, and alongside my partner General Smith, the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

In the past year, our sailors have defeated hundreds of drones and missiles and executed dozens of offensive strikes in the Red Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean. They have strengthened alliances and deterred Chinese aggression in the Western Pacific. They have supported operations on the southern border, and they have maintained an unbroken strategic deterrent with our ballistic missile defense submarines.

In short, our Navy, integrated with the joint force, remains postured and ready to fight and win.

We remain committed to a strong, global Navy, one that is prepared to defend our homeland, deter our adversaries, and prevail in war. We are laser-focused on China as our most consequential opponent, while strengthening defense of the homeland. We prioritize operations, training, and readiness accounts to ensure our Naval forces remain ready, resilient, and agile to execute national tasking.

The Navy and Marine Corps preserves peace through strength through investments in our strategic deterrence, our defense industrial base, and our installations via initiatives like the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program.

Most importantly, we are continuing the strong commitment to our people—our sailors, our Navy families, and our civilians—through pay raises, investments in quality-of-service initiatives and unaccompanied housing and childcare.

But we are facing some challenges.

First, the Navy has 23,200 gaps at sea. Thanks to process improvements and targeted investments, we are on plan to reduce that number significantly by the close of fiscal year 2026.

We are committed to attracting and developing Americans who can innovate to solve hard problems and dominate in combat. The Navy contracted over 40,000 sailors last year, the most since 2003, and we are currently on pace to exceed our recruiting goal for fiscal year 2025.

Second, our ordnance expenditures in the Red Sea have highlighted the strain on our munitions industrial base. The Navy is working with both our traditional primes and new entrants to close this gap, developing kinetic and non-kinetic weapons at speed and at scale.

And, third, our platforms are not as ready as they need to be. We set an ambitious goal to make 80 percent of our ships, submarines, and aircraft combat-surge-ready by January 1, 2027. To do that, we are reducing maintenance delays, we are improving manning, training, modernization, and sustainment.

In all of these efforts, consistent and predictable funding is foundational. We appreciate the continued support of this committee.

In closing, I am proud of our Navy accomplishments in the last year, and I am excited about the growing consensus that is powering our maritime rejuvenation. The whole-of-government and whole-of-Nation effort is essential to our security and prosperity.

We have work to do to ensure that we remain the world's most premier maritime force for another 250 years. Your leadership and support are critical in achieving this imperative.

On behalf of our sailors, civilians, and families around the world, I thank you.

I look forward to your questions.

[The information follows:]

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UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE

STATEMENT OF
ADMIRAL JAMES W. KILBY
ACTING CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
ON THE POSTURE OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY
BEFORE THE
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
MAY 14, 2025

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE

Introduction

Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the posture of the United States Navy. On behalf of our Sailors, Navy civilians, and families deployed and stationed around the world, thank you for your continued leadership and support. Thank you for ensuring our Navy-Marine Corps team remains ready for prompt and sustained combat incident to operations at sea as well as for recognizing in law our Navy's role in the peacetime promotion of our national security interests and prosperity. Your commitment guarantees that our Navy is postured and ready to deter aggression, defend our homeland, win decisively in war, and deliver peace through strength.

250 Years of Naval Power

The United States Navy provides our Nation with the seapower and sea control needed to preserve our way of life. The Navy's ability to access, maneuver, and command the seas that border our homeland enables our security, prosperity, and economic wealth.

For 250 years, the Navy has promoted and protected America's interests worldwide by manning, training, and equipping our forces to perform a wide range of missions on the ground, in the water, sky, and space. With a battle force of 293 ships and an average of 100 ships and 70,000 Sailors and Marines deployed on any day, the Navy provides ready, combat-credible forces to the Joint Force in competition, crisis, and conflict. Where 90% of the global economy moves by sea and 95% of international communications and 10 trillion dollars in financial transactions transit via undersea fiber-optic cables each day, our Navy keeps open the sea lines of communication which fuel our economy.

The Geopolitical Landscape & Operational Successes

Over the past year, our Navy has been on the maritime frontlines. We create space for diplomacy, but are always prepared if it fails.

Strategic Deterrence. The Navy's fleet of Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines conducted uninterrupted strategic deterrence patrols around the world. As the most survivable leg of the nuclear triad, they protect our security and provide an assured second-strike capability to adversaries who threaten our homeland, national interests, and the American people. These persistent operations underwrite national security and provide the strength, flexibility, and breadth of options that national leadership requires.

Defending the Homeland. Border security is national security. The Navy remains focused on defending our homeland and interests in the Western Hemisphere. In support of Operation SOUTHERN GUARDIAN, our naval forces are providing domain awareness and regional maritime security through operational deployments to the U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) and U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) areas of responsibility (AORs).

China. While acting urgently to strengthen homeland defense, we are also laser-focused on deterring China and strengthening deterrence across the Indo-Pacific region.

Over the last twenty years, China has undergone an unprecedented military buildup, modernizing capabilities and improving proficiencies across all warfare domains. The evolving joint capabilities and concepts of the People's Liberation Army continue to strengthen China's ability to revolutionize its maritime capability to rival and contest our own. In a short time, China has tripled the size of its navy, which is expected to grow to 395 ships this year and reach 435 ships by 2030.

China continues to aggressively use its naval forces against its neighbors to assert its illegal territorial claims in the South China Sea, while at the same time the People's Liberation Army Navy increasingly operates beyond the First Island Chain. To support the PLA Navy's

expanded operational reach, China has sought an expansion in overseas logistics and basing infrastructure to enable greater military power projection and sustainment.

China's ambition and commitment to supplant the United States as the preeminent global power is clear. Recent Chinese Navy invasion rehearsals and live-fire exercises near Taiwan and around the region, joint exercises with Russia off the coast of Alaska, and snap live-fire drills during the circumnavigation of Australia illustrate a pattern of belligerent and threatening behavior to U.S. and allied interests in the Indo-Pacific. The U.S. Navy remains committed to working with allies and partners in the region and around the world to reestablish deterrence and defeat this threat. We fly, sail, and operate in accordance with international law, conduct freedom of navigation operations, and build interoperability with key allies and partners to maintain a free, open, and secure Indo-Pacific.

Middle East. The Navy remains ready to find and destroy those who threaten our Nation and our allies and partners. In the Red Sea and the eastern Mediterranean, our ships, aircraft, and submarines are in combat defending American lives and assets and protecting waterways critical to the global economy. During the past 19 months, over 20 Navy ships, including 4 carrier strike groups and an amphibious ready group, have deployed to the U.S. Central Command AOR to respond to attacks from Iran and the Iranian-backed Houthis and stabilize the region. We have carried out dozens of offensive strikes against Houthi aggressors in Yemen to prevent further attacks and successfully defeated hundreds of drones and cruise and ballistic missiles targeted against American military and commercial ships, civilian mariners, and Israel.

Empowering Allies and Partners. The Navy remains steadfast in our commitment to enhance security, stability, and deterrence with our allies in the Indo-Pacific and around the world. Through joint exercises, force posture initiatives, and cooperative sustainment efforts, we are strengthening interoperability and ensuring a collective approach to shared security challenges. By deepening these partnerships and promoting burden-sharing, we enhance collective resilience, strengthen deterrence, and ensure our forces remain postured to respond to any contingency.

The Navy has participated in 49 exercises with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific in 2024 alone, most notably the Rim of the Pacific – the world’s largest international maritime exercise. The month-long exercise brought together 29 Nations, 40 ships, 3 submarines, and more than 25,000 personnel to build interoperability and demonstrate the importance of our allies and partners in countering Chinese expansionism.

We continue to support the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) enhanced security partnership. This once-in-a-generation opportunity demonstrates shared interest in strengthening peace, stability, and deterrence across the Indo-Pacific and represents a leap in integrated deterrence and undersea warfighting. Royal Australian Navy Sailors are currently serving on American submarines and in the nuclear training pipeline. Last fall, U.S. Sailors assigned to the submarine tender USS Emory S. Land (AS 39) executed planned and emergent maintenance on the USS Hawaii (SSN 776) alongside their Royal Australian Navy counterparts — the first time Australian personnel have worked on a nuclear-powered attack submarine under the auspices of AUKUS. This successful maintenance period demonstrated our clear progress towards establishing the Submarine Rotational Force – West, from which our most capable undersea strike assets will operate forward in the Indo-Pacific by 2027, imposing strategic dilemmas on China through multiple avenues.

Navy’s FY26 Strategy-Driven Budget Request

The Navy’s budget request for fiscal year (FY) 2026 funds a strong, global Navy that is postured and ready to defend our homeland, deter adversaries, and prevail in war – prioritizing China as our most consequential opponent. It is a thorough, strategy-driven budget that is focused on delivering resources to ensure our naval forces remain ready, resilient, flexible, and agile to execute national tasking and preserve peace through strength.

The FY26 budget executes our overarching strategic guidance. It fully funds the Columbia-class submarine – the Department of the Navy’s highest acquisition priority – and addresses the modernization of the nuclear architecture that underpins it. The FY26 budget allocates resources to our operations and readiness accounts that will keep our naval forces

forward, postured, and ready to defend our national interests, and prioritizes resources to fund the Submarine Industrial Base (SIB). Further, it supports the United States Marine Corps Force Design and maintains a mandated fleet of 31 amphibious ships.

However, the Fiscal Responsibility Act and realized inflation forced hard choices on the Navy. The FY26 Budget Request focuses on warfighting, lethality, and readiness for the near-term fight. It builds a deep bench of combat-ready platforms and invests in the key platforms, munitions, and sensors needed to meet our congressionally mandated peacetime mission and ensure our warfighting advantage in this decade. It delivers the quality of service our Sailors deserve.

The FY26 Budget Request focuses on achieving seven key tasks necessary for warfighting advantage in the near term. It enhances our long-term advantage by investing in key future capabilities and enablers. Recognizing our industrial constraints, the Navy endeavors to foster an adaptive, accountable, and warfighting culture; invest in the health, welfare, and training of our people; and strengthen shipbuilding and the maritime industrial base.

Binned under the Secretary of the Navy's priorities, these seven key tasks are:

Foster an Adaptive, Accountable, and Warfighting Culture

1. **Ready our platforms.** Through force readiness improvements, we will achieve and sustain an 80 percent Combat-Surge Ready posture for ships, submarines, and aircraft.
2. **Operationally integrate robotic and autonomous systems.** We will integrate proven robotic and autonomous systems for routine use by the commanders who will employ them.
3. **Fight from the Maritime Operations Center (MOC).** Prioritizing the Indo-Pacific, all fleet headquarters will have ready MOCs certified and proficient in command and control, information, intelligence, fires, movement and maneuver, protection, and sustainment.

Invest in the Health, Welfare and Training of our People

4. **Recruit and retain talent.** We will achieve 100% rating fill for the Navy active and reserve components, man our deploying units to 95% of billets authorized, and fill 100% of strategic depth mobilization billets.
5. **Deliver quality of service.** We will provide the quality of service our Sailors deserve, focusing on quality unaccompanied housing for our Sailors, quality medical and healthcare, adequate access to childcare and childcare development centers, and eliminating involuntary living aboard ships in homeport.
6. **Invest in warfighter competency.** We will have reliable, realistic, relevant, and recordable Live, Virtual, and Constructive (LVC)-enabled architectures to train Navy warfighters to successfully execute high-end warfighting in Joint and fully informed training environments.

Strengthen Shipbuilding and the Maritime Industrial Base

7. **Restore critical infrastructure.** Prioritizing the Indo-Pacific, we will assess, prioritize, and program resources to repair infrastructure directly supporting Defense Critical Assets and Task Critical Assets to enable worldwide fleet operations and force generation.

The events of the last two years in the Red Sea, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Indo-Pacific demonstrate the enduring importance of American naval power. America's Navy is a key pillar of national power and a critical part of our Joint Force's ability to maintain peace through strength. Achieving these seven key tasks will ensure a lethal, combat-credible Navy that contributes layered effects to the Joint Force and can fight and win our Nation's wars in the maritime environment. The Navy welcomes the White House Office on Shipbuilding and Executive Order Restoring America's Maritime Dominance as well as proposed legislation and looks forward to engaging with all stakeholders – the White House, Congress, industry, and

allies and partners – to remain the world’s most combat-credible Navy. There is no time to waste.

Key Task #1: Ready our Platforms

In an era of rapidly evolving threats, the readiness of our national maritime industrial base to build ships, aircraft, and weapons is essential to maintaining a technological and strategic advantage. We are providing industry with a clear demand signal based on our procurement strategy and working with our industry partners to improve our maintenance processes.

Strategic Deterrence Investments. The Navy is prioritizing our Nation’s top defense acquisition priority and the Navy’s contributions to our strategic deterrence: the Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine, the second life extension of the Trident II D5 Ballistic Missile, and the E-130J Take Charge and Move Out aircraft.

Surface Fleet. The Surface Force remains the backbone of our Navy’s ability to visibly project power, ensure maritime security, and uphold freedom of navigation across the globe. Our Surface Fleet provides persistent presence, rapid crisis response, and deterrence alongside allies and partners.

Amphibious Fleet. The Navy is committed to maintaining a 31-ship amphibious force structure. Last year, the Navy awarded multi-ship procurement contracts for three LPDs (LPD 33-35) and one LHA (LHA10). Congressional authorization in the FY25 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) allows the Navy to pursue a Non-Developmental Vessel this year as the initial Medium Landing Ship Block 1 to meet the Marine Corps’ critical mobility need for Marine Littoral Regiments in U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.

Submarines. Submarines ensure maritime dominance via unparalleled stealth and strategic deterrence. Their ability to access and operate undetected in hostile environments allows for critical intelligence gathering, force projection, and the protection of national interests. The Navy has an undersea warfighting requirement for 66 attack submarines. We are well below

our requirement, with 47 currently in inventory. As of April 2025, 24 Virginia Class Submarines have been delivered and 14 are under contract. Five Columbia class submarines are in construction.

Submarine Industrial Base (SIB) Investments. The Navy is investing in our undersea warfare capability. We must send a strong signal to and increase the health of industry, build our supply chain resiliency, bolster our long-term capacity and support the AUKUS partnership, all while ensuring readiness for today. This significant investment is on top of the investment of \$3 billion from the Commonwealth of Australia, of which the first \$500 million installment was deposited into the U.S. Treasury earlier this year.

This is a national effort. The SIB, including the supply chain that supports material readiness for all submarine classes, consists of over 15,000 industry partners spread across every state in the country. The Navy will continue to partner with industry to make investments that will deliver a production cadence of 1 Columbia and 2.3 Virginia-class submarines per year to replace the aging Ohio-class submarine, achieve our required force structure of 66 SSNs, and support our AUKUS commitments.

Air Wing of the Future (AWOTF). The AWOTF will consist of multi-generation manned assets with advanced weapons and capabilities, that will conduct manned unmanned teaming with the Navy's MQ-25 Stingray and collaborative combat aircraft (CCA).

Right now, the Navy is working on the CCA initiative, which is a key component of the Next Generation Air Dominance family of systems and focuses on developing unmanned air vehicles that can operate from aircraft carriers. This effort enhances the capability of Carrier Air Wings in air superiority, anti-surface warfare, strike missions, and many missions. By adopting a modular, data-driven, and scalable approach, the CCA program will redefine naval air power. With a focus on interoperability, government-owned systems, and data-driven outcomes, we are developing an aircraft system to enhance situational awareness, lethality, and range for our 4th and 5th generation platforms in complex, contested environments.

Last year, the USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) completed all installation milestones and became the world's first operational unmanned carrier aviation air warfare center, while the first class of MQ-25 air vehicle pilots completed initial training at Unmanned Carrier-Launched Multi-Role Squadron Ten. The MQ-25 provides the right combination of refueling, autonomy, and seamless carrier deck integration to meet the U.S. Navy's goals.

Taken as a whole, these long-term, critical investments mean America's naval aviators will project American seapower across the globe throughout the next century.

Long Range Fires. To ensure our naval forces remain equipped with cutting-edge capabilities to counter diverse threats, the Navy is focusing on key munitions investments in long-range fires and terminal defense. Our continued investment in air, surface, and subsurface launched weapons including Tomahawk, Long Range Anti-Ship Missile, and the Standard Missile family, provides multi-mission capabilities and extends range against aerial and surface targets. The Navy is dedicated to expanding production capacity for these critical munitions by investing in factory automation, source material availability, obsolescence management, and supply chain resilience.

The Navy recognizes our dependencies on capabilities from other services to enable long-range fires, particularly in the areas of sensing, effects, and communications. As such, the Navy supports continued investment and collaboration on these to ensure a unified and effective approach.

Sealift Investments. The current strategic environment demands a naval logistics enterprise capable of assuring readiness and sustainment at speed and scale for the Joint Force. The Navy is modernizing our logistics enterprise to be more agile, resilient, and capable of sustaining combat effectiveness in contested environments against peer adversaries. To address the challenges of refueling, rearming, resupplying, repairing, and reviving inside weapons engagement zones, we are investing in new equipment for our expeditionary forces, survivable logistics over the shore systems, and new capabilities such as rearming at sea.

Military Sealift Command (MSC), with the broader maritime industry, is facing a civil service mariner (CIVMAR) manning shortfall that jeopardizes its ability to sustain peacetime logistics operations and wartime readiness. CIVMAR shortfalls have reduced MSC's ability to operate its government owned / government operated ships, which includes our combat logistics force. Consequently, MSC has implemented a Risk Reduction Plan that places 17 ships pier side, temporarily taking them out of operation to reprioritize the CIVMAR workforce onboard to higher priority operational ships. The Navy has launched a comprehensive MSC Workforce Initiative to increase CIVMAR manning and quality of life. This effort targets retention and recruitment, CIVMAR quality of life improvements, improved Human Resource policy and systems, and pay reform to bring parity with private maritime industry.

The Navy is committed to meeting Strategic Sealift mobility requirements by recapitalizing the Ready Reserve Fleet and the Maritime Prepositioning Force with a combination of used vessels and new construction vessels. To achieve this, the Navy is building a Sealift Campaign Plan to focus on a whole-of-strategic-sealift approach across the entirety of sealift prepositioned and surge assets. A key element of this plan is continued implementation of the congressionally-provided authorities to address strategic sealift readiness and recapitalization through the Buy-Used Program.

To date, the Navy has procured seven ships through the Buy-Used Program and plans to procure two in FY25 and one in FY26, which will meet the congressionally mandated limit of ten.

Readiness Investments. Our enemies will not wait for our new platforms to be delivered. We must therefore generate more available ships, submarines, and aircraft from the fleet we have today.

We are increasing the readiness of our platforms by reducing maintenance delays and embracing focused and deliberate approaches to manning, training, modernization, and sustainment. Our goal is to achieve and sustain an 80% combat-surge ready (CSR) posture by

2027. These efforts began with naval aviation in 2018, improving the operational availability of tactical aircraft. We are now scaling our efforts across all aviation platforms, as well as in the surface and submarine communities.

CSR is a certification for air, surface, and submarine platforms to execute combat missions. It is distinct from Global Force Management, which provides forces in response to Combatant Commander demand, balanced with available supply. CSR-certified units meet minimum requirements for material condition, training, manning, and armament. To increase our combat surge readiness, we are reducing the number of platforms in depot maintenance through improved business and maintenance practices, as well as certifying training earlier in the force-generation cycle. Type Commanders have been designated as the single accountable officers to ensure their respective forces achieve 80% CSR. This accountability, along with the above reforms, is driving a fleet-wide cultural shift towards aggressively prioritizing readiness.

To sustain a high operational tempo, we must maintain a robust inventory of spare parts. The Navy is shifting from a “just in time” logistics model to “just in case” – a model that ensures Sailors have the right parts on hand to keep their systems operational, lethal, and ready. The Navy’s budget for spare parts has increased by 36% since FY20. This critical funding ensures that our ships, submarines, and aircraft are prepared to respond to commander tasking or adversary action and are not sidelined by equipment casualties. The Navy appreciates Congressional support for funding to improve the parts inventories that keep our warfighting platforms operational.

80% CSR for Aviation Community.

The Aviation community is at 75% CSR (as of 07 MAY 2025).

Achieving and sustaining 80% CSR in the aviation community requires improved maintenance and training for both aircraft carriers and carrier air wings, which certify independently. The Navy has improved the number of mission capable tactical jets and is scaling

proven methods across all type/model/series of aircraft. Aircraft carrier availability remains the primary constraint for reaching 80% aviation CSR. We are increasing aircraft carrier availability through performance improvement in our public shipyards. Recent investments in our naval shipyards have focused on workforce expansion, workforce training, optimizing maintenance schedules, and implementing advanced planning and logistics management practices.

80% CSR for Surface Community.

The Surface community is at 61% CSR (as of 01 MAY 2025).

Achieving 80% CSR in the surface community is critical to our overall force readiness and our ability to control the seas. The Navy has improved significantly in surface ship depot maintenance, from 41% on-time completion in FY23 to 68% in FY24. The surface Navy concurrently reduced the maintenance backlog, the accumulated 'debt' of deferred maintenance, from \$2.3 billion in FY22 to \$1.9 billion in FY24. Furthermore, the Navy was able to extend the service life for 12 destroyers and 3 cruisers based on improved material condition, maintenance processes, and Life Cycle Health Assessments.

The Navy is committed to improve the material readiness of the amphibious fleet. To that end, the FY25 Shipbuilding Plan maintains the legally mandated inventory of 31 amphibious ships. In 2024, the Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps tasked the Navy and Marine Corps to develop a comprehensive plan to improve the readiness of our amphibious warfare ships. The Navy is implementing this plan.

80% CSR for Submarine Community.

The Submarine community is at 64% CSR (as of 01 MAY 2025).

Production and maintenance delays are keeping our submarines in the shipyard and driving up costs. The Navy is working closely with all stakeholders to drive innovation and target investments where they will yield the greatest results in the shortest time. We are

improving our production and maintenance processes by embracing industry best practices such as outsourcing certain work, increasing material on hand prior to work commencing and pushing project management authority as close as possible to the worker on the shop floor.

As part of our broader investment in the maritime industrial base, the Navy is focused on improving the submarine industrial base across six lines of effort: workforce development, supplier development, shipbuilder infrastructure, strategic outsourcing, manufacturing technology, and government oversight. Since FY18, Navy has budgeted for over 725 supplier development projects with more than 300 suppliers across 33 states to add capability, capacity, and resiliency to the supply chain. The Navy has also invested in Virginia Class spare parts and has ordered contingency material to have on hand for inspection-based work. Those efforts are yielding results: Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard completed both USS Hawaii (SSN 776) and USS Minnesota (SSN 783) availabilities on time, returning both submarines to the fleet in July 2024. Navy will continue to focus on planning and materials until this becomes the standard.

Our four public shipyards – Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, and Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard – are vital to our effort to achieve 80% CSR submarines. I have visited each shipyard and seen the work being done by the 37,500 engineers, tradespeople, and support personnel who serve there. The workforce of our public shipyards is committed to improving the readiness of these critical assets, and the Navy is committed to supporting their efforts through improved compensation and work environments.

At the Navy's request, DoD conducted a wage survey in the Norfolk Tidewater region to achieve pay parity between Norfolk Naval Shipyard and the surrounding private shipyards. The survey showed that in the early 1980s, new wage-grade workers earned four times the minimum wage. Now, those same workers earn approximately one and a half times the minimum wage. This effort resulted in an \$80 million wage investment in FY24, and retention has begun to improve. We must continue to invest in shipyard infrastructure, expand and enhance the SIB, increase productivity, shorten maintenance timelines, and reduce our maintenance backlog to prepare our submarine force for the threats of tomorrow and stay ahead of our competitors.

Key Task #2: Operationalize Robotic and Autonomous Systems

The Navy is taking full advantage of the innovative technology available from American industry to rapidly deliver needed capabilities to our warfighters. We are focused on prototyping, experimenting, and integrating Robotic and Autonomous Systems into the Fleet through efforts such as Replicator and in close collaboration with the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) and the Disruptive Capabilities Office. We are leveraging established partners and new entrants in this sector. OPNAV is institutionalizing the lessons learned across the Fleet and using them to speed the capability delivery cycle.

Last year, we delivered the first 24 small, unmanned surface vessels to a newly established Unmanned Surface Vessel (USV) Squadron to jumpstart learning on how we command and control robotic platforms and integrate them into the Fleet with the stand up of USV divisions, as we enable a culture shift to rapid development and integration. Further, Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency's USX-1 Defiant completed construction in February and is currently undergoing commissioning trials. The Navy will take ownership of Defiant after her extended at-sea demonstration. Defiant will be the Navy's first Medium Unmanned Surface Vessel (MUSV) that is designed from the ground up as an unmanned ship and will operate in a fully unmanned fashion.

We recently launched the Navy's first extra-large unmanned undersea vehicle; follow-on developmental and operational testing is being conducted this year. We continue to develop and demonstrate long-duration, long-range, payload-capable unmanned underwater vehicles ready for persistent operations in dynamic maritime environments for undersea, subsea, and seabed warfare. In the air domain, we put more Triton MQ-4C aircraft on patrol, giving us operational orbits in the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and Middle East. We have also continued development of the MQ-25, which will enable CCA employment and our AWOTF, as previously mentioned. We have commenced CVN integration through in-port testing.

Key Task #3: Fight from the MOC

To stay ahead of emerging threats, we remain committed to DMO, which means dispersing the Fleet while concentrating its effects. That means distributing, integrating, and maneuvering people, platforms, munitions, and data across time, spectrum, and space. At the center of how we fight in this distributed manner is the MOC, the Navy's approach to fleet-level command and control. MOCs must act like the conductor of an orchestra – integrating with the Joint Force, allies, and partners so we can enhance our decision advantage while synchronizing distributed sensors, shooters, and effectors across an increasingly large and complex multi-domain battlespace. We are prioritizing the manning, training, and equipping of our MOCs in the Indo-Pacific before scaling to our other Fleets.

Information dominance and decision advantage are the key enablers in this new form of maneuver warfare. To ensure warfighting advantage, we must guarantee decision superiority for our warfighters. Fight from the MOC lines of effort will further expand Navy's contribution to DoD's Combined Joint All Domain Command and Control (CJADC2) initiative. Through Project Overmatch – the Navy's contribution to CJADC2 – we are fielding the connective tissue for today's Fleet, while developing and experimenting with what is needed in the MOC and our hybrid fleet. Navy investments have begun delivering software-defined networking to increase the available pathways to connect and share information, as well as containerized software applications that aid decision makers and planners in executing DMO.

Key Task #4: Recruit and Retain Talent

Our Sailors stand ready as a lethal fighting force to deter or confront any adversary. After missing our FY23 recruiting goal, we raised our goal for FY24, and exceeded that goal by contracting 40,978 future Sailors, the most since 2003. As a result of the Navy's comprehensive strategy to improve recruitment through sustainable process changes, we are on pace to exceed our FY25 recruiting goal of 40,600. This performance, coupled with improved retention, will help us advance towards our primary manning goal of 100% enlisted rating fill by the end of 2026 and will translate directly to reducing our gaps at sea.

We continually apply data-driven processes and explore innovative strategies to attract qualified, motivated individuals. The Navy is maximizing its pool of recruits with the Physical and Academic Future Sailor Preparatory Courses, as well as by expanding our reach through partnerships and traditional and mixed media marketing. Increasing access has not lowered the standard – every recruit must complete the same training at boot camp and meet all qualifications for his or her assigned rating.

The Navy is dedicated to retaining our most capable Sailors; retention is a critical component of achieving our end-strength goals. To that end, we leverage both monetary and non-monetary incentives, including Selective Reenlistment Bonuses, suspension of High Year Tenure Length of Service gates, the Retention Excellence Award and Best in Class program, and enhanced exit and milestone surveys which focus our retention efforts. As a result, enlisted retention remains healthy. We exceeded our FY24 retention benchmark forecasts in all retention zones. The Navy continues to meet or exceed its retention benchmark forecast for FY25.

While officer retention remains a challenge in specific career fields, we appreciate the continued support of Congress in enabling our monetary retention incentives in areas such as Aviation, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Surface Warfare, Submarine Warfare, Naval Special Warfare, and Health Professions Officers. We will continue to work with the committees to solve this challenge.

Key Task #5: Deliver Quality of Service

Quality of service (QoS) improves force readiness. The Navy is investing in barracks construction and renovations to repair poor and failing unaccompanied housing (UH) facilities.

Childcare capacity and housing quality are crucial, as they contribute directly to positive work environments for our Sailors and their families. The Navy provides high-quality childcare programs but has insufficient capacity, particularly in fleet concentration areas. Improvement requires a comprehensive approach including strategic staffing, new facilities, and leverage of

community resources. From our January 31, 2025 data, enrollment in Navy childcare centers is up from 76% of total capacity at the start of FY23 to 88% today, and staffing has grown from 75% of demand at the start of FY23 to 87% today. The waitlist for Navy Child Development Centers (CDCs) has shrunk from 3,400 at the start of FY24 to 2,500 as of January 31, 2025. The Navy has also expanded the Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood program, which provides fee assistance for families that are geographically dispersed or face long waitlists for on-base care, from 6,500 spaces at the start of FY24 to over 9,000.

To improve CDC staffing, the Navy deployed 150 supplemental staff across our child and youth programs through a contract with Utah Tech University. This resource fills staffing shortfalls during peak summer and Permanent Change of Station seasons at both domestic and overseas locations. In order to attract quality candidates, the Navy also expanded the staff childcare discount for Direct Care employees. Employee use of the discount increased from 22% in FY23 before the expansion to 32% by the end of FY24.

The QoS Cross Functional Team has made significant efforts to improve Sailor QoS in the Hampton Roads area at Newport News Shipyard. Supervisor Shipbuilding Newport News has been awarded the build contract and facility design for the Carrier Refueling Overhaul Workcenter Building which will include Morale, Welfare, and Recreation spaces, private counseling areas, game room, gym and showers, meeting rooms, a Chapel, and a micro market. Construction has begun with an estimated completion date (ECD) of June 26, 2025. The Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery has been working on the solution for the consolidated medical support to include laboratory, pharmacy, immunizations, and X-rays in the Bank Building at Norfolk Naval Shipyard with an ECD of mid to late 2025. All four planned 24/7 Micro-Marts have been opened as of February 2025 providing Sailors better access to high quality, affordable food at all hours of the day. Finally, the ongoing parking solution has reached a way forward to include the construction of parking garage 1, UH/PPV parking and housing solution, and 37,000 square feet of programmable space for wellness and medical.

We also owe our Sailors quality housing. Too many of our barracks are in poor condition. At the end of FY23, 25% of Navy Permanent Party UH bedrooms had a Building Condition

Index of 'poor.' We have driven this pool down to 21% as of the end of FY24, but still have work to do. Our long-term strategy will recapitalize our facilities to eliminate 'poor' housing through focused investments and privatization. The Navy increased its Restoration and Modernization investments to repair inadequate UH and is conducting a comprehensive review of UH to guide future investments.

The Navy is committed to taking care of Sailors. We recognize that primary prevention is our best defense against suicide or sexual assault. In 2024, I signed the Navy Medicine Enterprise charter, codifying Navy Medicine's central role across the Navy.

To deliver great care, we need medical warfighters. We are grateful to Congress for supporting provisions in the FY25 NDAA that increased certain health profession bonuses and authorized promotion boards to consider greater numbers of Nurse Corps officers for advancement. These measures tie into Navy Medicine's bolstered recruiting and retention efforts, which are showing positive results.

We are proud of our success in placing active-duty mental health providers closest to the fight, with 42% of mental health providers embedded in operational units. Mental health resources are available from a wide array of sources, from installation counseling centers to global virtual health platforms. We remain committed to ensuring Sailors and their families have access to quality health care in the face of flat budgets, increasing private sector costs, and the recruitment and retention impacts of the national shortage of healthcare professionals.

Key Task #6: Invest in Warfighter Competency

To prevail in war, we must train how we will fight. Naval forces need a reliable, realistic, relevant, and recordable LVC architecture to train all warfighters, whether deployed or pier-side. More than 50% of the Fleet already possess this capability. We are focused on expanding LVC to all communities to ensure we can rehearse and operate seamlessly across all domains, echelons, and functions, including manned-unmanned teaming. In February 2025, we

successfully demonstrated initial LVC operational capability for Information Warfare from shore to ship.

To prepare our warfighters for the future fight, the Navy is prioritizing Sailor education. The Navy is committed to Naval University System wholeness, giving our midshipmen, officers, and Sailors across the Fleet every opportunity to succeed. We continue to see great results from the United States Navy Community College with over 3,500 Sailors, Marines, and Coastguardsmen currently enrolled in eight different academic programs. Additionally, through other initiatives like LVC training, Ready Relevant Learning, and the Fleet Learning Continuum, the Navy is ensuring our Sailors have the professional knowledge, skills, and training to be ready to meet and excel in its national security tasking.

The Navy's wargaming enterprise is a critical component of our analytic efforts, shaping how the Navy better understands joint and combined warfighting challenges, refines our warfighting concepts, identifies our capability and capacity gaps, and prioritizes investments to close those gaps. The Naval Contested Logistics War Game (NCLWG) series is a key component of the Navy's wargaming effort. This contested logistics campaign of learning informed investments and concepts of operation to better sustain joint and combined forces. NCLWG included direct participation from our allies Japan, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. These efforts enhance interoperability, align sustainment strategies across domains, and ensure our logistics enterprise meets future operational demands. The Navy is integrating sustainment into operational games to ensure a more holistic approach to analyzing the warfighting functions.

Key Task #7: Restore Critical Infrastructure – Focusing on the INDO-PACIFIC

The Navy sustains and projects operations from its shore installations. The Navy must have a robust, strong, and effective shipbuilding industrial base, composed of shipyards, original equipment manufacturers, suppliers, ship designers, and supply chains that supports our warfighters and warfighting. We are continuing our investment in installations, shipyards, the SIB, and the weapons industrial base to ensure they are resilient and mission-ready and can

generate and sustain our warfighters and our warfighting. We are focused on infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific to ensure the Navy and Joint Force can access our installations, dry docks, and other facilities to generate and sustain ready forces for a potential conflict against China. We are targeting investment to the infrastructure that is most impactful for our warfighters, at the expense of other shore facilities.

We are also providing large investments in the health of the industrial base, providing a clear signal to industry. We are also exploring ways to invest in industry and increase shipbuilding capacity through multi-year, block buy purchases and investments in workforce development and supply chain resiliency. This requires a whole-of-government effort. In order to deliver the Navy the Nation needs, the Navy is pulling every available lever to expedite the necessary ships, aircraft, and weapons to our warfighters – by continuing to partner with industry, academia, the interagency, and allies and partners to solve our most pressing challenges and by improving our ability to maintain existing platforms.

Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP) Investments. The Navy is committed to this once-in-a-generation investment in our four public shipyards. SIOP is crucial for eliminating maintenance delays of new nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers, helping to reach 80% CSR, and ensuring our carriers and submarines can leave the yards on time. SIOP has completed 44 projects across 4 shipyards, an investment of over \$1 billion. We have four dry dock construction projects currently under construction. In addition to recapitalization, SIOP optimizes physical shipyard layout for efficiency and to align construction with warfighting requirements. Notably, dry docks at Puget Sound and Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyards will be upgraded to meet seismic resiliency criteria.

An additional 48 SIOP projects worth \$6.0 billion are under contract. The Navy is taking an integrated approach to installation resiliency by emphasizing initiatives in energy-, water-, and cyber-resilience. SIOP projects improve operational efficiency and strengthen adaptability to current and emerging threats.

Installation Investments. The Navy is investing in our piers, airfields, aviation facilities, maintenance facilities, and core utilities to meet the Nation's needs. Because shore infrastructure enables global logistics, the Navy is repairing and updating critical waterfront utilities, making structural repairs to wharves and docks, and building and repairing taxiways and hangars. We are investing in our critical utility systems, upgrading water, wastewater, and electrical generation, distribution, and treatment capabilities to improve cybersecurity, resiliency, quality, and reliability and minimize risk to mission. For aviation maintenance, the Fleet Readiness Centers (FRC) Infrastructure Optimization and Modernization Program (FIOP) follows a holistic investment strategy to integrate all infrastructure and equipment investments. FIOP optimizes maintenance, manufacturing, modification, repair, and overhaul infrastructure at naval aviation depots to ensure equipment readiness and improve material availability as fast as possible. Full Congressional support for FIOP will help the Navy maintain our momentum.

The Navy is examining the feasibility of establishing new bases from which to operate in the Indo-Pacific, including in the Arctic, to diversify the Navy's Pacific posture and better position the Navy to respond to increased Russian and Chinese patrols around Alaska. We are continuing our investments in Guam, repairing and improving structures damaged by Typhoon Mawar, restoring the Guam breakwater, and supporting the fielding of the Guam Defense System.

Weapons Industrial Base (WIB) Investments. The Navy is investing in critical munitions and building on the FY23, FY24, and FY25 WIB and procurement investments. Our warships must be equipped with the right weapons and payloads for a potential fight with replenishments nearby. We are investing to expand capacity and add new suppliers across our weapons portfolio, including rocket motors, warheads, and engines. Private industry is also contributing to this expansion via direct investment. Presidential Drawdowns and unplanned combat expenditures over the past two years have strained Navy's inventories; we must increase our investments to replenish them. The Navy remains committed to working with industry to identify manufacturing challenges and investment opportunities to streamline testing and on-board non-traditional contractors. Additionally, the Navy is investing in its organic industrial base to ensure we can accelerate munitions production in the immediate future.

Red Hill. The Navy remains committed to rebuilding trust with the people of Hawaii and service members, civilians, and families affected by the Red Hill fuel leaks. Joint Task Force-Red Hill has safely removed 104.6 million gallons of fuel – over 99 percent of previously held fuel reserves. We continue to execute the Navy’s tank closure plan and associated environmental remediation. The Navy team in Hawaii continues to work alongside the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Hawaii Department of Health to provide water that meets all Federal and state safe drinking water standards, while transparently communicating with elected representatives, community groups, and the public.

Update on Navy’s Audit

The Navy is committed to achieving a clean audit opinion in 2028. In November 2024, I issued clear direction through NAVADMIN 225/24 to reinforce the importance of the audit to all echelons of the Navy, making it clear that the audit requires ruthless transparency to critically evaluate data and metrics to determine whether we are on track to meet our goals. It also demonstrates to the American taxpayers and Congress that we are managing the country's business and funds responsibly. While we have made progress toward this goal, the most difficult part of the journey lies ahead. We must proceed with focus and urgency, leveraging lessons learned from ourselves and other Services to improve our audit readiness and mission effectiveness. This is a whole-of-Navy task and will take a whole-of-Navy effort to achieve the clean audit.

Conclusion

The Navy continues to meet its Title 10 mission – we are organized, trained, and equipped for the peacetime promotion of the national security interests and prosperity of the United States and for prompt and sustained combat incident to operations at sea. We must achieve and sustain our readiness goals to deliver a lethal Navy capable of defending American interests around the world.

To maximize the availability of our ships, submarines, and aircraft, we will continue to improve our maintenance practices. We will continue to innovate, and to integrate innovation into today's Fleet. We will train and equip our MOCs to direct tomorrow's fight. We will continue to recruit and retain talented, dedicated Americans. We will deliver the quality of service that our Sailors and their families deserve. We will invest in our warfighters through innovative training, and we will restore our aging infrastructure.

Consistent and predictable funding is foundational to meeting our readiness objectives, and budgetary instability creates a cascade of challenges. I look forward to working with you to support our Sailors, civilians, and families. The credibility of our Nation's deterrence rests upon ready and capable ships, aircraft, and submarines. The investments we make now will shape the global maritime balance of power for the rest of this century. I could not be prouder of the Navy team that guarantees our prosperity and security, deters our adversaries, and is ready to fight and win. The Navy will continue to work alongside all stakeholders to deliver the Navy the Nation needs. On behalf of our more than 600,000 active and reserve Sailors, Navy Civilians, and Navy families, I am grateful to this committee and to your colleagues in Congress for your steadfast commitment to the United States Navy.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you, Admiral.
I now recognize General Smith for your remarks.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF GENERAL SMITH

General SMITH. Good afternoon. Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, Chair Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honor to appear before you today alongside Secretary Phelan and Admiral Kilby, my shipmate. I am here for you on behalf of your Marine Corps, and I look forward to answering your questions.

First, I would like to start by sharing the Marine Corps's top three priorities.

First, restoring a 3.0 Amphibious Ready Group and Marine Expeditionary inner presence. This is the Marine Corps's North Star. That is one Amphibious Ready Group constantly deployed off the East Coast, one constantly deployed off the West Coast, and one Amphibious Ready Group episodically deployed out of the FDNF, the Forward Deployed Naval Force, in Japan.

The Amphibious Ready Group with a Marine Expeditionary Unit embarked is the most versatile tool in our Nation's arsenal. It is the Swiss Army knife of the joint force. And we are working closely with our Navy partners to maximize this capability.

Our second priority is accelerating Force Design. Force Design is our righteous journey to adapt to the changing character of war. The nature of war remains the same, but the character changes.

We are in the implementation phase. We are fielding new capabilities time now and reshaping formations across the force, from our Marine Expeditionary Units and Marine Littoral Regiments to our Marine Expeditionary Forces.

And, finally, improving quality of life. Every marine deserves a clean, safe place to lay their head at night. They don't ask for much, but they do ask for that. Barracks 2030 is how we are getting after this. It is the most consequential housing investment in Marine Corps history.

And quality of life goes beyond our barracks. We are also investing in the well-being of marine families, because retaining our marines means supporting those who stand by them. We say, "You recruit the marine, but you retain the family."

I will close with this. Your marines remain the most ready when the Nation is least ready. It is who we are, it is our foundation: a forward-postured force, trained for combat, and built to deliver flexible, lethal options anywhere, anytime.

Thank you again for your trust and support, and I look forward to your questions.

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STATEMENT

OF

GENERAL ERIC SMITH
COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

AS DELIVERED TO CONGRESSIONAL DEFENSE COMMITTEES

ON

THE POSTURE OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

32 Chair, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the
33 opportunity to report to you on your Marines and your Marine Corps. Your support in the coming
34 years will be critical to the Marine Corps' ability to remain our Nation's premier expeditionary
35 force-in-readiness while simultaneously modernizing for the fights of the future. Together, we
36 will maintain the Corps' commitment to lethality and our warrior ethos.

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Discipline and our Warrior Ethos

39 The Marine Corps is defined by its singular purpose: to fight and win the Nation's battles.
40 As a warfighting organization, everything we do is designed to support the infantryman whose
41 job is to locate, close with, and destroy the enemy.

42 Discipline is the foundation of our warrior ethos. It sharpens our readiness, forges
43 unbreakable bonds between Marines, and enables us to adapt and overcome in any situation. It
44 allows Marines to make sound decisions amidst chaos, execute complex tasks under extreme
45 conditions, and thrive where others falter. Discipline permeates every aspect of a Marine's life,
46 from the self-discipline required to meet rigorous physical fitness standards to the accountability
47 needed to ensure we are ready to "fight tonight." Without it, we are a collection of individuals;
48 with it, we are an unstoppable, cohesive force ready to fight any adversary.

49 The Marine Corps has not and will not lower its standards or change its warfighting
50 culture. Our standards, developed over hundreds of campaigns and battles, define what it is to be
51 a Marine. We challenge our citizens to rise to meet these uncompromising standards; combat
52 offers no second chances, and lapses in discipline cost lives. Marines do not train for comfort,
53 fairness, or convenience – we train for war.

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Current Operating Environment

56 As the nation's expeditionary shock troops, forward deployed Marines are a vital element
57 of the Joint Force—they provide our Nation's leaders with a flexible response option in an
58 unpredictable global security environment. Chief among these is the threat posed by China,
59 which seeks to reshape the global order to serve its own authoritarian ambitions. The Chinese
60 Communist Party's aggressive military modernization, coercive economic practices, and actions
61 in the South China Sea directly threaten the principles of a free and open Indo-Pacific. With over

62 33,000 Marines forward deployed or stationed west of the international date line—ready to fight
 63 at a moment's notice—the Marine Corps plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the U.S. and its
 64 allies can deter the Chinese Communist Party's aggression, protect critical sea lines of
 65 communication, and safeguard U.S. interests.

66 Beyond the Chinese Communist Party's military ambitions, the Marine Corps stands
 67 ready to address other significant threats to U.S. security and interests. In the Middle East, Iran
 68 continues to destabilize the region by supporting terrorist organizations, advancing its ballistic
 69 missile program, and conducting malign activities through proxy groups. These actors threaten
 70 regional stability and endanger global energy supplies. Meanwhile, Russia's war in Ukraine
 71 underscores its willingness to destabilize Europe, disregard international borders, and use
 72 cyberattacks as weapons.

73 At the same time, transnational threats such as terrorism, piracy, and the proliferation of
 74 advanced weapons systems further complicate the security environment. Additionally, the
 75 security of the U.S. homeland remains paramount, as porous borders and transnational criminal
 76 organizations pose risks to national safety and stability.

77 These challenges demand a Marine Corps capable of campaigning to deter aggression
 78 and responding to crises on a global scale to defeat adversaries and set conditions for the Joint
 79 Force. From the complexity of the cyber domain to the maritime chokepoints of the Indo-Pacific,
 80 Marines remain committed to being the most ready when the Nation is least ready—a force that
 81 thrives in chaos and delivers victory whenever and wherever required.

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83 Meeting the Challenge

84 In order to assist Congress with understanding where your Corps stands today and where
 85 we are headed, I have broken down my posture statement into four areas that are nested with my
 86 Commandant's Planning Guidance: Amphibious Readiness and Littoral Mobility; Accelerating
 87 Force Design Modernization; Modernizing Barracks and Improving Quality of Life; and
 88 Recruiting, Making, and Retaining Marines. Given my Title 10 authorities to man, train, and
 89 equip the Marine Corps, I am acutely focused on these four areas in this budget cycle as I believe
 90 their achievement will best posture the Corps for both the fights of today and the future.

91

92 **Amphibious Readiness and Littoral Mobility** - Achieving a 3.0 Amphibious Ready Group

(ARG)/Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) presence is my top priority. 3.0 ARG/MEU presence is the Marine Corps' North Star. Three continuous, consistent, and simultaneously deployed ARG/MEUs provide lethal response options, creates dilemmas for our adversaries, forward postures forces to deny adversaries decision space and supports campaigning alongside our allies and partners. At the same time, we will pursue organic littoral mobility options to ensure Stand-in-Forces—forward, low-signature units that operate inside adversary threat rings to impose costs across all phases of conflict—can persist and maneuver.

Accelerate Force Design Modernization - The Marine Corps must stay agile to remain ahead of evolving threats. We are in the implementation phase of Force Design—integrating new technology, refining organizational structure, and strengthening the Joint Force. We are committed to accelerating this effort to ensure Marines from across our Marine Expeditionary Units, Marine Littoral Regiments, and Marine Expeditionary Forces are lethal, survivable, and one step ahead of the enemy. The character of war is changing and we must continue to evolve—continued congressional support is essential to sustain this momentum and ensure Marines evolve at pace alongside the threat.

Modernize Barracks and Improve Quality of Life – Barracks 2030 is the most consequential infrastructure investment in Marine Corps history, aimed at providing safe, modern living conditions for our Marines. Quality of life directly impacts readiness, which is why we're also investing in childcare, spousal employment, and programs that promote total fitness and well-being. Supporting Marines and their families is essential to retaining a ready and resilient force.

Recruit, Make, and Retain Marines – Maintaining an elite force begins with recruiting and retaining high-quality individuals. Despite historic challenges, the Marine Corps continues to meet its recruiting goals without lowering standards—thanks to the dedication and hard work of our recruiters. We have implemented data-driven initiatives to strengthen these efforts while upholding our warfighting ethos and caring for Marines and their families.

The following provides additional details on the four areas I believe we need to focus on to better inform Congress on where the Marine Corps stands today and where we are headed in the future.

Amphibious Readiness and Littoral Mobility

The Marine Corps is, first and foremost, a Naval service. Our identity, ethos, and operational success are rooted in our enduring partnership with the U.S. Navy. Amphibious Warfare Ships (AWS) aren't just a number on a spreadsheet—they're a cornerstone of forward-deployed, expeditionary power that uniquely complements and enhances the Nation's broader strategic arsenal. The ARG/MEU is the Swiss Army Knife of the Joint Force. When on station, the ARG/MEU provides lethal response options to national decision-makers, creates dilemmas for adversaries, and supports campaigning alongside our allies—all without requiring Access, Basing, or Overflight (ABO) permissions. When forward deployed, these ships allow the Navy and Marine Corps team to deter our adversaries, and fight and win should deterrence fail.

The MEU, as a forward-deployed, flexible, and self-sustaining Marine Air-Ground Task Force, remains a cornerstone in the defense of our Nation's interests and the deterrence of our adversaries in the maritime domain.

3.0 Amphibious Ready Group / Marine Expeditionary Unit (ARG/MEU) Requirement - My nearly 40 years of military experience—and in my role as a member of the Joint Chiefs—have led to my fundamental conviction that, when on station, the ARG/MEU is the most effective and efficient tool of both the Marine Corps and the Joint Force. It is our premier force offering to support the operational requirements of our Combatant Commanders—providing options within hours, not days or weeks.

A "3.0 ARG/MEU" refers to the continuous, consistent, and simultaneous deployment of three, three-ship ARG/MEUs—one forward deployed from the East Coast, one forward deployed from the West Coast, and one episodically deployed from Okinawa, Japan. This posture provides our Combatant Commanders with the ability to shape events, respond rapidly to threats, and deter adversaries with forward-deployed, sea-based forces. ARG/MEUs offer unmatched flexibility across the range of military operations, including expeditionary strikes, sea denial, seizure of advanced naval bases, cyberspace operations, and amphibious assaults. Historically, Combatant Commander-registered and Joint Staff-validated requirements have consistently exceeded what the Navy and Marine Corps can provide, even before accounting for maintenance

154 and availability challenges.

155 Achieving and sustaining a 3.0 ARG/MEU with no fewer than 31 AWS will require
156 significant change—particularly in how we approach amphibious readiness and ship availability.
157 Regardless of AWS readiness challenges, the Marine Corps will always ensure expeditionary
158 forces are ready to respond as the Nation’s expeditionary force-in-readiness. But in the long run,
159 without adequate resourcing of the amphibious warfare fleet, the Joint Force’s ability to
160 campaign forward, deter adversaries, and respond globally will be seriously diminished.

161

162 AWS Readiness and Availability Procurement - This is fundamentally an AWS readiness and
163 availability problem. The Navy and Marine Corps remain aligned on the critical role of
164 amphibious forces, but the lack of available AWS has put that role—and the 3.0 ARG/MEU—at
165 risk. Today, AWS readiness hovers below 50 percent, meaning only half the fleet is available to
166 support training and operations at any given time. This shortfall has already disrupted scheduled
167 MEU deployments across all three Marine Expeditionary Forces—not because we lack trained
168 Marines, but because we lack the ships to move them forward. If this trend continues, unit
169 proficiency will erode, amphibious experience will degrade, and risk—to both training and future
170 combat operations—will increase. Reversing this decline is essential if we are to meet Joint
171 Force requirements, sustain global responsiveness, and provide Combatant Commanders with the
172 ready, sea-based forces they consistently require.

173 AWS delivery delays and shipbuilding constraints further threaten our ability to build and
174 sustain a 3.0 ARG/MEU over the long term. During the Cold War, LHAs were built on one-year
175 centers—meaning a new ship entered construction each year, keeping a steady cadence of
176 production. Today, because of increased complexity and a thinned industrial base, those same
177 ships are started on four-year centers—and even then, deliveries are behind schedule. Without
178 on-time construction of AWS and restored readiness across the existing fleet, we will continue to
179 fall farther behind Combatant Commander requirements and further erode a critical capability of
180 our National Defense.

181 The Acting Chief of Naval Operations and I have committed to work together to increase
182 AWS readiness. His recent decision to convene the Amphibious Ship Maintenance Performance
183 review provided critical insight into actionable steps that can be taken to improve AWS
184 readiness. We are grateful for the Navy’s recent initiatives to adopt civilian-standard world class

185 planning principles to repair availabilities; employ “signature availabilities” for AWS which will
 186 award contracts for substantial yard periods one-year out, vice A-120; and resourcing a critical
 187 systems acquisition strategy to steam repair for our LHDs and LSDs.

188 I also agree with the Acting Chief of Naval Operations that persistently maintaining,
 189 without replacing, our older AWS is not a sustainable strategy. We are grateful for the President
 190 and Congress’ initiatives to strengthen and maintain the Maritime Industrial Base and to continue
 191 timely procurement of our LPDs and LHAs. The recent decision to execute a multi-ship contract
 192 saves the American people money, gets our Marines forward, and sends a strong signal to
 193 industry. Restoring a 3.0 ARG/MEU presence will not be solved overnight—it will require
 194 sustained commitment and deliberate action over the next two decades. Now is the time to begin
 195 that work in earnest—future generations of Marines depend on us to take action.

196
 197 Medium Landing Ship (LSM) - Mobility in the littorals is essential for the maneuver and
 198 persistence of Stand-in Forces. This is especially true as these forces maneuver throughout the
 199 first and second island chains in the Indo-Pacific. Early in the development of Force Design and
 200 the Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) concept—which emphasizes temporary,
 201 austere, and operationally relevant positions to support sea control and denial—the Marine Corps
 202 identified a key mobility gap. In partnership with the Navy, it is now pursuing the LSM to close
 203 that gap in the priority theater. Separate from, but complementary to traditional amphibious
 204 ships, the LSM is being designed for mobility, beach access, and sustainment in contested
 205 environments. To accelerate delivery and ensure operational impact, the Marine Corps is
 206 pursuing a three-phased approach: first, a Littoral Maneuver Bridging Solution (LMBS) to
 207 rapidly enhance movement within the First Island Chain; second, LSM Block I as an initial non-
 208 developmental vessel; and ultimately, LSM Block Next—a fully mature, optimized solution.

209
 210 Phase 1: Littoral Maneuver Bridging Solution (LMBS) - The LMBS will serve as an
 211 interim capability to support Stand-in Forces in the Indo-Pacific while the LSM program
 212 advances toward Initial Operational Capability. LMBS addresses the urgent need for intra-theater
 213 mobility and tactical maneuver by leveraging a mix of existing platforms, experimental vessels,
 214 and chartered solutions, mitigating the near-term gap in organic littoral mobility and maneuver.
 215 Expeditionary Fast Transports (T-EPF), Landing Craft Utility (LCU) variants, and Maritime

216 Prepositioning Ships are providing critical operational and tactical support for dispersed units
217 conducting EABO. Experimental and chartered vessels are also being used to refine tactics,
218 techniques, and procedures, providing valuable lessons for the future LSM program. While
219 LMBS cannot fully replicate the capabilities of the LSM, it enhances mobility and sustainment,
220 ensuring Stand-in Forces remain agile and combat-ready in contested littoral environments for
221 the near future. Absent this bridging solution, the Marine Corps would be accepting unnecessary
222 operational risk. LMBS gives us a practical way to reduce that risk while gaining insight and
223 momentum toward future capability. We will deliberately transition away from this interim
224 capability as LSM Block I becomes available.

225

226 Phase 2: LSM Block I - LSM Block I is the mid-term solution to support the Marine
227 Corps' shore-to-shore littoral mobility requirement. Originally, the Joint Requirements Oversight
228 Council (JROC) approved LSM capabilities development document (CDD) proposals were
229 deemed unaffordable and late-to-need. Due to the threat window, we recognized the need to
230 balance requirements with cost and schedule. Therefore, the Marine Corps revisited LSM
231 requirements to ensure capability is delivered within cost and schedule, and we are naming this
232 effort LSM Block I. While the Navy's initial fielding plan includes 18 ships, the Marine Corps
233 ultimately needs 35 LSMs. We are thankful for Congress's support in the FY24 NDAA provision
234 which permits the Navy and the Marine Corps to purchase a non-developmental vessel, which
235 will lower costs substantially while greatly speeding the time-to-field. As we field LSM Block I,
236 we will continue to refine requirements for the long-term solution, referred to as LSM Block
237 Next.

238

239 Phase 3: LSM Block Next - The final phase, LSM Block Next, will incorporate advanced
240 technologies and lessons learned from LMBS and LSM Block I to further enhance the ship's
241 capabilities. This phase represents the long-term evolution of the LSM program, ensuring the
242 platform remains relevant in future operational environments. By continuously refining the
243 design and integrating new capabilities, LSM Block Next will maximize the platform's
244 effectiveness as a key enabler of littoral mobility, operational flexibility, and sustained
245 expeditionary posture in the Indo-Pacific.

246

Accelerate Force Design Modernization

Now in its sixth year, Force Design is transforming the Marine Corps to meet the challenges of future conflict. This effort has required tough decisions on the part of the Marine Corps, including the divestment of legacy systems and reinvestments within our topline—enabled by Congress’ strong support. Over five budget cycles, we have identified efficiencies, eliminated outdated capabilities, and ensured every dollar advances our lethality and readiness. For the second year in a row, we achieved an unmodified, or “clean,” financial audit—an institutional milestone that reflects our commitment to transparency, accountability, and responsible stewardship of taxpayer resources. That trust and discipline are what make Force Design possible—every dollar accounted for is a dollar that can be reinvested into modernization, ensuring we deliver a more capable, lethal force for the future fight.

Priority Capabilities:

The service is intensifying experimentation with prototype platforms and leveraging multi-vendor contracts to foster competition and innovation within the defense industry. We have greatly expanded our portfolio of classified investments to remain focused on cutting-edge technology. The integration of advanced sensors, the Family of Integrated Targeting Cells, artificial intelligence, Navy/Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS), and one-way attack drones are greatly improving our ability to sense, make sense, and deliver precision fires. Our Campaign of Learning is a conscious effort to constantly reassess our modernization efforts and make in-stride adjustments when necessary. Bolstered by lessons from the current conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, our Campaign of Learning has sharpened our focus on three critical capability areas that are essential to realizing the vision of Force Design and enabling the Stand-in-Forces:

1. Joint / Coalition Kill Webs and Combined Joint All Domain Command and Control (CJADC2)
2. Organic Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) and Automated Systems
3. Contested Logistics

Joint / Coalition Kill Webs and CJADC2 – As a member of the Joint Chiefs, I see firsthand how critical it is for U.S. forces to share information and work together in real time—across services,

allies, and partners. To win in today's fight, we must link our forces and sensors together so commanders can make better decisions faster and act decisively.

The Marine Corps is doing its part to make this a reality. We're focused on being the forward edge of the Joint Force—what we call Stand-in Forces. Our role is to sense the environment first; pass that information up the chain; and help drive faster, smarter decisions. Just as importantly, we must be able to receive direction from higher headquarters and act without delay.

To support this, we are investing in systems that help build these "kill webs"—the process of finding, tracking, and engaging targets. Our contributions include:

- **Advanced sensors** to detect threats early and accurately.
- **Electronic sensing systems** like Electronic Remote Sensors (ERS).
- **Improvements to our TPS-80 Ground/Air Task-Oriented Radar (G/ATOR).**
- **New sensing techniques** such as bi-static and multi-static radars.
- **A variety of Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) payloads** across different platforms.
- **Marine Electronic Warfare Ground Family of Systems (MEGFoS)** to detect and disrupt enemy electronic signals.

We are also making sure that the systems we're building can easily connect and share data with the rest of the Joint Force. Our systems aren't being built in a vacuum—from the very beginning they're designed to work with Navy, Army, Air Force, and Allied systems. This "born Joint" approach avoids stovepipes and ensures the Marine Corps can meaningfully contribute to the larger fight. Some examples of how we are doing this include:

- Our electronic warfare systems are tied directly into the Joint Spectrum Services Framework (SSF), helping all services share information about the electromagnetic environment.
- We are moving to a modern data architecture—shifting from Tactical Services Oriented Architecture to the Tactical Data Orchestration Layer, which plugs directly into CJADC2's broader data-sharing network.
- We're integrating proven joint systems like Minotaur and Maven Smart System (MSS) into our own intelligence platforms so we can contribute to the Joint Force's Common

309 Operational Picture and receive data from it.

- 310 • We're fielding Family of Integrated Targeting Cells in collaboration with the Navy and
- 311 Army—ensuring that targeting data is fused quickly and precisely.

312

313 The Marine Corps is fully committed to making CJADC2 a reality for the Joint Force,
314 with the Stand-in-Forces as the eyes and ears of an interconnected and interoperable network.

315

316 ISR and Autonomous Systems – The Marine Corps is investing in a family of autonomous
317 systems—ranging from long endurance ISR platforms to lethal drones—to extend our
318 operational reach, increase the survivability of our forces, and support distributed operations in
319 contested environments. These capabilities provide our commanders with enhanced situational
320 awareness and precision strike options while enabling Stand-in-Forces to impose dilemmas on
321 the adversary at scale and at speed. Key examples include:

- 322 • **MQ-9A:** We are employing the MQ-9A extensively in the Indo-Pacific, providing long-
323 range surveillance and real-time intelligence to forward-deployed forces and the
324 interagency. These platforms connect Marines in the field with commanders across the
325 globe. We are now moving to the next phase, Increment II, which adds advanced
326 capabilities in electronic warfare, edge-based artificial intelligence, and improved
327 satellite communications. Increment II will be fully fielded by Fiscal Year 26.
- 328 • **Organic Precision Fires (OPF):** OPF remains a priority effort and is a critical element
329 of Force Design. It provides an organic, loitering, beyond line-of-sight precision strike
330 capability to rapidly engage the enemy beyond the range of direct-fire weapons while
331 minimizing collateral damage and exposure to enemy direct and indirect fires. OPF–
332 Light, the only funded capability at this time, is the near-term effort to provide platoons
333 and squads with anti-personnel and anti-material precision effects on the objective or in
334 an engagement area in a man-packable, dismounted configuration.
- 335 • **Lethal Drones and the Replicator Program:** The Marine Corps is fully leveraging the
336 Department of Defense's Replicator initiative as an integrating effort to accelerate the
337 fielding of lethal drones and autonomous systems at scale. Replicator's focus on
338 commercially available, scalable systems allows us to rapidly experiment, iterate, and
339 field capabilities that enable stand-in forces to hold targets at risk across the depth of the

battlespace. These systems will enhance the survivability and lethality of Marine formations by complicating adversary targeting, enabling kill webs, and imposing unfavorable cost-exchange ratios on potential aggressors. Replicator is also providing access to a family of loitering and autonomous strike systems across multiple domains and is informing our Organic Precision Fires portfolio. Furthermore, the Marine Corps has partnered with the Defense Innovation Unit to expand our options for delivering massed, precision strike effects while maintaining affordability and operational flexibility—key attributes for distributed maritime operations.

- **Combat Collaborative Aircraft (CCA):** We are experimenting with unmanned aircraft like the XQ-58 Valkyrie working alongside crewed platforms such as the F-35. Recent tests validated their ability to conduct electronic warfare, execute autonomous tasks, and support Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses (SEAD) missions—all of which improve the survivability and effectiveness of manned Marine aviation in high-threat environments.

These investments ensure that Marines can operate effectively in contested spaces, while reducing risk to personnel and increasing the speed and accuracy of decision making.

Contested Logistics - Sustaining Marines in contested environments is just as critical as sensing the enemy or maintaining command and control. The Marine Corps is shifting from traditional supply chains to a more agile, resilient sustainment network—one designed to maneuver under threat, reinforce dispersed forces, and sustain operations across the vast distances of the Indo-Pacific. This includes investments in mobility and sustainment platforms, prepositioned equipment and supplies, and strategic sealift capacity.

Key elements of this effort include:

- **Global Positioning Network (GPN):** We are expanding prepositioned stocks and equipment in key locations across the Indo-Pacific to reduce dependency on long, vulnerable supply lines and ensure Marines have the resources they need where and when it matters most.
- **Emerging Distribution Technologies:** We are advancing new ways to maneuver and sustain forces in contested areas, including:

- 371 • **Ultra-Light Tactical Vehicles (ULTVs):** 504 vehicles have been delivered to infantry
372 battalions and MARSOC.
- 373 • **Tactical Resupply Unmanned Aircraft Systems (TRUAS):** 63 systems have been
374 fielded across the Fleet Marine Force.
- 375 • **Autonomous Low-Profile Vessels:** Under development with the Navy, Army, and
376 partners to enhance littoral sustainment.
- 377 • **Expeditionary Manufacturing:** Portable fabrication labs (XFAB and TACFAB) are
378 being fielded to logistics and maintenance units, enabling in-theater repair and
379 production.
- 380 • **Expeditionary Medical Support:** We are modernizing medical capabilities to meet
381 distributed operations requirements, including smaller, mobile surgical teams, patient
382 holding, and long-range casualty evacuation.
- 383 • **Restoring the Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF):** Over the past decade, the
384 Navy's MPF fleet has been reduced from 16 ships to 7 in full operating status, with 2
385 additional ships in reduced status. This has created a significant shortfall—our
386 requirement is 2.1 million square feet of lift; today, we have only 1.3 million. This gap
387 limits our ability to rapidly deploy and sustain forces in a crisis, removes redundancy, and
388 increases risk to mission. We are working closely with the Navy to recapitalize this
389 essential capability.

390
391 These efforts ensure Marines can maneuver, sustain, and fight in contested
392 environments—without relying on fragile, unpredictable supply lines. To be clear, supporting
393 contested logistics at scale is only achievable with the LSM—the LSM is our bid for success.

394 **Additional Capabilities:**

395 Beyond these critical capability areas, the Marine Corps is committed to sustaining other
396 key priorities outlined below, which underpin our warfighting excellence. Force Design and
397 modernization efforts are about more than technology – they are about ensuring every Marine
398 has the tools, training, and support needed to thrive in the future fight. By maintaining this focus,
399 the Marine Corps will remain the Nation's most ready, forward-deployed force.
400
401

402 Long Range Precision Fires (LRPF) - The Marine Corps continues to invest in long-range
 403 precision fires to complement our advanced sensing and reconnaissance capabilities. These
 404 systems are essential to enabling the Stand-in-Force to hold adversary naval and land forces at
 405 risk and, when necessary, strike decisively—all while maintaining a small, agile, and survivable
 406 footprint. Our LRPF portfolio includes several key programs:

- 407 • **Navy/Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS):** A ground based
 408 anti-ship missile system consisting of a Remotely Operated Ground Unit for
 409 Expeditionary Fires (ROGUE-Fires) carrier equipped with two Naval Strike Missiles
 410 (NSM). NMESIS provides a highly mobile, expeditionary capability to target enemy
 411 surface vessels at extended ranges.
- 412 • **ROGUE-Fires:** A remotely operated ground vehicle based on the Joint Light Tactical
 413 Vehicle (JLTV) chassis, designed to provide mobility for precision fires systems. In
 414 addition to the NMESIS, we are currently integrating the Multiple Launch Rocket System
 415 (MLRS) Family of Munitions (MFOM) onto the ROGUE-Fires to expand the munitions
 416 that can be employed from that platform and provide additional range and flexibility to
 417 the Service.

418
 419 Together, these capabilities provide the Marine Corps with the ability to complicate an
 420 adversary's decision-making, disrupt their freedom of maneuver, and impose real costs in the
 421 maritime domain—all from highly mobile, dispersed, and hard-to-target platforms.

422
 423 Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems (C-UAS) - The proliferation of Unmanned Aircraft
 424 Systems poses a growing threat to U.S. forces across all domains of warfare. To counter these
 425 challenges, the Marine Corps is fielding a layered defense system with four key programs:
 426 Marine Air Defense Integrated System (MADIS), Light-MADIS (L-MADIS), Medium Range
 427 Intercept Capability (MRIC), and dismounted C-UAS systems.

- 428 • **MADIS:** Mounted on JLTVs, neutralizes threats from manned aircraft to Group 3-5 UAS
 429 and disrupts Group 1-3 UAS using electromagnetic warfare.
- 430 • **L-MADIS:** A lighter solution for ULTVs, offers similar capabilities and supports agile,
 431 distributed operations.
- 432 • **MRIC:** Provides high-end defense, defeating cruise missiles and large UAS. A U.S.-

based production facility will ensure a steady supply of interceptors.

- **Dismounted C-UAS:** Dismounted C-UAS systems provide individual Marines with low-size, low-weight, and low-power solutions to counter Group 1-2 UAS. Prototypes are in use, and accelerated fielding is underway.

To address urgent threats, the Marine Corps is deploying commercial solutions while refining long-term Programs of Record. Enhanced training and tactics ensure the effective use of organic weapons and sensors to complement these systems. The Marine Corps remains committed to staying ahead of the evolving UAS threat through rapid fielding and continued innovation.

Marine Littoral Regiments (MLR)

The foundation of our Force Design progress is our Marine Littoral Regiments (MLR), specialized and purpose-built units designed for dispersed, task-organized operations that integrate advanced command, control, communications, computers, combat systems, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C5ISR) capabilities. These regiments enhance the ability to rapidly find, fix, track, target, engage, and assess (F2T2EA) threats in support of maritime commanders, the Joint Force, and allied partners.

The 3rd MLR, based at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, has achieved Initial Operational Capability (IOC) with the activation of its subordinate units: the 3rd Littoral Combat Team, 3rd Littoral Anti-Air Battalion and 3rd Littoral Logistics Battalion. In 2024, the 3rd MLR participated in exercises BALIKATAN, ARCHIPELAGIC COASTAL DEFENSE, and Marine Aviation Support Activity in the Philippines, validating its capacity to operate in dispersed maritime environments alongside allies. Similarly, the 12th MLR, stationed in Okinawa, Japan, has activated its Littoral Logistics Battalion and plans to establish its Littoral Anti-Air Battalion and Littoral Combat Team by the end of FY25. The 12th MLR has engaged in joint and bilateral exercises, including RESOLUTE DRAGON and KEEN SWORD, in strategically vital locations such as the Sakishima Islands, bolstering deterrence and readiness in the Indo-Pacific region.

Barracks Modernization & Quality of Life

The quality of life of our Marines and their families is inseparable from the readiness and

464 resilience of our force. Marines who are well-supported in their personal lives are better prepared
 465 to meet the demands of the mission. The Marine Corps recognizes that our most valuable
 466 resource is our people, and we are committed to ensuring they have access to safe housing,
 467 reliable childcare, high-quality healthcare, and the resources necessary to thrive.

468 In recent years, we have made substantial progress in improving the quality of life for
 469 Marines and their families. From targeted investments in unaccompanied housing through the
 470 Barracks 2030 initiative to expanded childcare options and enhanced fitness and dining facilities,
 471 we are taking deliberate steps to support the physical, mental, and social well-being of our
 472 Marines. These efforts will remain a top priority as we continue to invest in the programs and
 473 infrastructure that enable our force to remain ready and lethal.

474

475 **Installations:**

476 Barracks 2030 - In December 2024, I directed a generational investment in Marine Corps
 477 barracks infrastructure, known as Barracks 2030. This initiative is a critical step toward restoring
 478 faith with our Marines and Sailors. It aligns with the Department of Defense's Quality of Service
 479 effort and directly responds to enduring challenges in recruiting, retention, and readiness. Our
 480 objective is clear: to provide safe, healthy, and professionally managed living quarters that allow
 481 Marines to rest and recover after demanding training or operational deployments.

482 Marine feedback—captured through exit surveys and direct engagement—consistently
 483 points to poor barracks conditions as a major factor impacting morale, welfare, and retention.
 484 The scale of the problem demands sustained, resourced action.

485

486 Facilities Sustainment, Restoration and Modernization (FSRM) - The Marine Corps continues to
 487 face significant facility challenges within the constraints of available resources. Rising material
 488 costs, inflation, and workforce shortages in the construction sector all impact our ability to
 489 deliver projects on time and within budget.

490

491 **Quality of Life:**

492 Marine Corps Total Fitness - The Marine Corps Total Fitness (MCTF) program is a
 493 comprehensive framework designed to enhance the readiness, resilience, and overall well-being
 494 of Marines, their families, and the broader Marine Corps community. By focusing on four key

pillars—physical, mental, spiritual, and social fitness—MCTF aims to strengthen individual performance, sustain long-term force effectiveness, and foster a culture of holistic well-being. More than just a fitness initiative, MCTF integrates training, support systems, and leadership engagement to ensure Marines are equipped to thrive in both operational and personal environments. Through this approach, the Marine Corps seeks to cultivate a force that is not only physically prepared for the demands of service but also mentally resilient, spiritually grounded, and socially connected, ensuring sustained readiness and mission success.

Military Compensation - Competitive compensation remains essential to sustaining the all-volunteer force and directly impacts both recruiting and retention. Today, Marine Corps pay and benefits—including housing, healthcare, bonuses, and tax advantages—remain highly competitive. According to the 14th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, officer pay ranks in the top 24 percent compared to civilian counterparts, while enlisted pay ranks in the top 17 percent. We appreciate Congress' support in approving a 4.5 percent basic pay increase for all Marines, and an additional 10 percent for our most junior Marines. Beyond basic pay, we employ targeted incentives to retain and properly assign Marines based on experience and skill. Selective Retention Bonuses help shape the force by focusing on critical military occupational specialties and encouraging lateral moves to meet emerging requirements. We continue to pair monetary incentives with non-monetary options tailored to individual Marines, ensuring we retain the talent needed to maintain readiness and warfighting excellence.

Spouse Employment - The employment of Marine spouses directly impacts the financial stability, readiness, and retention of our Marines. We remain committed to supporting career opportunities for military spouses through programs like the Family Member Employment Assistance Program, which offers career coaching, job search support, and referrals for education and employment services. To further assist, we have implemented a Relocation Tool within our personnel system, enabling spouses employed by Marine Corps Community Services to identify transfer opportunities in advance of their next move. Additionally, we reimburse eligible spouses up to \$1,000 for costs associated with professional licensure or business relocation when moving to a new state—an initiative that has already supported over 500 Marine families. We appreciate Congress' recent expansion of this program and continued efforts to help our families thrive.

526
 527 Child Care - Sixteen Marine Corps installations operate Child Development Centers (CDCs), but
 528 five locations—MCB Quantico, MCB Lejeune/MCAS New River, MCAS Beaufort/MCRD
 529 Parris Island, MCB Pendleton, and MCB Hawaii—account for 75 percent of the Marine Corps’
 530 childcare waitlist. Wait times vary based on child age, family type, and care start date, with
 531 Priority 1 personnel (Child Development Program Direct Care Staff, single/dual active duty,
 532 single/dual Guard or Reserve member on Active Duty or Inactive Duty Training status, and
 533 Service members with full-time working spouses) receiving the highest priority.

534 To address these shortages, the Marine Corps is investing in childcare-related MILCON
 535 projects. A \$44.1M CDC at MCB Camp Pendleton (P-2401) is under construction to add 250
 536 childcare spaces, eliminating waitlists for Priority 1 personnel. At NSA Andersen AFB, Guam, a
 537 \$105.2M CDC (P-415) was awarded in May 2024 to support 276 children as part of the Marine
 538 Corps’ buildup in the region. Future projects include a \$79.1M CDC replacement at MCB
 539 Quantico (P-732) in FY27, a \$58M investment at MCB Camp Butler (P-309) for two new School
 540 Age Care (SAC) facilities, and an OSD-funded CDC at MCAS Miramar in FY27,
 541 complementing a \$3.2M renovation. Additionally, a \$37.7M CDC (P-250) completed in
 542 November 2023 added 412 new childcare spaces, bringing Miramar’s total capacity to 929
 543 children once the FY27 project is complete. The Marine Corps also provides Military Child Care
 544 in Your Neighborhood (MCCYN) fee assistance for families without access to on-base childcare
 545 to alleviate waitlists.

546 These efforts ensure greater access to quality and affordable childcare, directly
 547 supporting Marine families and enhancing overall force readiness.
 548

549 **Recruit, Make, and Retain Marines**

550 Maintaining an elite force begins with recruiting young men and women of the highest
 551 character, mental aptitude, and physical fitness and retaining the talented Marines who define our
 552 warfighting ethos. Recruiting today is more challenging than it has been in decades, with historic
 553 lows in the number of Americans eligible to serve and a declining propensity to join. Despite
 554 these headwinds, I am proud to report that the Marine Corps has exceeded recruiting and
 555 retention goals without lowering our high standards. I am equally proud of the work our Marines
 556 are doing in recruiting. We select the very best for this demanding mission and reward them for

557 their dedication and success. Their efforts ensure we continue to recruit individuals who meet
558 and exceed the standards required to earn the title of Marine.

559 Recruiting, making, and retaining the right individuals is essential to our institutional
560 success and directly impacts our readiness. To this end, the Marine Corps has undertaken several
561 initiatives to bolster recruiting efforts, improve quality of service, and retain our most talented
562 Marines. These efforts are guided by a data-driven approach rooted in our enduring ethos as a
563 warfighting organization and our responsibility to care for Marines and their families. Bottom
564 Line: We must recruit high-quality people, transform them into Marines, and keep them in our
565 ranks.

566
567 **Recruiting:**

568 Despite recruiting challenges, we are continuing to meet our recruiting goals. Your
569 Marine Corps made its recruiting mission in FY24 and is currently on track to meet it again in
570 FY25. Service as a Marine continues to attract those who meet our standards and aspire to prove
571 themselves worthy of earning the title. While FY25 is a slightly higher mission, we will
572 approach it with the same planning factors as FY24 to ensure we recruit to our Military
573 Occupational Specialty (MOS) needs. The Marine Corps exceeds the minimum Department of
574 Defense standards for enlistment to send the best Marine possible to the Fleet, and I intend to
575 keep it that way—the Marine Corps will not lower standards.

576 Despite our success, we must remain mindful of the long-game—recruiting will continue
577 to be difficult into the future, requiring hard choices and continued investment in personnel and
578 advertising to ensure future success. While we have achieved the first “Start Pool” increase since
579 FY22—we are still in a nascent recovery and cannot declare victory. Our 28 percent FY25 Start
580 Pool is relative to the 20-year historical average Start Pool of approximately 52 percent. Start
581 Pool continues to be the most significant predictor of mission success.

582
583 **Retention:**

584 Retention is critical to the Marine Corps' ability to maintain a highly trained, experienced,
585 and ready force. Retaining skilled Marines reduces the need for constant recruitment and
586 training, ensuring a more capable and combat-ready force. High retention rates preserve
587 institutional knowledge, enhance unit cohesion, and improve overall effectiveness. Additionally,

investing in retention strengthens leadership development as seasoned Marines mentor and train the next generation. Retention also optimizes personnel investment, reducing recruiting and initial training costs. By fostering a culture that values professional growth, career progression, and quality of life, the Marine Corps retains the best talent to meet operational demands and sustain warfighting excellence.

Commandant's Retention Program (CRP), Active and Reserve - The FY25 CRP cohort yielded over 1,400 reenlistments, accounting for nearly 20 percent of the overall First Term Alignment Plan (FTAP) mission for FY25. We secured over 7,900 FTAP reenlistments for the Active Component, achieving 114 percent of our goal. For the inaugural year of the Reserve Component CRP, we secured 248 reenlistments and drilling obligations from the first-year cohort, reaching 103 percent of our goal. The CRP remains critical in incentivizing the reenlistment of our high-performing Marines.

Multiple-Year Reenlistment Cohorts - Beginning with the FY25 retention campaign, our expanded FTAP model allows the Active Component to reenlist Marines from the FY24-FY27 retention cohorts simultaneously. The expanded FTAP retention model has yielded a greater overall retention rate and Primary MOS (PMOS) skillset match. We will continue looking at ways beyond FY25 to expand reenlistment windows, providing additional agency and decision space for Marines to achieve their career goals.

Lateral Moves - In FY24, incentivization efforts and a streamlined lateral move process led to 1,014 enlisted Marines from the FY24 FTAP and STAP retention cohorts executing a lateral move with reenlistment. This is a roughly 20 percent increase in lateral moves compared to FY23. To exploit this success and strengthen MOS health across the force, we will continue to offer various monetary and non-monetary incentives, as well as earlier submission periods and active identification of qualified Marines for lateral move opportunities.

Dual-Military Assignments - As of November 2024, over 11,000 active-duty and active reserve Marines are married to other service members. Recognizing the importance of keeping families together while ensuring Service requirements are met, we are optimizing the assignment process

619 for dual-military Marines. A key enabler in this improved process is our Dual-Military
620 Coordinator, responsible for maintaining transparent working relationships with service monitors
621 (active and active reserve) and adjacent service detailers, synchronizing geolocation selection
622 and timeline execution, and facilitating waivers.

623

624 Manpower Information Technology Systems Modernization (MITSM) – We have identified the
625 need to modernize our manpower information technologies and have therefore developed the
626 Manpower Information Technology Systems Modernization (MITSM) strategy, which seeks to
627 employ adaptive acquisition pathways to generate rapid prototyping and state-of-the-art
628 commercial technology. As of September 2024, the MITSM strategy has been the driving force
629 behind awarding six major contracts across Headquarters Marine Corps. Efforts underway
630 include an IT/Data Modernization Strategy, a Talent Marketplace—released this year as the
631 Talent Management Engagement Platform (TMEP)—TFRS 2.0, and Models Modernization.
632 TMEP is an internally developed prototype intended to increase command input and provide
633 monitors and their assignable Marines with more accessible and transparent information. Since
634 May 2024, TMEP has been tested by approximately 12,000 enlisted Marines across 10 MOSs
635 and released to Active Component Marines in the ranks of second lieutenant through colonel,
636 consisting of roughly 16,000 Marines. Marines are already seeing some of the initial benefits of
637 these efforts, including TMEP and TFRS 2.0, both of which Marines helped test and refine
638 during the development process. Through MITSM, we will remain aggressive in optimizing
639 analytics to improve institutional decision-making related to personnel-related functions.

640

641 Performance Evaluation Reform—Aligned with the recent Government Accountability Office
642 study on “Military Officer Performance,” released November 2024, DC, M&RA is evaluating
643 and assessing the need for performance evaluation reform to better align Marines’ innate
644 capabilities with the needs of the Fleet Marine Forces. Applying dramatic advancements in
645 information technology over the past several decades will help us better mentor, evaluate, and
646 report on our Marines to support their career development and progression.

647 Additionally, we are analyzing our Assignment Incentive Pay (AIP) program and
648 exploring other ways to incentivize service in geographically challenging locations. Finally, we
649 are digesting information gleaned from a recent total force incentives Operational Planning Team

to identify and optimize current and potential monetary and non-monetary incentives to improve Fleet Marine Forces readiness.

Enduring Efforts

Marine Forces Reserve:

The Marine Corps Reserve remains a cornerstone of the Total Force, delivering critical combat-ready forces and supporting the Active Component (AC) in global operations, joint training, and community engagement. In FY24, Marine Forces Reserve (MARFORRES) expanded its contributions to the Global Force Management Allocation Plan (GFMAP), increased its participation in Service-Level and Joint Training Exercises, and invested in facilities and equipment to enhance readiness.

Global Force Management - In FY24, the Marine Corps activated nearly 600 Reserve Marines to support Joint Force Commanders across Southwest Asia, South America, Africa, Europe, and the Pacific. This marked a significant increase in operational tempo compared to FY23. In FY25, activations are expected to double, with nearly 1,500 Reserve Marines mobilizing to meet global commitments. These activations include large combat formations such as infantry battalions, artillery batteries, and aviation squadrons, as well as unique enabler capabilities like civil affairs, foreign advisors, and other specialized skill sets essential to modern operations.

Reserve Modernization – As the service continues to rely on its reserve component to fulfill its role as an operational force provider, I have directed the Marine Corps Reserve to modernize and grow to maximize its contribution to the Total Force in support of global competition, crisis response, and conflict. Force Design modernization plans for the active and the reserves balance the need to maximize “Total Force” lethality and capacity during a period of increased risk while optimizing resource allocation. Modernization plans include synchronizing reserve and active efforts to ensure there are no decrements to total force offerings as units undergo modernization. In coordination with Marine Corps Recruiting Command, Marine Forces Reserve is pursuing a long-term comprehensive plan for reserve component infantry unit modernization and distribution across the country in a manner that maximizes recruiting potential, personnel readiness, facility suitability, and access to training.

681

682 Community Engagement and Facilities Investments - MARFORRES maintains a vital presence
 683 in communities nationwide through initiatives like Toys for Tots and Military Funeral Honors
 684 (MFH). In FY24, MARFORRES distributed over 25.5 million toys to more than 10.3 million
 685 children and conducted over 20,400 MFHs—demonstrating the Marine Corps' enduring
 686 commitment to "Once a Marine, always a Marine." Additionally, facility investments totaling
 687 over \$45 million in FY24 improved training environments, enhanced unit morale, and supported
 688 retention efforts.

689

690 Personnel, Training, and Equipment Challenges - Despite these achievements, MARFORRES
 691 faces readiness challenges in personnel, training, and equipment. With a shortage of 3,764
 692 Marines—most notably in the reserve infantry community—only 41 percent of SMCR units
 693 meet the 85 percent personnel readiness threshold. To address this, MARFORRES is
 694 implementing retention incentives, MOS retraining programs, and adjustments to unit locations
 695 to align with shifting population centers. Training remains constrained by the authorized 48
 696 Inactive Duty Training periods and 15 annual training days, limiting opportunities to keep pace
 697 with evolving tactics and technology. To mitigate this, units maximize volunteer training and
 698 extend active-duty support, particularly for pre-activation units.

699

Equipment disparities also hinder integration with Active Component counterparts.
 700 MARFORRES relies on National Guard and Reserve Equipment Allocation (NGREA) funding
 701 to close this gap but has received less than 1.5 percent of total NGREa allocations since 2016.
 702 Advocacy efforts continue to secure a larger share of these funds to enhance readiness. Despite
 703 these challenges, MARFORRES remains an indispensable component of the Total Force,
 704 strengthening the Marine Corps through strategic investments, innovative training, and
 705 community engagement.

706

707 **Training and Education Command (TECOM) Initiatives:**

708 The Marine Corps is transforming training and education to ensure Marines are prepared
 709 for the complexities of modern warfare. Through a combination of Professional Military
 710 Education (PME) modernization, integration of lessons learned from recent conflicts, and

cutting-edge training initiatives, the Marine Corps is strengthening its ability to develop adaptable, decisive warfighters. Lessons from Ukraine and Gaza have reinforced the need for integrated fires, dispersed operations, and resilience in contested environments, shaping updates to both training exercises and curriculum development. At the same time, Project Triumph, Project Trident, and Project Tripoli are revolutionizing how the Marine Corps trains, educates, and prepares forces for future conflicts.

Project Tripoli - Project Tripoli is the Marine Corps' initiative to establish a persistent, globally accessible, all-domain, and all-echelon live, virtual, and constructive training environment (LVC-TE). The project is in the execution phase with the deployment of the Marine Training Enterprise Network (MTEN), fully integrated with the Navy Continuous Training Environment (NCTE) and Joint Training and Experimentation Network (JTEN). The Joint Live Virtual Constructive (JLVC) Federation, featuring 16 advanced simulations, enhances multi-echelon Command Post Exercises (CPX) and other constructive training capabilities. Key developments include the deployment of 250 Marine Common Virtual Platforms (MCVP), providing tools for fires, Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TC3), maintenance, ISR emulation, and decision-making. The Marine Corps plans to complete procurement of the Marine Corps Tactical Instrumentation System (MCTIS) in 2025, alongside a Contracted Logistics Support (CLS) contract to sustain comprehensive training events and maintenance at fielded locations. Continued testing will further integrate MCTIS into the LVC-TE, while prototyping efforts for MCTIS-Vehicle and Weapon Surrogate programs and Small UAS remain ongoing to enhance training realism.

Project Trident - Project Trident enhances combat readiness by integrating all-domain fires and effects into individual and unit-level training. A key milestone is the designation of Commander, Pacific Fleet, as the Maritime Fires Executive Agent (MFEA), with Commander, Marine Forces Pacific, serving as Deputy MFEA, which strengthens Naval Service integration. Service-Level Training Exercise (SLTE) enhancements now incorporate non-kinetic effects and maritime operations, featuring real-time electronic warfare, cybersecurity, and signals intelligence adversary forces to refine multi-domain warfare execution. Looking ahead, Project Trident will expand formal instruction in all-domain fires through new courses such as the Littoral Targeting and Fires Course, Naval Expeditionary Operations Planners Course (NEOPC), and Advanced

742 Fires and Effects Course (AFEC). Additional training in Maritime ISR, expeditionary
 743 communications, and MAGTF fires will ensure seamless Navy-Marine Corps integration,
 744 preparing Marines to execute and sustain complex, all-domain operations in support of naval and
 745 joint forces.

746

747 Project Triumph - Project Triumph modernizes training and education by shifting to an
 748 outcomes-based, learner-centric model that enhances warfighter proficiency and instructor
 749 effectiveness. Emphasizing critical thinking, adaptability, and decision-making under stress, this
 750 approach ensures that Marines are prepared for the challenges of modern warfare. A key
 751 initiative, the Instructor Development and Recognition Program (IDRP), standardizes instructor
 752 training across all levels, improving professional development, evaluation, and retention. Early
 753 results show Infantry Marine Course (IMC) graduates demonstrating greater combat proficiency
 754 than those trained under previous methods. Looking ahead, Project Triumph will expand IDRP,
 755 integrate AI-driven adaptive learning, simulations, and digital tools, and enhance instructor
 756 incentives and professional development. Pilot programs at the Basic School (TBS) and School
 757 of Infantry (SOI) are refining these methods for force-wide implementation, ensuring Marines
 758 are highly capable, adaptable, and ready for future conflict.

759

760 Professional Military Education - The Marine Corps is modernizing Professional Military
 761 Education (PME) to develop adaptive, strategic leaders capable of operating in multi-domain
 762 environments. Enlisted PME is being restructured to align with warfighting requirements,
 763 incorporating maneuver warfare, leadership under stress, and joint operations, with the new Staff
 764 Non-Commissioned Officer (SNCO) Leadership Course enhancing leadership development. The
 765 College of Distance Education and Training (CDET) is expanding AI-driven adaptive learning to
 766 personalize coursework. Marine Corps University (MCU) has expanded its curriculum to include
 767 advanced wargaming, threat-based scenario planning, and an increased focus on naval
 768 integration, ensuring alignment with the Joint Warfighting Concept and service concepts. The
 769 introduction of the Joint All Domain Officer (JADO) Program at Command and Staff College is
 770 to bridge current education gaps that lack classified, real-world capability and can address
 771 modern threats with agile, cross-domain education. The Commandant's Research Fellows
 772 Program strengthens ties with top civilian institutions and expanding international PME

773 partnerships foster interoperability with allies. These initiatives ensure PME remains rigorous,
 774 relevant, and fully aligned with modern warfare, preparing Marines to excel in future conflicts.

775

776 **Personnel Readiness:**

777 Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program (SAPR) - The Marine Corps remains
 778 committed to fostering a culture of safety and respect, ensuring that all Marines feel secure in
 779 their units and that sexual assault is not tolerated. We take a data-driven approach to preventing
 780 sexual assault within our ranks while providing comprehensive response services to those
 781 affected by this horrible crime. In FY24, the Marine Corps received 1,239 reports of sexual
 782 assault—similar to recent years. Clearly, this is not where we want to be. The only acceptable
 783 number of sexual assaults is zero. Through data-informed training and leadership engagement,
 784 the Marine Corps remains dedicated to preventing sexual assault. We hold leadership
 785 accountable for further reductions in the occurrence of these crimes and for ensuring that every
 786 Marine can engage assistance and recovery services as desired.

787

788 Suicide Prevention – According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the
 789 U.S. is experiencing its highest suicide rate since 1941, with increases in both 2022 and 2023.
 790 The Marine Corps, like the rest of the nation, continues to confront this challenge. Preliminary
 791 Calendar Year (CY) 24 data shows a slight decrease from the CY23; however – official rates will
 792 not be released until the official Annual Report on Suicide in the Military is published later in
 793 2025. The Marine Corps continues to track suicide deaths daily to monitor the health of their
 794 Marines.

795 The Marine Corps is committed to a public health approach to primary prevention,
 796 leveraging the Command Individual Risk and Resiliency Assessment System (CIRRAS) to
 797 facilitate communication across all levels of command, helping identify risk factors early. The
 798 Force Preservation Council develops mitigation strategies and connects at-risk Marines with
 799 resources before issues escalate. Additionally, the Marine Intercept Program (MIP) provides
 800 voluntary support for Marines experiencing suicidal ideations or who have attempted suicide.
 801 The program offers periodic outreach, care coordination, ongoing risk assessment, coping skill
 802 development through personalized safety plans, and communication with the individual's
 803 command. Through these efforts, the Marine Corps remains focused on early intervention,

804 support, and prevention to safeguard the well-being of its Marines.

805

806 Substance Assessment and Counseling Program (SACP) – Formerly the Substance Abuse
807 Program (SAP), SACP provides training, education, and non-medical counseling to reduce
808 substance misuse. SACP includes three areas: The drug demand reduction program (DDRP),
809 alcohol misuse prevention, and non-medical counseling services. The Drug Demand Reduction
810 Program (DDRP) utilizes targeted urinalysis testing to deter illicit drug use and prescription drug
811 misuse. In FY24, the Marine Corps recorded 2,138 unique positive results for wrongful drug use,
812 representing a measurable decrease from the 2,370 cases reported in FY23. This data reflects the
813 effectiveness of current deterrence and accountability measures across the force.

814

815 **Materiel Readiness:**

816 Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) - The ACV remains an essential element of our Corps'
817 modernization. By May 2025, it is anticipated that 278 of the planned 632 ACVs will be fielded
818 across the force. This includes three ACV companies at I MEF, one ACV company at II MEF,
819 and one ACV platoon at III MEF, as well as training assets at the Assault Amphibian School.
820 Additionally, test articles will be retained by the Program Manager Advanced Amphibious
821 Assault (PM AAA) and the Amphibious Vehicle Test Branch (AVTB). Of these, 263 will be
822 personnel variants (ACV-P), while the remaining 15 will be command variants (ACV-C). The
823 ACV recently made its inaugural deployment with the 15th MEU, demonstrating its role in
824 strengthening the Fleet Marine Force while enhancing capabilities for the Joint Force. This
825 program remains on schedule and on budget, playing a critical role in ship-to-shore movement
826 capability. We continue to collaborate with industry and the supply base to improve readiness
827 and sustainment.

828

829 F-35 - By May 2025, the Marine Corps will have 218 F-35s in the fleet, including 170 F-35Bs
830 and 48 F-35Cs. To align with evolving operational requirements, we have updated our F-35
831 procurement profile to expand the number of F-35C squadrons. As part of the TACAIR
832 Transition Plan, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232 (VMFA-232) and VMFA-323 will
833 transition to F-35C squadrons. The program of record remains at 420 total aircraft, comprising
834 310 F-35Bs and 110 F-35Cs, supporting 12 F-35B squadrons and 6 F-35C squadrons. While

835 these figures reflect the current plan, the mix of F-35B and F-35C aircraft will remain adaptable
 836 to accommodate future adjustments. Additionally, I want to express my appreciation for
 837 Congress's continued support of AN/APG-85 radar development and production. Delivering a
 838 fully functional radar in sufficient quantities as quickly as possible is critical to ensuring the F-35
 839 remains a dominant force in the battlespace.

840

841 MV-22 - In service since 2007, the MV-22 has completed 109 operational deployments and
 842 accumulated over 630,000 flight hours, maintaining a strong safety record with a Class A mishap
 843 rate of 3.04 per 100,000 flight hours—consistent with other military aircraft performing similar
 844 roles. However, the grounding of the MV-22 from February to August 2024 prevented new
 845 students from entering training and disrupted essential flight operations, which are crucial for
 846 maintaining proficiency and readiness. Following extensive engineering analysis, NAVAIR has
 847 certified the V-22 as safe to fly with caveats, and all pilots and crew have undergone retraining,
 848 including comprehensive maintenance checks, emergency procedures, and flight operations.

849

850 CH-53K - The Marine Corps remains committed to fielding and integrating the CH-53K King
 851 Stallion to meet its heavy-lift requirements, fully replacing the CH-53E Super Stallion by FY32.
 852 Since the establishment of HMM-461—the first operational CH-53K squadron in FY22—the
 853 platform has demonstrated unmatched heavy-lift assault support capability, interoperability,
 854 survivability, reliability, and maintainability in distributed maritime and expeditionary
 855 environments. The first deployment of the CH-53K is anticipated in FY26. Due to fiscal
 856 reduction, the Marine Corps is currently reviewing plans to procure a total of 200 CH-53Ks, but
 857 the distribution plan across the fleet currently remains unchanged: 6 active squadrons x 16 CH-
 858 53K; 1 reserve squadron x 16 CH-53K; 1 fleet replacement squadron x 17 CH-53K; 1
 859 operational test detachment x 2 CH-53K; and 1 developmental test detachment x 2 CH-53K.

860

861 **Marine Special Operations Forces (MARSOC):**

862 MARSOC continues to modernize in alignment with the Interim National Defense
 863 Strategic Guidance and Combatant Command priorities, ensuring readiness for complex, multi-
 864 domain operations. Integrated with Naval forces, allies, and interagency partners, MARSOC
 865 remains agile, resilient, and ready to transition rapidly to conflict. Innovations like the RAIDER

866 Spectrum Analysis tool—developed with the Marine Corps Software Factory—enhance force
867 protection and planning through advanced communications analysis. Task Force AYUNGIN has
868 bolstered regional security in the South China Sea by uniting key Special Operations Force
869 elements to address rising tensions. MARSOC’s emphasis on sensor tech, intelligence fusion,
870 and joint fires keeps it ahead of emerging threats and reinforces its role as a Stand-in-Force
871 accelerator across the Special Operations Community.

872

873

Conclusion

874 The Marine Corps will be ready to respond to any crisis or contingency in the future, just
875 as we have in the past. I remain committed to ensuring the Marine Corps remains our Nation’s
876 force-in-readiness. We will never lower our standards or sacrifice the reputation associated with
877 our sacred title, “Marine”—and will remain innovative and agile in our approach to warfighting.
878 After five budget cycles under the “divest-to-invest” approach, we have identified efficiencies,
879 eliminated outdated capabilities, and ensured every dollar spent directly supports our mission to
880 build a more lethal, capable force. Our commitment to transparency and accountability is evident
881 in achieving a second consecutive unmodified—or “clean”—financial audit, with Ernst &
882 Young’s ranking the Marine Corps as comparable to a “top 120” large company in the U.S. in
883 financial management.

884 With your help, we will ensure your Marines are provided with world-class training,
885 improved quality of life, and the capabilities required to win our Nation’s battles against any
886 adversary. Every dollar invested will deliver the greatest return in lethality, readiness, and the
887 well-being of our Marines and their families. I thank the Committee for your continued advocacy
888 and support for your Marines. Semper Fidelis.

DELAYS IN SUBMARINE PROGRAMS

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you, General.

I will first recognize myself for 5 minutes before we get into questions for both sides.

Obviously, Mr. Secretary, the committee is continually concerned about the reported 18- to 24-month delay in the Columbia-class submarine program.

As you know, the retirement timeline for the Ohio-class boats is apparently, you know, unless I am corrected on this, non-negotiable due to the aging hulls, which means any further delay in Columbia directly threatens our ability to meet STRATCOM's minimum deterrence requirement. As you well know, the significant part of our nuclear deterrent is carried on the Columbia—well, will be carried on the Columbia program.

Secretary Phelan—and maybe, Admiral Kilby, you may want to come into this too—you can walk us through the primary drivers behind the additional 18- to 24-month delay of the Columbia-class submarine program.

And beyond the issues we have already seen, whether supply-chain disruptions, workforce shortages, or integration challenges, what risks remain most concerning to you as we look ahead?

Secretary PHELAN. Thank you for the question. I know this is an important issue to you and a top priority for myself and Admiral Kilby as well.

I think it is a combination of a first-of-class ship, still an inexperienced workforce. It is supply-chain issues. It is also a lack of modernization in some of the plants. And I think, honestly, it is just sitting and going and talking to the workers on ways of improving workflow.

And so these are things that—you know, I have met with the CEOs of General Dynamics and Huntington Ingalls to talk about this and go through it. It was very interesting in some of their assessments of what they did not perceive to be as problems, where, when I went and sat down with the workers, I got completely the opposite.

So let me just give you a couple of examples which might help you understand in ways we think we can shift the schedule left.

So, in Japan, I went to JMU. They get the productivity out of one 8-hour shift that we get out of three shifts. I believe that is for two reasons.

One, their average worker is 50 years old and he is a career. They spend time there, they have been in that shipyard a very long time.

Two, when I spoke to the welders in Japan, they spend zero time on paperwork. Our welders spend between 30 and 40 percent of their time filling out paperwork to match designs, et cetera. That is a problem. The training when they come from training and get actually on site is completely different.

So these are things that they need to work on. And I have spoken to General Dynamics about it. We are working on a couple of different other ideas as well. There were a couple things I saw at Bath Iron Works, to be honest, that were excellent. And there were

some things being implemented at Portsmouth that were really good that we need to start to integrate and do.

This is a very big concern. I do think we can get the calendar shifted left, but it is going to take a lot of hard work and a lot of effort. And it is my number-one priority right now, given the strategic importance of this.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for that.

Admiral, if you want to add anything to that?

Admiral KILBY. I think the Secretary covered it. I do have the same concerns he does.

I have the same observations about maturity of workforce and skilled labor. So, at our public yards and our private yards, there has been a diminished—a loss of that experience, so supervisors don't have the same experience they used to. That is an important thing for us to correct.

Additionally, we are looking at extending those hulls in our Ohio-class that can make sure we don't have a gap in strategic deterrence. The first one is USS Alaska, which we will extend through a PIRA in 2029, and there are four additional hulls.

So I think that is an insurance policy to make sure that we are still the most survivable leg of the nuclear triad, sir.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you for that.

It is interesting to note what is going on in Japan and South Korea, where they have a significant amount of the world's shipbuilding capability. You know, we have dropped now to, what, 3 percent of shipbuilding worldwide. The Chinese are, what, 50 percent of ship construction? The Japanese and the Koreans are about 35, 40 percent combined, and then the rest of the world.

And so it is disappointing that we have gotten ourselves in this situation. So we have a lot of work ahead of us, as you mentioned, Mr. Secretary, to straighten this out.

Ms. McCollum, you wanted me to recognize——

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Cuellar.

Mr. CALVERT [continuing]. Mr. Cuellar.

Mr. Cuellar, you are recognized.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CUELLAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking. Thank you. We have to go to the same place, talk to the Coast Guard.

But just, first of all, Mr. Secretary, Admiral, and—I think we have got a fellow Texan—General, thank you for the service that you have provided.

A couple things.

One, the military does bring some skills, some assets that the Department of Homeland doesn't do. So we would like if you can follow up on that and what you all bring to it. It is not only the southern border but, of course, we have got the coast, as you know. Number one.

Number two, you know, the law already calls for operational and regulatory efficiency reviews. The law already calls for contracting and procurement standards. The law already calls for quarterly performance updates. The law already requires development and submissions of updated performance measures.

I would like to just focus on the contracting and procurement standard, as it has been brought up by both the chairman and the ranking member—is, why can we not do things on budget and on time?

I mean, if the Chinese can do it, the Japanese can do it, and other folks can do it—you know, we always come up with, “Well, we have got workforce development and all of that,” but why can—you know, there are already penalties there for—monetary penalties, suspension of work, and other things under the law. You know, we keep coming up with excuses, but you have got other countries that keep doing this.

On budget and on time are the two factors.

Finally, the last thing. And you can follow up on this later on. In my San Antonio area, as you know, there has been different suspension of contracts. There is one in particular that had to do with some data, a data contract that deals with servicemembers’ records, data for promotion boards and other things. Again, this contract was—you know, we think it was necessary, and it was performing, but then you all cut it.

I don’t want you to take up the time now, but have somebody follow up on that.

But I would like to go and, you know, if you can mention a little bit on border security, what you bring in that Homeland doesn’t have; but, more importantly, on budget and on time and why other countries can do it and we can’t.

Admiral KILBY. Why don’t we start with the border piece, and then we can go to another question.

So, from the Navy’s perspective, 30 intelligence specialists on the border helping with the southern border, 58 P-8 sorties for intelligence and surveillance, and now 3 ships: Minneapolis-Saint Paul is the littoral combat ship, as well as two destroyers. And they relieved two destroyers.

So the presence for counter-drug-flow, counter-immigration, there is a maritime component to that that the Navy is performing and has performed for a long time. You know, the first time I got underway on a ship, in 1987, we had a law enforcement detachment. And that is something the Coast Guard and the Navy are really good at doing together to extend the reach of the Coast Guard.

General SMITH. Sir, in terms of the Marines, our First Combat Engineer Battalion, based out of Camp Pendleton, California, is operating on the southern border.

They are doing engineer tasks. They are constructing concertina wire. They are building obstacles. They are doing what they do. So they are continuing to get the training that they would normally get at Camp Pendleton; they are just getting it on the southern border.

But that is our contribution, is our First Combat Engineer Battalion.

Mr. CUELLAR. On budget and on time?

Secretary PHELAN. Just real quick just on the border as well. I mean, I think the Navy, since its inception, has been a homeland defense organization. They work with the Coast Guard. They do ballistic missile defense. And keeping sea lanes and trade lanes

open has been part of their job since inception. So I think it is a very important aspect to what they do.

In terms of on time, on budget, I think it is a number of different things.

One, as I mentioned in my opening statement, the industrial base has been hollowed out. We have lost a lot of manufacturing and our ability to manufacture. We have had prior conflicts where we have spent a lot of money, and the bills for deferred infrastructure spend, whether that is piers, docks, are now coming due.

And it has been going on for a while. And so these are not new problems. I mean, I have looked back at testimony 20 years; I keep hearing the same things. I am trying to figure out why it hasn't been fixed, to be perfectly honest.

But I will tell you, I think it is a combination of bureaucracy—so, just to give you an example, in the Navy, in acquisitions alone, we have 56,000 people in our acquisitions department. Now, we did last year 217,000 contracts. That is 34 contracts per person. That is two contracts a month. Something is off. You know, I keep trying to understand, what are all these people doing?

And these are complicated contracts, but I will also be honest, when I look at our contracting, it is poor. We don't control our IP. We can't repair stuff. We don't have very good penalties built in for lack of performance.

These are all things we are going to really try to change. And I kind of called it in my confirmation hearing "shared risk." I think it is great for the private sector to make money, and they should, but they should be paid according to the risk that they take. And that is not going on right now, and we need to fix that.

So it is not an easy solution, but it has our focus, and we are going to get it fixed. It will take time. We will be very transparent with all of you and walk you through and tell you the good, the bad, and the ugly and try to get it sorted.

Mr. CUELLAR. Thank you.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.

Chairman Cole.

TACAMO MISSION

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I want to go back to something I mentioned in my opening statement, Secretary Phelan. Could you tell us whether or not we are looking at structuring the TACAMO mission and whether or not we are looking at offloading some of those functions that it currently provides to the Air Force?

Secretary PHELAN. Thank you for the question, Chairman. I am going to let Admiral Kilby answer that, but let me just give you my thoughts.

Look, the investments in both the E-6B and its replacement, the E-130, are critical to nuclear modernization. I am committed to improving that. It is a critical part.

And then I will let Admiral Kilby comment on your specific question.

Admiral KILBY. Yes, sir.

So, as Secretary Phelan said, the E-6, which you now know so much about, has served us well. We need to make sure that air-

craft gets through its service life and is replaced by its replacement.

There is another mission assigned to that aircraft now, the ABNCP mission. And that is the mission that needs another platform or a home, because the EC-130 just does not have the room in it that the E-6 does to perform both those missions.

But, most important—and I agree with Secretary Phelan—we must stay on track for the TACAMO replacement program. We have gotten more than our money's worth out of the E-6s. We have had this empennage problem, and we repairing those aircraft to make sure they are safe to fly, they can provide continuity of NC3.

But I am committed to the TACAMO replacement program and staying on budget and on delivery for that so we can do what we do for the Nation.

The CHAIRMAN. And, again, just to not be redundant but to be specific, are we talking about any of that mission moving to the Air Force, or are we talking about keeping it within the Navy?

Admiral KILBY. That is a discussion still at the Department of Defense. The part I specifically talked about, though, was, it will not go into the EC-130 replacement, because there is just no room for the kit for that aircraft.

So there is a limitation to what the 130 can do. And it is a performance game for us, we think, in the execution of NC3. So we will have to figure out as a department, the Department of Defense, what happens to that initial mission. And it may not be an aircraft; it might be another means to provide that secure comps.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I would ask you to keep us apprised of that. And I will tell you, since I have got a lot of E-6s based out of my district and E-3s that are all being retired from the Air Force where we are having to scramble to find replacements, I am not sure the Air Force would have the capacity to do some of the things you need to do. So, again, I would very much like to know when and if that decision is made.

MUNITIONS

Let me ask you, too, quickly, if I may—and I would put this to all of you. And Chairman Calvert raised it. I am very concerned about where we are at in terms of munitions, in terms of what is available, what you need, what we would have if, God forbid, we were in, you know, a short-term conflict. It would be short-term, because we don't have enough munitions to sustain a long-term fight.

So where are we at in procurement, in stockpiling of the munitions, particularly precision-strike types of munitions that you think you would need in a conflict with a near-peer power?

Admiral KILBY. Sir, I will take that one just for the Navy.

We are investing in the munitions we need, particularly to be ready if we need to go to war with China. Those are precision-guided, long-range munitions like Tomahawk, Maritime Strike Tomahawk, LRASM, SM-6, SM-2, RGM, AIM-9X, AIM-120, and the heavyweight torpedo. So all those munitions we need to increase production on.

I am also of the mind that we need to look at other vendors. And they may not be able to produce the same exact specification, but

they might be able to produce a missile that is effective, which is more effective than no missile. So I think we have to open our aperture a little bit.

But those munitions that I listed, we need to increase production. And we have done so with things like the SM-6, which used to have 125 rounds a year. We are ramping up to 300 rounds a year. We have restarted our Mark 48 line. That is our premier torpedo. We stopped doing torpedoes in 1996 and now have just reconstituted that line and are going to deliver 10 a month, so that is 120 a year. That is a step in the right direction.

But we need to stop looking, like I have, at the minimum sustaining rate and look at what we need for protraction. I think it is foolish to think that we are going to be in a short, sharp war. If we go to war with China, this is going to be a big deal. And it is going to be bloody, and there are going to be casualties, and it is going to take time and munitions. So our stocks need to be full.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, again, I would ask you to keep us informed on that and what we can do to accelerate that process, because I think we are all very, very concerned.

And I am glad to hear you are looking at alternatives, because I think you are exactly right; I am not sure the capacity exists in the traditional munitions that we have to do it in a short-term and speedy fashion.

FORCE DESIGN 2030

Last question, if I can get to you quickly, General Smith. I was just curious of your assessment of where we are at on Force Design 2030. You know, how are things going? Are you on schedule?

General SMITH. Sir, thanks for that question.

Sir, we are on schedule. I am committed to Force Design, balanced against our crisis-response and readiness missions.

We are investing in key capabilities, such as unmanned systems, long-range precision fires—which you addressed—air defenses, counter-small-UAS. We are enabling modernization while retaining our capability for competition and crisis response, which is our *nom de guerre*.

It preserves the capability of the Marine Expeditionary Unit. Based on combat operational employments, the COCOMs have asked us to accelerate some of our capabilities, such as the MQ-9, our big-wing drone. Pair that with MADIS, our Marine Air Defense Integrated System, and an MRIC, a Medium-Range Intercept Capability, and we are well on our way to realizing the value of Force Design as a stand-in force to enable us to deter the PRC from—I won't say "breaking out," but—breaking out and, if they do, to punish them for it.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am happy to recognize the ranking member, Ms. McCollum.

SUBMARINE PRODUCTION AND SHIPYARDS

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Secretary, you were very refreshing in your confirmation hearings with what—the learning curve you were going to take on.

You have been on the job for less than 2 months, and here you are, without a full budget in front of us, us asking a lot of questions.

But I am going to—as a schoolteacher, I am going to just press one more time for an answer for the question.

We haven't had two-sub production, I have been told, since before COVID.

So you have been out talking to people, looking at the shipyards, looking at workforce. You are doing your due diligence. But we will start marking up a budget in June.

Secretary PHELAN. Uh-huh.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. So do you have any idea of when maybe you can come before the committee and tell us when we can expect to get back to two subs a year?

Because the budget—I mean, what kind of conversations are happening at the Pentagon about how we get back on track? And are they giving you all the flexibility to put this priority number one to move forward?

The other problem we discussed is the backlog for maintenance in the shipyards. And you just mentioned, with the Admiral, too, now, what is happening with the hulls in the Ohio-class. That is something else you are going to be bringing into the shipyards, and there is already backlog there.

So I know you are putting all the pieces in the puzzle together. It has been 2 months. You are taking this extraordinarily seriously. I want to be fair and recognize that. But I have a job to do, too, along with these committee members.

Do you have any idea when you think you might be able to come back in front of the committee, within the next month, 2 months, with any kind of a plan and anything we have to look at for the allocation of dollars to get you back on track?

Secretary PHELAN. Thank you for the question.

I would tell you that we have been working very hard with the DEPSEC and SECDEF on this issue. It has been a high priority for them, as it is for us.

I think that we are trying to attack this problem from a number of different angles to try to figure it out and get a better idea. I would like to believe that we should be able to come and sit down with you hopefully within the next month or 2 months. Give me a little bit of decision space time, because we are still trying to get this all put together.

You know, a lot of what the companies will tell you is that we took people off of Virginia and put them on Columbia, which set them back on Virginia. I am trying to understand this, because I think part of the problem also is, there are materials they are waiting on. They take workers and shift them from a Columbia to a Virginia, which does not make sense. That is something that does not happen in the Korean shipyards or the Japanese shipyards that I visited.

I saw a fair amount of automation at the Korean shipyards that I have not seen in our yards that I think will help things in a big way. And that doesn't—you know, a lot of people think that means less jobs. It actually doesn't. It just means different types of jobs. Because those machines still need to be watched and kept abreast in what they are doing. So it is a different type of training.

As soon as I have an answer, I will come and sit down and give you the honest truth on what I think is the best we can do schedule-wise and what we think these are going to be and how quickly we can fix that problem. But it would be——

Ms. MCCOLLUM. I appreciate that. I really do, I appreciate that. Because, you know, the President has put forward all kinds of things—you know, top priority is Sentinel, which is a huge boondoggle cost overrun that this committee is having to deal with, and the concept—as has been described in this hearing room—the concept of what Golden Dome is going to look like.

For me, we have a task in front of us that has not been completed, and, for me, that is my first priority, my first mission. So I appreciate that.

AUKUS AGREEMENT

Along with that, the chairman and I had the opportunity to go to Australia last year with some other committee members. And do you think, with the AUKUS, that we are going to be able to meet our requirements that are included in that agreement? Is that part of the calculus on how we get back on track?

Admiral KILBY. It just may be a little more—because I have been working this a little bit longer than the Secretary.

So we have accepted money from Australia to get to the “.33” part of 2.33. We have Australia workers at our Pearl Harbor Navy Shipyard. We have maintained and done some availabilities in Stirling. I think those are all on plan for AUKUS Phase 1, and that is helpful to us.

But, to your point, ma’am, we have to get to the 2 and then to get to the 2.33. So I think all that, in conjunction with each other, is what we are going to try to bring to bear, including the investments, supported by you, which we are appreciative of, on both SIB and MIB, I think, are key to clutch in. And that dividend will make parts more available and we will be able to do our work faster.

So Phase 1 is on plan now, and we just need to watch it, because, working with two countries, we have come across some things that we didn’t expect as far as bureaucratic roadblocks to getting workers in certain places. So I think we are on it, we are going to stay with it, and I think it is important for the whole effort.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you.

JOINT LIGHT TACTICAL VEHICLE CUTS

And then, lastly, Mr. Chair, General Smith, we had an opportunity to talk just briefly about this, that the decision for the Army to cut the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle came as much of a surprise to you as it did to this committee.

So if you could maybe share with some of the other members of the committee how you think these cuts could impact you both presently and in the future? And what happens with the cost per unit for these vehicles for your budget as you are getting ready to prepare it?

General SMITH. Yes, ma’am.

The Marine Corps is fully committed to the JLTV program. It is our workhorse on the ground tactical vehicle fleet.

It is a little bit too early to assess the impact of the Army stopping their version of the program. But per unit costs are clearly going to go up. APUC, the average per unit cost, is going to go up when the orders go down, and that is going to negatively impact the Marine Corps' ability to fulfill its ground tactical vehicle mobility strategy, which has me concerned.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Well, when you have those numbers, we would appreciate receiving them.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

JAPAN'S SHIPYARD CAPABILITY

Mr. CALVERT. Thank the gentlelady.

I just want to make a point too. Our former colleague, Rahm Emanuel, who was the ambassador to Japan, would call me, and I know he called the full committee chairman from time to time, pointing out that Japan has significant shipyard capability and capacity to help us with the maintenance of our ships without having to send them back to CONUS. And right now apparently there are some scheduling issues with some of the yard.

So I hope, Mr. Secretary, you are looking at some of our colleagues in Japan and South Korea. They are great allies that maybe can help you get you where you need to be.

Secretary PHELAN. Thank you for the question, Chairman.

Look, all options are on the table. And I was very impressed by what I saw in Korea, in Japan. I saw two ships that they did maintenance work in Korea for us. Excellent. I actually saw a DDG destroyer they made, which is 10 percent bigger than ours—which, by the way, was an excellent ship. I even think the combat information center was laid out better than ours, looking at it.

So I think we have to really look at this. And I think I kind of bucket it in two ways. There are short-term things we need to do because we need to get hulls in the water, and there is long-term. And the long-term is getting the maritime industrial base, getting the jobs, getting those brought back here.

I think you have seen what Hanwha did with Philly, with the Philly Shipyard. They are very interested in expanding some of their work here.

We have to put everything on the table. We are at that sort of kind of period of time. And so, yes, we will definitely be looking into that.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you for that.

Mr. Rogers, the Dean.

LITTORAL COMBAT SHIPS AND DRUG INTERDICTION

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary, let me discuss with you lay hold drug interdiction. The Navy has a history of reliability issues with littoral combat ships, but plans to decommission those ships have halted due to other potential use cases, such as drug interdiction missions.

The Navy's Littoral Combat Ship has recently gotten some praise for its success in those drug interdiction missions. In April of this year, the Minneapolis-St. Paul, the Freedom variant LCS, stopped two suspected drug smuggling operations within 72 hours through a combination of air and surface operations in the Caribbean Sea.

The successful operation that I have described is one of several good examples in recent years of an LCS interdicting drug smuggling operations.

In 2020, the USS Gabrielle Giffords stopped a vessel in the eastern Pacific that was carrying \$106 million worth of cocaine. In 2021, the USS Wichita and USS Sioux City seized \$17 million and more than \$20 million worth of cocaine.

These littoral ships, they are fast, they carry helicopters, they have air and surface search radars, all of which are very helpful in stopping drug smuggling operations.

These ships are also armed with missiles. They are unlikely to be used against drug smugglers due to the cost of the munitions.

Of all the Navy's warships, the LCS is probably the best choice for counter-drug missions. But the program has been repeatedly described as a costly misstep for the sea service. The two classes of small but fast warships were designed to operate in littoral near-shore waters and primarily seen as a solution to an unclear problem.

Due to technical issues, the service has opted to retire some of the oldest vessels years before their end of service life. Others would be pawned off to regional partners and allies.

In 2025, just recently, the Navy stopped buying LCSes, halting production at the current 28 ships, rather than moving forward with the 52 that was originally planned.

What can you say about this? Are we going in the right path?

Admiral KILBY. Sir, if I could start and then turn it over to the Secretary.

One, I think your points are spot-on. Even though it is a Coast Guard mission to do drug interdiction, the Navy and the Coast Guard have worked together on this for a long time. The LCS presents some great attributes, as you pointed out. One of them is a gigantic mission bay if needed.

So the ability to support General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, both Northern Command and the Southern Command commanders, for missions south of the border I think are a great use of that vessel and it would allow us to free up DDGs to do other things. So I think there is great potential there.

We have had some challenges with our hull mechanical electrical system, particularly on the Freedom class. We have addressed those through a combining gear fix.

So I think those missions can be well served by LCS, allowing our DDGs maybe to be used for another mission in homeland defense for General Guillot, like an out-of-area deployer from either our West or East Coast.

So we will look at these platforms and we will field the best Navy we can for the budget we have to do the missions assigned.

Mr. ROGERS. Well, we are being flooded with drugs. That is beyond doubt. And it seems to me it is not too wise to holster a weapon such as the LCS in this time.

I thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.

Ms. McCollum.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Secretary, you are not totally aware of this, but both the chairman, when I was the chair and he was the ranking member, and now he is the chair and I am the ranking member, we have asked repeatedly for ways in which the LCS, when it fits, when it works, can be repurposed for doing programs such as former Chairman Rogers was just talking about. And slow to get us the report; the report was not very adequate.

And so if you ask somebody back in your office they can dig up an old file for you. This is something that this committee has been trying to figure out how to be best use for these ships when it works. We know that they won't work for everything. Some of them need to be retired and I want to be clear on that.

But this committee has been asking for this for a long time, and I just thought maybe you would want to know that.

Secretary PHELAN. Thank you. I will look into that. We are very good at putting together reports and studies and hiding them and getting to us. So I am working on getting through that as fast as possible. We will look into it.

We are spending a lot of time, honestly, trying to come up with the appropriate force structure given the budget that we have and the budget issues we have with some of the other programs.

So we have some tough decisions to make and tough tradeoffs, and that is really what we are going through as we speak.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.

Ms. DeLauro.

VIRGINIA CLASS SUBMARINE CONTRACT

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I know there has been discussion in my absence about the Virginia class submarine contract, so I don't want to have you be repetitive. But I just wanted to—a couple of things in this area.

And we know that the contract announcement came at the end of April. We were supposed to get it at the end of February. But the April 30 contract modification indicated that future Virginia class procurement will not be conducted through, quote, "block multiyear contracts," as has previously been the case, but instead through one-off cost-plus-incentive-fee contracts.

You have noted that the April 30 contract modification that obligated the December continuing resolution money was renegotiated to appropriately, quote, "share risk between the Navy and the industry," end quote. You have indicated that this will serve as a template for future shipbuilding contracts.

Whatever the contracting method that the Navy uses, we have the same goal: getting production back on schedule and on budget.

Can you explain in more detail how shifting contract mechanisms will achieve that goal and create, as you described, quote, "more value for the American taxpayer"?

Secretary PHELAN. Thank you for the question, Ranking Member. And, again, thank you for the support of this committee for the Virginia.

I think at the end of day we had a very tight timeframe in which to try to get something put together quickly in order to continue the production on Virginia.

What we ended up doing was we had a cost-plus contract, which was eating us alive. And as you delay out schedule that is pretty tough.

So we had to get money to them for workforce. We had to send a demand signal to the private sector to put money into their facilities and invest.

What I liked about what we were able to do on this contract is we shifted it from cost-plus with a cap of call it—with a 130 percent ceiling to fixing it up to 86 percent of the cost, but we brought the ceiling up to 138 percent.

So we ended up fixing the price more on this, which our view was to put pressure on them to try to perform and get quicker.

So the template is going to be more of a fixed price with some incentives. And I think what we are missing to some extent is incenting them to move faster.

So with a cost-plus contract, the longer you wait, the more money you make, and that is what we have.

And we have to look also at one of the things—again, it is still early—but we have to figure out who else can help us build these and if there are modules we can have done somewhere else to get this done, because we have a sole source supplier and that is a big constraint. And there are a number of infrastructure constraints that exist as well, both at the public shipyards and at the private shipyards.

So to give you an example, one of the workers I met at Norfolk told me that she has to get to the office—she has to get to the yard at 5 in the morning, her shift starts at 7, because the parking is so bad that she wants to get a spot because she has to get home to her child after her shift is over.

That is crazy. We need to fix that. And we need to come up with some ways to do that.

But specifically to your question, we are able to fix this now. And I think when we get to the next contract we will look to try to modify that more and have more shared risk with them, which is kind of locking in margin, locking in numbers, and also trying to rationalize the supply base.

I think we have done some very good work with 3D printing, which the admiral can talk about, in Danville. I visited a company on the West Coast that does 3D printing that I think has what appears to be a pretty good solution to our munitions problem potentially.

We have to get more advanced. We need to try things. This is a very—it is a thing the Navy does not like to do, and we need to get better at that.

Ms. DELAURO. I just would say that the fixed price—and, again, just tracking what those incentives are so that we don't find ourselves back in the situation where you have got the cost-plus issue. And obviously as you spread it out, there is much more money involved. We tried to get that under control.

So I appreciate what you are doing. And we want to really understand our regular communication about how that is working and what that means in dollars and cents and what that means and using that model.

It is important for us to know what these models are, as my colleagues have said, because we are dealing with the money here and being able to really be able to get you what you need, but not at any price at all and production being slower than it usually is.

Secretary PHELAN. I understand the frustration. I have been on it 50 days and I feel like I am in a perpetual game of whack-a-mole whenever I find something new.

I don't have great news. I don't think it is going to be good. I am going to be very honest. The numbers are eye-opening to me. I am still trying to get through it and really sort through what is real, what is on us, and what is on them.

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you.

Secretary PHELAN. I am tired of the COVID excuse. I am tired of a lot of these things. I hear we have a 139-year-old facility. I am like, when you signed the contract it was 134 years old. So I am not sure that is my problem.

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you.

Secretary PHELAN. And so we are working on that.

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you. And we want to be helpful in that.

Mr. Chairman, can I ask one more quick question?

Mr. CALVERT. Real quick.

FUTURE OF MILITARY SHIPBUILDING

Ms. DELAURO. Okay. Very, very quick. Just about the future of military shipbuilding.

Let me just say it this way. Congress, we have invested billions of dollars in the submarine industrial base. We need a clear sense of what oversight and accountability mechanisms the Navy has in place to ensure again that the money is well spent. And we need to know how you are going to continue to engage with this subcommittee and the Congress to ensure that we are kept up to date on the Navy's work in this area.

Very, very quickly. We have seen the Army the last 2 weeks, Secretary Hegseth, he is interested in reevaluating programs, force structure, service-wide. We received little or no warning on those changes.

And I would hope that if the Secretary's office is looking at something similar for the Navy and the Marine Corps that we would receive advanced notice and would be consulted on the decisions. Can you commit to that?

Secretary PHELAN. I am sorry. Give me the question you are asking me. I am sorry.

Ms. DELAURO. I want you to commit to letting us know what restructuring is, what services. Like Hegseth just said we are going to reevaluate the force structure service-wide with no warning about any of that. And we don't know if you are planning anything similar for the Navy or for the Marine Corps, and we need to be engaged and involved in that conversation.

Secretary PHELAN. So obviously the administration has—the President and Secretary Hegseth have put forth a plan to flatten and streamline the flag officer and general officer structure to ensure decisions are being made closer to the warfighter.

And so we are looking at that as we speak, per that instruction, and complying with that order. We are trying to figure out how to

streamline and make things more efficient, and we are doing our best as to that. And that is all I can tell you.

Ms. DELAURO. Well, I would just say this to you. If those conversations are going on with regard to the Navy, that is something that this committee should know about and be engaged and involved in. We just don't want to be told that this is it, this is the fait accompli. Hell no. Hell no. So I am hoping that you can commit.

Mr. CALVERT. We don't want a failure to communicate.

Ms. DELAURO. You got it.

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Womack.

NEXT-GENERATION FIGHTERS

Mr. WOMACK. Ms. Kaptur, do we need to yield to Siri for a question? [Laughter.]

Ms. KAPTUR. I surprise myself all the time.

Mr. WOMACK. It happens to all of us.

Thanks, gentlemen, for your service to our country. I want to ask a couple of questions.

The first one fits into the category of a good plan executed now is probably better than a perfect plan executed way too late.

And I realize the level of classification here so we can't too far down in the weeds, but maybe in general terms on next-generation Navy fighters.

The Air Force has moved out on their plan. The Navy has not. I am concerned about the risk associated with delays. And without getting too far down in the weeds, can you help me understand how we mitigate risk and when we might expect a down-select on that platform?

Because if everybody understands that there is a move-out date for China on Taiwan of 2027, those are the kinds of things that cause us to have to look at our acquisition process and wonder if we are operating from behind.

So I don't know, Mr. Secretary, if you want to take that one or if the admiral wants to take it. Then I will come back with an amphib question for General Smith.

Secretary PHELAN. I think we are still looking at the force structure manned, unmanned, and understanding what is the right balance, how to do that going forward.

So we are committed and I am committed to making sure we have the ability to fight in the future and meet the next-generation threats.

That is what we will look to do, and we are still working through that. We are testing a number of unmanned platforms. My own bias is manned and unmanned combined is probably the best, but I am going to leave it to the experts as we learn more and more. We have learned a lot from Ukraine, we have learned a lot from some of these other conflicts on how we should fight and I think that needs to inform our posture moving forward.

Mr. CALVERT. Admiral.

Admiral KILBY. Just to comment on the sixth-gen fighter.

I have had the pleasure of briefing this committee on carrier survivability and the Navy composition in the western Pacific. The sixth-gen fighter is key to Air Wing of the Future.

So to me, the carrier is the most survivable airfield we have, period, end stop. The sixth-gen fighter is a keystone of our Air Wing of the Future, which includes, as the Secretary indicated, manned and unmanned aircraft.

And that is the beauty of an air wing, is that it can be updated and still be serviced by the aircraft carrier, which is a capital investment which we are going to have for a long, long time.

To me it is the joint force that is going to win against China. That is the Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and the Army and the Space Force. And the Navy brings mobility, which is our chief attribute for you and the chief confounding thing for China.

So the carrier is a big piece of that because it brings mass volume fires over and over and over again, where a submarine will have to be reloaded and a destroyer will have to be reloaded maybe at some place and take it offline. That carrier has got sustainment power and the thing that delivers it is a fifth-gen and sixth-gen fighter into the future.

Mr. WOMACK. But back to the technologies. I realize that we are deliberating the emerging technologies that will be central into the decision-making process. These doggone technologies are changing like every day, right? I mean, we are learning stuff from the battlefield all the time.

And the private sector is doing a fine job of helping understand how these developing technologies are emerging as quickly as they are.

So at what point in time will we say time is up, we have got to move out, we have got to make a decision and go? When does that happen?

Secretary PHELAN. I think at the end of the day, look, we need to create more flexibility in our procurement. We need to be able to adapt faster. We are very slow. We are putting ships in the water that are 30 percent obsolete by the time they get into the water. That is a bad, bad thing and we need to fix that. So I don't have a specific answer to your question, Congressman.

I think we are going to look at that. We are studying each program line by line and trying to understand this.

I think the companies that currently serve us would tell you, "Oh, we have got to do this immediately." I am not sure, because of the speed at which technology is moving. What we are seeing in advanced manufacturing is changing daily.

And so what we will be able to do today versus 2 years, 3 years, 4 years, 5 years is going to take a while. I think this comes back to my earlier comment about what our force posture is going to look like.

I think what I found in business is the best way to be successful is not to be reactive. It is to say, where do you want to be in 5 years, where do you want to be in 10 years, and then work your way backwards to get there. Don't try to work to it, work back from it. And we are still in that process. I don't know if that—

Admiral KILBY. I think, Secretary, you covered it.

But I just wanted to speak to the operational benefit of sixth-gen fighter to the joint force. We are going up against a world class adversary potentially and we have got to have world class equipment.

And for the aviation component of Air Wing of the Future, that is a sixth-gen fighter.

Mr. WOMACK. Got it.

AMPHIBIOUS FLEET

Finally, with the remaining time I have, General Smith, you and I have talked many times about amphibs. And I am very concerned about the readiness rates that are critical to your ARGs and what these rates do in terms of adding risk to our ability to deploy.

So I am going to throw you that softball because I know you have some strong feelings about your amphibious fleet.

General SMITH. Well, sir, I am working closely with my shipmate, Jim Kilby, Admiral Kilby, to bring the readiness rates of amphibs up to where they need to be. We base our amphibious readiness on 80 percent acebo (ph), 80 percent readiness, and the current readiness is in the fortieth percentile.

So it has got to come up. There are only two solutions: either increase readiness or increase the number of ships and/or a combination thereof.

But there is a thing called the Optimized Fleet Response Plan, OFRP, that I am committed to, I know Jim Kilby is committed to.

So we are working hard to produce the number of amphibs required to produce a 3.0 ARG/MEU. That is, one Amphibious Ready Group/Marine Expeditionary Unit off the East Coast, one off the West Coast, and the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit out of Okinawa, Japan, episodically deployed.

Again, it is the Swiss Army knife of the joint force. It can do a whole lot of everything and a lot of combat. It can do humanitarian assistance, disaster relief. It can evacuate embassies. It can reassure allies and partners.

But it can do combat. It can knock down Houthi drones. It can take out targets in the Red Sea. And it can keep sea lanes of communication open.

So we think it is a good investment. And, again, it is the Swiss Army knife. But I am committed to getting those amphibious readiness rates up, and I know Admiral Kilby is as well.

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.

Mr. Case.

EXPAND MIL-MIL RELATIONSHIPS WITH ALLIES

Mr. CASE. Mr. Secretary, first of all, commendation on kicking off your tenure with a listening tour. That is great that you get out of Washington and see what is happening out in the field, both here and internationally.

On the international front, I have asked many of your colleagues that have come in here this year about the extent to which our military is now required to carry a heavier load in our relationships with other countries around the world, friends and allies.

But not just friends and allies, but potential friends and allies, and the consequences really of withdrawing from some of our other instruments of national outreach, for example USAID. And as that has happened we obviously have some pretty nervous—and the combination of other things, tariffs or whatever—we have some

pretty nervous friends and allies out there. And our mil-to-mil relationships have really carried the day in past comparable situations.

I guess what I would like to hear you talk about is, what are the opportunities, from your perspective, in your responsibility, to expand those mil-to-mil relationships? So I am thinking about, for example, more joint training exercises, more just people out there on the road as you have done, meeting a little bit more with their colleagues around the world.

Is that a conscious part of your planning, your policy?

Secretary PHELAN. Thank you for the question, Congressman.

Yes. I mean, in Korea I met with the Minister of Defense and the Acting President at the time. And in Japan I met with their equivalent of the Joint Chiefs and their Minister of Defense as well.

I think we are doing a number of joint exercises, and I will let Admiral Kilby talk about them because I think they are pretty impressive what we have been doing in the Indo-Pacific.

But I think, look, my message to the allies is the same as the President said, which is we are your ally, but it is time for you to pay your fair share. And I think that is the basic message.

And what I have seen to some extent is in some cases we are definitely seeing that and in some we are seeing the reluctance and the political aspects of it.

From the military side, they want to spend it, they know they need it, they know that they need to have the same capability.

And I think, candidly, we need to attack even the manufacturing aspect of this better. I think we need to be speaking more about how do we both create our forces to make sure that if we got into a major conflict that we can maybe depend on them to help manufacture some things as well.

So I think that is a critical component. I have met with the head of the Spanish Navy, the head of the Italian Navy, and recently one of the Ministers of Defense from the U.K. came in.

Mr. CASE. Thank you. Thank you for that.

And I think that I guess my only response to you is I think we can both have higher expectations of our allies and partners and maintain a much stronger military relationship as we all get through a little bit of change and dislocation in those relationships. I don't think it is an either-or.

If I can just shift on you, Admiral, you probably have something to say on this, but I do want to shift quickly.

NAVIGATION PLAN

Admiral Franchetti of course came up with her navigation plan in 2024, refined in, what is it, Project 33 in terms of a timeframe. President Trump came out with his "Restoring America's Maritime Dominance" in April, just a month ago.

I am trying to figure out how that all fits together in terms of what we have to do in terms of funding you. Has anything fundamentally changed in the goals or are there just massive changes that you are going to go through where we have got to go, "Oh, wait a minute now, we have got to go in a different direction or at least consider it"? Are these all pretty much aligned going into the future?

Admiral KILBY. My opinion is they are aligned.

Now, Admiral Franchetti's focus was 2027, as is mine. So the goals we were pursuing are goals to get after a force that is as ready as possible by January 1, 2027.

The first goal is ready platforms. That is where the 80 percent combat surge ready comes from where 80 percent of my aircraft, ships, and submarines that are not in depot level are available to the fleet commander if needed.

We still are going to follow the process that General Smith talked about to get them fully certified. But if they need to get called over early, I want to know that those ships are armed and manned and ready to go for the call.

So those are good targets and we are still moving out on them.

Mr. CASE. Okay. So, I mean, when we look at matching up what has been done in the last year against the budget request, we will see a continuity, I suppose that is one. I just don't want to get surprised at anything coming out like, "Oh, wow, we are not doing that anymore."

Admiral KILBY. I do not think you will be surprised.

Mr. CASE. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.

Judge Carter.

DIRECTED ENERGY SYSTEMS

Mr. CARTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for what you do for our sailors and our marines. You have a big-time job.

Admiral Kilby, you and others have acknowledged that relying on expensive missile systems to counter low-cost threats like drones is unsustainable.

What is the Navy's plan to rapidly field directed energy systems like the mechanized enduring high-level laser for shipboard use? And how are you incorporating lessons from the Army's development to reduce cost per engagement and preserve the missile power for higher and more important threats?

Admiral KILBY. Sir, I don't restrict that only to directed energy, but that is certainly an area we are interested in. We have a HELIOS installed on the Preble which is located in Japan. We had some problems with testing but now we are up to one-third of the power and we are going to continue to test that weapon system and make sure it works.

You know, I have got buyer's remorse. When I worked with General Smith in our last life, I was the N9, which is the person procuring systems, and I was focused on a laser between 500 kilowatts and 1 megawatt because that is what it takes to knock down an antiship cruise missile.

I wish I had been a little bit more thoughtful and taken a lesser power weapon that would have been capable against UASes.

In the meantime, we are going to pursue that testing on the HELIOS system, but we are strapping on a lot of systems on the Ford Strike Group which is going to deploy next from the East Coast, like a Coyote missile system, which is a much cheaper version of a munition to ascend at a counter-UAS threat or a high-velocity profile—projectile, sorry—high-velocity projectile from the 5-inch

gun. That is a very—a more expensive—inexpensive way to get at it. Or Hellfire-Longbow missile, which is a more inexpensive way to get at that.

So we are going to put those on that system. They are not fully integrated with the combat system. But I think they will be very effective and we will test them out at sea and then we will procure them at scale if we need to.

Mr. CARTER. That is good to hear.

GROWTH IN SHIPBUILDING WORKFORCE

Secretary Phelan, workforce development to revitalize the maritime industrial base is crucial to speed up shipbuilding and for readiness.

Are there currently planned partnerships between Department of the Navy and Texas-based community colleges, trade schools, or universities to grow the next-generation skilled shipbuilding and maintenance workforce?

Secretary PHELAN. As the product of a Texas college, I wish I knew the answer to that, but I am going to let Admiral Kilby answer that question. We are doing a lot of programs as it relates to shipbuilding at a lot of different schools. I do believe we do have them in Galveston, I think.

Admiral KILBY. Yeah, we have got to expand this, sir.

So one of the things the Secretary referred to was 2 weeks ago I went to Danville, Virginia, where we have an Accelerated Training in Defense Manufacturing Center. That is an exciting proposition for me.

We used to send money to invest in the Navy in Danville, Virginia. I watched five disciplines being trained 8 hours, three sections a day, so 24/7, welders, nondestructive testers, QAs, additive manufacturing, and a thing called CNC. They had 16 CNC machines. At Norfolk Naval Shipyard I have got two.

This part was produced in Danville, Virginia. It is a part required to fix a HELO hangar door. When we went to go look at how to make that part or if it was available in the stock system, it was not. It would take 40 weeks to make this part through traditional means. Danville did it in 19 days. And if I did it tomorrow, it would be 5 days, because I don't have to find the IP and get it run in the system and do a FYDP.

So to me, that is the promise, and we need to do that all over our country.

Rep. Kaptur, we talked about how this could happen in Ohio. That system is going to produce 900 people a year at a 90 percent placement rate that go into the defense industrial base. That is the way to buy back our system so it has more tradesmen in it than it has today.

We used to have 33 percent of our workforce was in that category. Now it is 11. My son is going to welding school at Northern Virginia Community College. I hope he goes to Danville, Virginia, to get his cert.

Mr. CARTER. I am very much looking to make the trades work and have been for now about 10 years and invested quite a bit of money in trades in many of our States because I have seen this

coming and hoping that when we get the trades going it will work fine.

And 3D training is the real solution. I just talked to a guy last night who was at an event I was at in Austin and he told me his business was 3D printing for the Navy.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank the gentleman.

Mr. CARTER. And I was glad to hear that.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank the gentleman.

Mr. CARTER. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. CALVERT. Ms. Lee.

FALLON RANGE TRAINING COMPLEX

Ms. LEE. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Secretary, Admiral, General. Nice to be with you.

I wanted to ask quickly about the Fallon Range Training Complex, which is undergoing a significant modernization project.

Can you outline where we are in this process, Admiral?

Admiral KILBY. Well, a lot of work, Congresswoman, on that, and I am appreciative of that.

To protect that range, which is a world class range for us, as you know, not only do our air wings get certified in there, but we have made a significant milcon investment in a training facility, to include other communities in the Navy, the surface community as well as the aviation community, in a live virtual constructive manner.

So that is one of our seven targets, Congressman Case, as well, is to increase the ability to conduct training anywhere we want, wherever we want, on our ships and our ranges. So Fallon is the centerpiece of that.

Ms. LEE. Great. You spoke with Senator Jacky Rosen during your confirmation hearing. It is my understanding that the Navy is currently working to meet the requirement to give full compensation for grazing permit holders who are being displaced.

The current compensation offer, I understand, is said to be inadequate. So have you had an opportunity to review this? And could you give an update to that, where that stands?

Secretary PHELAN. I am planning to go out to Fallon, I think, the end of this month or very early next month for myself to go see it.

As you know, I am trying to balance the fairness to the grazing permit holders and the American taxpayer. I think that my understanding is the bid ask, I am going to call it, is not that wide and we are trying to figure out how to collapse that down. I don't have an update since then, but I figured I am going to go there and try to see if I can get that—

Ms. LEE. Great. Thank you. Appreciate that.

FORCE STRUCTURE

I wanted to just touch on force structure review as you were talking about the need to cut the bureaucracy, I mean, 56,000 acquisition personnel.

But at the same time, I am hearing an incredible time-compressing need to bring new capabilities—AI, directed energy, autonomous systems.

Right now you have a hiring freeze. We have a deferred resignation program.

I am just wondering, how are you managing and prioritizing who gets cut, who stays, in light of this modernization need?

Secretary PHELAN. So if you look at the workforce there is basically about 12 percent of it that attrits every year. And there was about another 8 percent that basically is in 1 year.

So if you look at what they have really done, is they have offered up money to those and a lot of people have taken advantage of it. Now, we have identified all those areas that are critical where we cannot lose people. And so that has not been offered to them.

I think the next round is really to really make sure that we are rationalizing and making sure we are not losing key people in other areas.

To me it is just the question of, are there things that we can streamline and make it better? You talk about AI and what it can do. It is an incredibly powerful tool. I used it in my business before I retired and it had the capability of about eight people when I was done training that system.

So it is very powerful and I think it can be used in different ways. But I think it is very additive to people. So, again, it is a tool, I think, that helps people.

I can let the admiral kind of go into more specifics on some of the other things as well.

Admiral KILBY. We are working through those people that elected to take the RP right now. So we are really looking at the structure and saying, how do we make sense of this and get the organization we need?

I am a shipyard fan. We lost 1,918 people from our shipyards. But when I looked at the specificity and we are still analyzing what trades did we lose from, was it overhead, was it direct labor, the rough magnitude is two person, twice the number of people in overhead from the trade.

So to me there is an opportunity to rebalance here, because we want that ratio to be 20 percent indirect, 80 percent direct, and we were a little out of balance. So there is an opportunity to rightsize the force. But we do need people like structural engineers to go adjudicate problems when we come across them.

So we have got to come through that and do exactly what the Secretary said and get the most effective organization. So we are doing that work now.

Ms. LEE. That is good to hear.

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Ellzey.

SIXTH-GENERATION FIGHTERS

Mr. ELLZEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for being here.

Admiral, you are wearing eight stars and you are not getting paid enough for it. And I just want you to know you are doing a tremendous job.

General, force design has finally reached escape velocity and you have withstood the attacks. And I am glad to see that it is coming to fruition.

Mr. Secretary, I have never seen anybody work so hard, travel so much, and learned as much as you have in only 50 days in taking on this gigantic job.

Our entire top of the force structure in the Navy/Marine Corps team is understaffed. You are still waiting on folks, and so are you, and you are doing a tremendous job.

Our Navy, our joint force, and our future combatant commanders need the Navy's sixth-generation fighter, or the F/A-XX, as it is now called. Relying only on the Air Force's sixth-gen fighter, called the NGAD, or now the F-47, it doesn't solve our air superiority challenge; and neither does just CCA on the F-18 or F-35 off our aircraft carriers.

I am a fervent supporter of the F-47 and I would have done what was necessary to save it. It is basic math. We need more air frames, land-based and carrier-based, and we need to complicate our adversaries' targeting. And we do that by outsticking them—or, in other words, having aircraft that have longer range with weapons that have longer range so the carrier can stand off and hit the enemy before they can hit us.

We do that with an AIM-174B and CCA on Gen 6 Navy fighter. And industry is ready to do this, no matter what anybody says.

I am kind of getting tired of the bureaucratic brigade delaying our mission to provide for the warfighters. We win with both the F/A-XX and NGAD, not one or the other.

A 3-year year delay is a de facto cancellation and a win for China—and Xi Jinping is watching.

One of the reasons we are even having this conversation is because of a broken acquisition system and systems commands that slow us down. What DIU and AFWERX can do in weeks or months NAVSEA takes years to do. They either need to get better or get DOGE'd. Let's start with the mandated flag officer reductions by focusing on a Navy yard and freeing up some housing space.

So, Admiral Kilby, I just want you to—you have already mentioned that the carrier is the most survivable air field we have. Can you elaborate a little bit on range and what Gen 6 and 174 bring?

Admiral KILBY. Sure. The sixth-gen fighter has some capabilities that we need to counter the PRC. Those are signatures, those are range, those are different engines. They are all the things that will make it survivable.

The Air Force and Navy have different missions, but we are going against the same threat. So if that threat dictates a pivot to that sixth-gen fighter, then the Navy and the Air Force and the Marine Corps and the Army and the Space Force need to bring all that to bear as a joint force to be capable.

So I mentioned the Air Wing of the Future. This is kind of the lead sled dog with MQ-25 to shape that out and understand what that looks like. Not only does the sixth-gen fighter replace a fifth-gen fighter, but it also replaces the Growler. So that is an electronic attack aircraft capability that is important in this fight because of the electronic warfare capability it brings.

Mr. ELLZEY. Absolutely. And I would like to point out that the Chinese are showing us what they have got. It is two Gen 6 fighters and they are building more aircraft carriers. So aircraft carriers are absolutely valuable.

FILL LSM GAPS

General Smith, since we are talking about NAVSEA and all the fine work they are doing, can you share some more details on how the Marine Corps plans to fill the LSM gap until we and the Navy can deliver your suitable platform 8 years late?

General SMITH. Sir, I can.

What I would say is we are looking for something that we can get now, as a replicate for a Landing Ship Medium. The Landing Ship Medium is purpose built. It is designed to move and be an inter-island connector.

In the short term, we are looking at using LCU 2000s. We are looking at using leased Stern Landing Vessels, so we can get our TTPS, our tactics, techniques and procedures right, until we can get the LSM that is purpose built for us.

Admiral KILBY. I would like to add we are also going to man two EPFs. So we have a challenge with our MSC force now. I have committed to work with MSC to have a CIVMAR crew on two EPFs that serve the Marine Corps in this role until we can cover down on this gap.

Mr. ELLZEY. Fantastic.

Thank you, gentleman.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentlemen.

Ms. Kaptur.

INDUSTRIAL AMERICA

Ms. KAPTUR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, Mr. Secretary. Congratulations to you.

And also, Admiral Kilby and General Smith, thank you for your lifelong service to liberty. You are appreciated and all those under your command.

Secretary Phelan, I think you are the first person that has ever come before this committee within the first paragraph of your formal presentation you mentioned the term defense industrial base.

In the same paragraph you talked about the trips that you have taken, the valuable trips to the Atlantic Coast and to the Pacific.

Well, I come from industrial America, and when I heard defense industrial America, I thought "Ah."

And we are not from the Gulf of America, we are Erie and Ontario, Michigan, Superior, Huron. And back in World War II Admiral Ernest King, who served as the Commander in Chief of the U.S. Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations, came from a place called Lorain, Ohio.

And what I didn't hear you say—and I am doing this purposely just because I have the moment—there are shipyards in Cleveland, Monroe, Marinette, Sturgeon Bay, Toledo in our region. We also have the phenomenal capability to make steel. We almost lost it, but we have struggled to come back. And the Great Lakes are America's steel kingdom.

We have all the strategic metals. We have nuclear tooling and machining because of the nuclear industry and what we do with them. We have electric welding. We make air frames, big ones. We do Mars boosters.

The amount of talent this takes from people who actually do the work is extraordinary and America left us behind.

So people might describe their districts as agricultural or tourism or other skills, but we are industrial America. And we invite you to come see us some time, bring anyone you want.

We tried to work with the Department of Defense in many ways to help in our school systems to attract younger people into some of the skills that are needed. That has been harder than the Mars booster.

So I mention this because you seem to care about that. We have underutilized shipyards. We have phenomenal workers. They do tooling, they do machining, they do things I can't do. When we repair—it is hard enough to make the [inaudible] but then when you have to repair it, that takes you to a different level. And we have people that do that.

So America has a need, and I just want to put our part of America on the map. Thank you for listening to that request and you are welcome any time.

INCIDENTS

I also wanted to ask—and I don't know which of you gentleman could answer this—over the past year the USS Truman has faced several incidents in the Red Sea. In December an F-18 from the USS Truman, as you well know, was mistakenly shot down by the USS Gettysburg. And within the last 30 days the same carrier lost two F-18s to the ocean within a week of each other during operations against the Houthis.

What might be done to prevent further such losses and ensure the safety of our servicemembers in that region?

Admiral KILBY. Ma'am, I will take this and yield to the Secretary.

There are four incidents. There was one other incident, there was a collision. All those incidents on Truman are under investigation right now. Accountability actions are being taken or will be taken. And when those are complete, I will come brief you. I commit to you to come brief you on those specific incidents.

We are committed to learning what happened and preventing it from happening again. And so until those come out, I can't give you specifics. But I can tell you, we are going to build those types of scenarios that those ships and aircraft were in and train to it when we do our composite unit training exercise which certifies a strike group to deploy.

GLOBAL MARITIME SECURITY

Ms. KAPTUR. Thank you, Admiral, very much.

And finally, what steps are being taken to ensure the operations in regions like CENTCOM and EUCOM are not undermined by the increased focus on the Indo-Pacific? I am not against what you are doing in the Indo-Pacific, but how can the Navy maintain global maritime security in CENTCOM and EUCOM with these other commitments?

Admiral KILBY. Well, ma'am, I would just tell you that every one of those combatant commanders has a Navy assigned to it, a Navy component assigned to it. In the case of Fifth Fleet, that is the

NAVCENT Commander Admiral Wikoff and the Fifth Fleet, and their job is to manage and operate those forces, in the case of CENTCOM for General Kurilla. So that won't change.

We are focused on the Pacific to be sure, but we are focused on wherever the Nation calls us to go, whether it be EUCOM, CENTCOM, SOUTHCOM, or INDOPACOM.

So you have got our commitment, and we train our forces to be ready to do anything in any of those AORs. That is our writ to you.

Ms. KAPTUR. Thank you.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank the gentlelady.

Mr. Aderholt.

AUKUS PARTNERSHIP

Mr. ADERHOLT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Again, glad to have you here today and enjoyed chatting with you earlier.

The AUKUS partnership between the United States, the U.K., and Australia is now in its fourth year. Since then we have made a lot of progress on both Pillar 1 for submarines and Pillar 2 for advanced capabilities.

What are some of the lessons learned from the first couple of years? And what can we expect for, say, the next 4 years?

Mr. Secretary, I will address this one to you.

Secretary PHELAN. I will give you my 50 days of observation and then probably pass it off to Admiral Kilby.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Okay. Fair enough.

Secretary PHELAN. But I think what I would say is, look, I think it is important allies. I think we are learning a lot just trying to figure out how to do this together.

I would say from my own perspective some of the questions I have been trying to understand is how much brain power is this taking from us, because subs are very important in how we do it and how we produce these.

But also being able to do bases and repairs in another country I think is a good skill set for us to learn and understand better. I believe we are learning from that and learning how to build things.

I am still trying to assess the real costs of this to us, not just dollars and cents but brain power. And so I look forward to chatting with you.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Let me ask you this. Would you support an AUKUS collaborative campus that would bring together our three nations whose focus would be promoting further cooperation and meeting both our Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 objectives of the United States?

Secretary PHELAN. You know, look, I think it is an interesting idea to look at. It is harder for me to answer because I think you have got a lot of distance. And we have Australians currently, I think, at our base in Pearl Harbor. And it is moving faster with them right now than the U.K.

So a campus, I think I would have to understand the concept a little better and look at it. So I think it is certainly worth looking at.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Admiral, do you want to?

Admiral KILBY. Just a specific, sir, there is tech sharing we have got to work through from a lessons learned perspective. For AUKUS Pillar 1, I think we have got it about right with our schooling now.

Just to kind of give you a laydown of where we are at, we have got 100 Royal Australian Navies in our nuke pipeline right now. Those are our schools, so they benefit by graduating from the schools. Ultimately they will have to create their own school for now. We have got 120 Australians in Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard. And then the conduct of avails together in Sterling is important.

So I think that campus idea, just not knowing it fully, would be more aligned to Pillar 2 than Pillar 1, because our system—that conveyer belt needs to keep working. And I don't know that we, the Navy, we want to change our process right now from nuclear production and how we qualify our enlisted sailors and officers. So we would really have to look at that to see if there is mutual benefit.

MOBILE NAVY YARD SITE

Mr. ADERHOLT. Before my time runs out, I just want to mention that of course many think of Alabama as an Army and Space state, but support for the Navy is large and it is actually growing.

I am especially encouraged by the recent investments that are in Mobile down on our coast to expand our Nation's maritime industrial base in support of such critical missions as submarine production and office.

Since the initial investment in September of 2024, what are the next steps to develop the Mobile Navy Yard site and expand the shipbuilding capacity there?

Admiral KILBY. Well, I think Austral has done a great job turning those investments, and they are going to contribute to that 2.33 problem we talked about earlier by producing modules for our submarine construction.

I think there are other opportunities, too, sir, in the unmanned world. So when we think about a hybrid fleet which is going to have traditional manned destroyers, cruisers, frigates, just like we are talking about aircraft unmanned, there are unmanned ships that could be built at nontraditional shipyards right now that could be very helpful to us.

One of our focus areas is nontraditional sea denial, and that is the delivery of unmanned capabilities undersea, on the surface, and in the air that can help in a 2027 scenario in the western Pacific.

So I think there is a lot of opportunity there to expand in non-traditional vendors and shipyards.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Thank you.

I see my time has expired. I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank the gentleman.

Mr. Morelle.

INTEGRATION OF AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS

Mr. MORELLE. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to the ranking member.

And thank you, gentlemen, not only for being here, for your service.

If I could just follow up Mr. Aderholt's question, Admiral, can you talk about the integration of autonomous systems and unmanned systems with manned systems? I know it is an attempt to reduce risk to personnel, distribute operations, expand maritime domain awareness.

What have you learned over the last several years in terms of the development and experimentation about how—what insights have you learned and sort of how have you used that and will it influence the long-term integration of autonomous systems and manned systems?

Admiral KILBY. So, sir, we have three fleet areas, principally, that are working this now: Task Force 59 in Fifth Fleet, Task Force 66 in Sixth Fleet, and the Fourth Fleet.

Now, there are different needs for those. I would tell you, necessity is the mother of invention. So Admiral Cooper, when he was the Fifth Fleet Commander, found himself ship-poor, so he invested in unmanned technologies to do maritime domain awareness with things like a saildrone, which is a persistent vessel that can do maritime domain awareness. Similarly, Fourth Fleet has adopted that.

The work being done in the Sixth Fleet is interesting because it ports right over to support Admiral Koehler and Admiral Paparo in the Indo-Pacific because those same technologies can be used there in a manner that is effective. So it is almost a battle lab for the Indo-Pacific.

So there is learning across all our fleets. The geography drives the use case for what you need for that.

But our initial focus is this thing called “nontraditional sea denial.” Ultimately, though, I want to get to a hybrid fleet that engages our unmanned capabilities alongside our ships, supporting our submarines, in the air wing of the future for manned-to-unmanned teaming.

So, to me, that is the future state. And, last week, I was in San Diego with Admiral Paparo and Admiral Koehler looking at their experimentation and rehearsal of these very technologies.

SONOBUOYS

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you. I appreciate that.

I want to maybe, if I can, just expand on the Indo-Pacific and the use. Undersea dominance, I understand, is critical to deterrence and force projection. I am concerned about what appears to be a little bit of a mismatch between rising demand for anti-submarine war capabilities and relatively flat funding for key enablers like sonobuoys. I think I am saying that right. That is a weird word.

Inventory levels are reportedly well below the global floor, which raises questions about anti-submarine warfare.

Could you just elaborate along that line?

Admiral KILBY. I think you are spot-on. We got ourselves in a non-effective position for sonobuoy manufacturers. But we have increased our sonobuoys for everything but the MAC buoy now.

So we want to get back to that global floor. We will continue to invest in it. We appreciate your support in that investment. And it is a key enabler for us to invest in.

But now we have two companies, Sparta and Lockheed Martin, that are individually producing sonobuoys. They are not producing something that have to be married up together. I think that is a much better solution.

And my last stats are, about a 7-percent increase is what we are shooting for every year. So I think that is an area we definitely need to continue to invest in.

ACQUISITIONS PERSONNEL

Mr. MORELLE. Very good.

I just wanted to come back to something. I am new to this committee. And when we had Secretary Driscoll, I think he said something—and I am paraphrasing—essentially, that there were 35,000 people in the Army related to acquisitions. But, upon further conversation, it turned out that it seemed like there were about 5,000. The rest were engineers and people who were involved with sustainment.

So, Mr. Secretary, when you say that there are 56,000 people, help educate me, what does that mean? Are they actually all doing acquisitions, or are they are doing other things that relate to sustainment and making sure that the engineering and the contracts, et cetera, are appropriate?

Secretary PHELAN. Thank you for the question, Congressman.

There is actually close to 80,000 if you count third-party and contractors. But the total number is 55,833, of which 51,438 are civilian.

In cost estimating, there are 700. In financial management, there is 2,127. In contracting, there is 7,959. In engineering and technical management, there is 27,031. In lifestyle logistics, there is 7,154. In program management, there is 7,483. Test and evaluation is 2,990. Other, which I am still waiting for, is 389.

Mr. MORELLE. So—and I see I am out of time, and I apologize. Perhaps we could get just a definition of what all those areas are and, when the appropriations request comes in, how that will match up against those.

Secretary PHELAN. I would be happy to follow up with you on it.

Mr. MORELLE. Okay. Thank you.

I yield back, sir.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentleman for that answer.

Mr. Fleischmann.

TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Mr. FLEISCHMANN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you for your testimony today. Very, very helpful to me. I am relatively new to the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee. I have chaired Energy and Water, which of course has the NNSA portfolio, so I am very involved with our nuclear arsenal.

But a little point of privilege. Admiral Kilby, I want to thank you. Our office asked for a Defense fellow, and we finally got one, and it is Lieutenant Davids, who is behind me, doing a great job, an Annapolis grad, and doing a great job, a Navy aviator. But he has been so helpful to me in a lot of the conversations we have

been having. So it is vicarious to you and the Navy that I say thank you for that.

Admiral KILBY. Thank you, sir.

Mr. FLEISCHMANN. Yes, sir.

I am going to ask a question about the Navy's demand for tactical nuclear weapons.

As chairman of Energy and Water, I have the NNSA facility and the Y-12 Security Complex in my district. I am very interested in the health and effectiveness of our nuclear capabilities. Our boomers, sir, are the survival leg of the triad, and they will continue to be a critical deterrent to nuclear-armed adversaries.

I believe nonstrategic nuclear weapons are a vital complement to our credible deterrent in the Pacific. I am a strong proponent of the nuclear sea-launched cruise missile program, and I believe it is essential that we quickly provide INDOPACOM with the flexible capability to deter adversary escalation. The ability to deploy nonstrategic nuclear warheads on a fast-attack submarine and perhaps eventually surface ships greatly increases our credibility.

Recognizing, sir, that we are limited on our launch tubes afloat, it is only necessary to have a small number of tactical nuclear weapons to significantly complicate our adversaries' decision calculus.

I think, given this dangerous capability gap, the emphasis should be on speed. We do not need to reinvent the wheel when we are talking about a capability we recently had in service only 15 years ago.

My question, sir, to both Secretary Phelan and Admiral Kilby: Can you share your vision for the SLCM program with this committee? And how is the Navy working to ensure this program does not stall in development purgatory for years when we need a capability as soon as possible?

And I will defer to your answers.

Admiral KILBY. Thanks for your question, sir.

I share your opinion. I have had a couple of sessions with Vice Admiral Johnny Wolfe, who is the Strategic Programs Office lead who will produce this. He is on target for a new production by 2035.

But, to your point, he has looked at some alternatives, and we haven't totally briefed the Secretary on those yet, but he is looking at speed and an urgency to get something out sooner. So we need to come through that with our Secretary, but I think there are some possibilities there that we can work to.

Mr. FLEISCHMANN. Yes, sir.

Mr. Secretary.

Secretary PHELAN. Look, I think that it is an important strategic deterrent and gives the President more flexibility and options to have, both for tactical nuclear attacks or non-nuclear attacks.

So it is something that I think is an important component to the force and one that I look forward to learning more with the Admiral on, now that I know what is going on with it.

But I will find out—

Mr. FLEISCHMANN. Yes, sir.

Secretary PHELAN [continuing]. And get back to you.

SUPPLY CHAINS

Mr. FLEISCHMANN. Thank you.

In my remaining waning time, I would like to talk about the logistic challenges. I have spent most of my time in Congress focused on energy—I am Energy and Water chair—all forms of energy. And, in 2022, the Navy made a decision to defuel the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility in Hawaii. This removed a strategic fuel reserve of over 250 million gallons of fuel for military operations in the Pacific.

My question, for whoever would like to answer, please, is: What is your assessment of the sustainability of our supply chains for both our aviation fuel and ship fuel in the context of a protracted conflict in the Pacific? What changes or investments does our Navy need to make to ensure we can adequately supply our ships and aircrafts in a protracted war?

Admiral KILBY. May I take a wag at this, sir?

So we need to have a distributed system. I have visited Red Hill. We are committed to doing the work we have agreed to do there, and we will continue to complete it by 2028 and all the remediation that happens there. But we need to find other sites and distribute them around the Indo-Pacific to make it hard for China. Right? We don't want to make it easy for them.

So those can be mobile things. They can be, like, tankers and supertankers. They could be fuel bladders that I have talked about with my good partner General Smith. But there are ways to resustain ourselves in a different manner that makes it hard for the adversary to confound us.

So we are committed to that. There are alternate sites we need to look at for those fuel storages in the Pacific as well.

Mr. FLEISCHMANN. Thank you, gentlemen.

And I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART.

SIXTH-GENERATION FIGHTERS

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, gentlemen, for what you do for our country.

Let me follow up on what Mr. Ellzey questioned about and talked about, whether it is fifth-generation, sixth-generation, manned or unmanned, because there are open reports out there saying that, you know, there could be a potential delay of fielding the aircraft needed for our carriers.

Do you feel confident that that is not going to be the case, regardless of what that mix is? And you have talked about that. Are you confident that, whatever decision is made, that you will be able to have the adequate platforms on our carriers—

Secretary PHELAN. Uh—

Mr. DIAZ-BALART [continuing]. With no delay—with no delay for that? Or are we looking at another delay because, you know, decisions have to be made?

Secretary PHELAN. Are you asking in general, or are you asking with respect to a specific program?

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Well, I mean, again, without getting into—because we are here, right? But open sources talk about how we may be looking at, you know, having some pretty serious, you know, 3-year delays on fielding on what we may need to be fielding for our aircraft carriers.

Secretary PHELAN. Look, I think, as I said earlier, we are still trying to sort through the appropriate force posture——

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. I get that.

Secretary PHELAN [continuing]. And appropriate balance between manned and unmanned——

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Yep.

Secretary PHELAN [continuing]. And what that should look like.

I don't think we can ignore swarm drone technology and where it is going to go and how fast it is going to develop and what that means and what the implications are for the force in sixth-gen and fighters.

Currently, our carrier is, I think, very, very good. It is a mobile platform. It works very, very well. We will continue to develop that posture and that idea and be able to pivot hopefully as quick as possible.

So I think we are still analyzing and looking at it, but I do not believe we are going to do anything that would jeopardize the vulnerability of a carrier.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. All right.

Again, do you all feel confident about that, that we are not going to, I mean, you know, 2 or 3 years down the road, oops, you know, we don't have the capability, we don't have the platforms, whatever that mix may be, on our carriers that we need?

Admiral KILBY. Well, I guess, in a reality situation, to be clear, the sixth-gen fighter isn't going to come by January 1, 2027. It is going to take time to develop that——

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Right.

Admiral KILBY [continuing]. And build it into the future.

So the 3-year part is a delay if we started the program late, but it would deliver far into the future.

But we have to commit to that, because we are going to have aircraft carriers that are going to live in this contested environment. And that is my operational assessment, that we need an air wing of the future that does everything the Secretary just described for the reasons he described it, to pace the threat.

So, in 3 years, we are going to deliver the fleet we have to be as capable as it can be to counter the PRC, and then we need to build that future fleet moving forward.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Would the gentleman from Florida yield on a budget question?

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Of course I would.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you.

So it came up this morning that, in fiscal year 2025, we appropriated \$453 million. The Navy doesn't have that under a contract. And now we are understanding OSD is trying to say that they don't want the \$500 million in the reconciliation pulled—they want that pulled from the bill.

So I think that is why, budgetarily, we have some of the questions that we have.

So is it true that we don't have a contract signed? Is that imminent to be signed, or is that not going to be signed? And then has OSD asked for the \$500 million to come out of the reconciliation bill? Because that is, in part, why you are getting these questions.

Secretary PHELAN. The budget numbers are all over the place, to be perfectly honest. And we are sitting down and having meetings daily on different topics and different things.

I don't have a great answer for you as it relates to it. A number of different programs we are going through are being debated, just like we went through with the Virginia-class contract—

Ms. MCCOLLUM. I understand that, Mr. Secretary, but when we appropriate money, \$453 million, and \$25 million just for that, that is what that money is for, and Congress doesn't make it fungible for it to be used in other places.

So that is why you are getting the question. And we will follow up with you on that.

Secretary PHELAN. Appreciate it.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you so much. I thank the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Of course. A pleasure to yield to the ranking member.

And I will get rid of some of the questions that I had because some of my time has—let me—you have taken questions about the direct energy—

Mr. CALVERT. I will give the gentleman a couple minutes.

DIRECT ENERGY AND OTHER TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Well, no, I will be very brief, Mr. Chairman.

Because I was going to talk about the sonobuoys, and that seems to be kind of a bright spot, I understand. Torpedoes, as well, is what I am hearing, that at least it is a step in the right direction? All right.

So, direct energy. Are you—and, Admiral, you mentioned that when you answered the question. And are you all—I have heard that, for example, the Israelis have some kind of new technology which is really, really interesting, potentially requires less energy, whatever it may be. Are you looking at other alternatives?

And, by the way—and, if you are, are you able to, if, in fact, there is a good alternative—I am not saying there is or there isn't—are you able to tap into, for example, if there is an alternative that the Israelis might have, to be able to tap into that?

Admiral KILBY. We want to get a workable technology to be effective in the maritime environment for counter-UAS and other things. I am open to all that technology and doing it rapidly. I have to work through the steps in the bureaucracy to do that, but I want to be open to it and exposed to it.

So, yes, there could be—high-powered microwave could be another technology force to be effective in that space. So all of that is what I call a “renewable magazine,” where I don't have to load weapons to do that.

So that is our focus, is to have an ability to defend our ships so we can use our high-powered or expensive munitions for offense, not defense.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Yeah.

But, again, if there were an ally—and I am just saying the Israelis—do you have the ability to procure something from an ally on something like that?

Admiral KILBY. I probably don't, and I have to work through that. But I do believe that the time is right and the indications are that we can look at things differently and hopefully be more effective and agile. I am hopeful of that.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Yeah. Just please keep us in mind if you think that there is something that we can do—

Admiral KILBY. Absolutely.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART [continuing]. To help you be more flexible on things like that, if it makes sense, obviously.

Anyways, Mr. Chairman, you have been generous with my time. I thank you. I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.

Mr. Valadao.

NAVAL AIR STATION LEMOORE

Mr. Valadao. Thank you, Chairman.

Thank you to our guests for being here today, and I appreciate your service to our country.

Admiral Kilby, the Eisenhower—oh, I am sorry. Let me start off with the Lemoore question.

Admiral Kilby, how is the Navy addressing the combat search and rescue gap in the Pacific, particularly as aircraft crews face longer-range missions and self-supported recoveries without close support of a full Combat Search and Rescue Task Force, as seen in previous conflicts.

Admiral KILBY. I will have to take that question for the record and get back to you for some specifics.

I do believe this is in our contested logistics space, and we are looking at how we do this at scale with large numbers of people.

But I will take that question for the record and get back to you.

OPERATIONAL REPORTING

Mr. VALADAO. I appreciate that. I have been hearing that a little bit from my home district base.

And then another question for Admiral Kilby: The Eisenhower carrier strike group fired nearly 800 missiles during its deployment to the Red Sea, at a cost of about a billion dollars, to counter Houthi threats.

What is the Navy's plan to pursue more cost-effective and scalable methods to address these types of asymmetric threats? And how are you ensuring greater transparency in operational reporting going forward?

Admiral KILBY. Let me take the first part. I spoke about this a little bit, but we found ourselves in a position where those captains did what they had to do to knock down a threat, and they used expensive missiles to do it. And they have done it and are continuing to do it quite effectively.

We want to provide them an alternative where they can defend their ships and other bases and allies in a cheaper, more effective method. So that could be things like a high-powered microwave or a high-velocity projectile, or a Coyote weapons system from Raytheon that we got from the Army and bolted on that system, or a Hellfire Longbow missile.

So those are things we are in process with experimenting on the forward strike group which will deploy next if effective; then we will procure them at scale.

But, ultimately, we want to get to the end state we just talked about, where I have a relatively renewable, rechargeable way to have terminal defense and have husbanded my magazines for that offensive capability.

LEVERAGE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Mr. VALADAO. All right. Well, thank you.

As the Marine Corps has looked to leverage artificial intelligence to speed up decision-making and optimize operations, how are you balancing rapid acquisition of these technologies with the need to keep the marines in control of final decisions? And how are you preparing marines to confidently challenge or override AI-generated recommendations when necessary?

General SMITH. Yeah, sir, we are using our Marine Corps Systems Command and, frankly, we are using our Combat Development and Integration Command in Quantico to go after AI. We leverage all of the DOD AI, artificial intelligence, agencies.

We are always in control. There is always a human on the loop. There doesn't have to be a human in the loop; there has to be a human on the loop who can leverage the autonomy that is brought by an AI system. We have to just determine where the human is on the loop.

So I believe we are doing it. I believe that our Systems Command and our folks in Quantico keep us well-appraised of how we can leverage artificial intelligence for better decision-making, more rapid fielding, and, frankly, more rapid responses.

We don't need a human to direct the missile be fired. You need to have a human direct the system to fire at an inbound missile. When it is descending below 4,000 feet and closing in on your ship, the CIWS, the Vulcan Phalanx, has activated. It has permission already. There just has to be a human on the loop.

MODERNIZATION OF NAVY'S IT SYSTEMS

Mr. VALADAO. All right. Well, I appreciate that.

I will go back to Admiral Kilby.

Can you provide an update on the progress of Operation Cattle Drive, particularly regarding the modernization of the Navy's IT systems? How many vulnerable legacy systems have been decommissioned to date? And which key systems are currently being prioritized for transition and onboarding?

Admiral KILBY. I will have to take that question for the record. I am embarrassed to tell you I don't even know what Operation Cattle Drive is. So I will get back to you.

Mr. VALADAO. Well, when we get down the food chain to where I am at, we have run out of questions to ask. Someday, I guess, when I am further up, I will get to ask something more——

Admiral KILBY. You get a gold star for stumping the Admiral.

MARINE CORPS ATTACK DRONE TEAM

Mr. VALADAO. All right. I have a couple more seconds here. Back to the Marine Corps.

With the establishment of the Marine Corps's Attack Drone Team and growing demand for low-cost, armed, first-person-view drones, how long will it take to fully equip all registered Marine Corps formations, and how quickly can they be fielded with compared to more traditional, costly platforms?

General SMITH. I don't have a good answer for how long it will take. The answer is, we are not fielding them fast enough.

I was just visiting our Attack Drone Team a couple of weeks ago. What they are doing with low-cost detritables (ph) is stunning. They are, you know, turning hundreds of dollars of systems against thousands of dollars of inbound drones or against adversary troop formations.

So I don't have an answer for you, but what I can tell you is, we can't manufacture them fast enough. The Ukrainians are doing it on the cheap, and we are trying to keep ours on the cheap too. We are trying to make sure we build a Ford F-150 pickup truck, not a Denali.

And so we are building these as fast as we can, but I would invite you, Congressman, down to our Attack Drone Team at Quantico to get you a firsthand view of what we are doing. We have invested the manpower and the brain power through our Marine Corps Systems Command.

Mr. VALADAO. All right. Well, I appreciate that. Thank you——

General SMITH. Sure.

Mr. VALADAO [continuing]. Again, for your time.

Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentleman.

I recognize the ranking member for any closing comments.

ARCTIC IMPACTS

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Well, I want to thank the three of you for being here today.

And, Mr. Secretary, A-plus. I know that you are very serious about getting back to us on the questions on personnel and the rest. I look forward to it.

And then I am going to submit some questions. Some of them actually have to do—are we back to calling it “sea-level rise” rather than “climate change”? I am not sure—or “climate resilience”? But my questions are going to focus on what is happening in the Arctic and installations, permafrost, all those things that are going to affect what you can do up there.

And then the chairman and I, as you know, are very interested in what we can do as far as moving forward with doing some ice-breakers.

And then, also, a question for the Marines on the Arctic. I want to make sure—being from the high north, the bold north, whatever

you want to call Minnesota these days, I want to make sure that when you are out there participating in exercises that you have everything that you need to practice, do your mission, so that when you are out there doing it in real-time that you can come home safely with no frostbite included.

So, with that, Mr. Chairman, thank you so much.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentlelady.

Before I conclude, I want to thank all of you—Secretary Phelan, Admiral Kilby, General Smith—for your testimony today.

And, obviously, all the subcommittee members are welcome to submit questions for the record. And I would hope that you can respond in a reasonable timeframe.

FIGHTER DECISIONS

One thing I just want to close with is: Obviously, you heard a lot about the gen-six fighter. I think, you know, we have had air dominance since 1942, and we hope to keep it that way. Our men and women on the ground don't have to look up. Now, maybe, with drones, they are constantly going to look up, but certainly, with high-performance aircraft, being able to control the air is extremely important.

And I know you have some short-term decisions you have to make here pretty soon in order to meet the requirements of these contracts. But we have, as you know, well know, a fighter shortfall. I am not quite sure—we will probably put that question for the record—how big a shortfall we have.

And, obviously, the last couple of months, we have lost three F-18s. And that line is shutting down, as you well know. We have the last of the F-18s under construction. F-35s, we are not getting as many as we had hoped.

And, you know, we are going to be—we are well underway on the Enterprise and the Kennedy aircraft carriers, and so we are going to be flying off aircraft carriers for a long time to come.

So these are important decisions, and I know you are taking it seriously.

And we will submit some questions for the record.

Mr. CALVERT. We certainly appreciate your being here today.

And, with that, we are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:07 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

[The information follows:]

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing – Navy and Marine Corps

Witness(s) being Asked (if Multiple):

- The Honorable John Phelan, Secretary, United States Navy
- Admiral James W. Kilby, Acting Chief of Navy Operations, United States Navy
- General Eric Smith, Commandant, United States Marine Corps

Question One:

I continue to be concerned about the usage of failing and degrading ballistic shields at crew-served weapons stations across the surface fleet. Deficient ballistic shielding directly impacts the safety and readiness of our Sailors and Marines. The Committee would like to better understand the enduring requirements established by the Navy to field existing Navy driven SBIR ballistic shield solutions across the surface fleet, particularly DDGs and Amphibs. In a letter to the Ranking Member dated November 14, 2022, Secretary Del Toro committed to develop these requirements.

What is the status and when will these requirements be established to ensure this critical safety deficiency is being addressed and the defense industrial base is maintained? What is the plan to field advanced ballistic shielding across the surface fleet, particularly the DDGs, including the funding necessary and a delivery timeline?

Response: Navy ships, including CVNs, amphibies, and surface combatants, are equipped with ballistic shields that provide Sailors with a suitable level of protection against small arms fire. Each ship class uses ballistic shields that are optimized for their individual mission sets. The Navy currently assesses shields in use for balance force protection requirements, size/weight constraints on ships (notably DDGs), maintenance and upkeep, as well as the ability to be rapidly removed and stored based on ship conditions e.g., flight deck operations. The Department of the Navy (DON) continues to evaluate the best shield configurations that meet these competing requirements, as well as invest in remote-operated gun systems that maximize Sailor protection through reducing topside exposure.

The Honorable Tom Cole
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing – The United States Navy and Marine Corps

Witness(s) being Asked (if Multiple):

- The Honorable John Phelan, Secretary, United States Navy
- Admiral James W. Kilby, Acting Chief of Navy Operations, United States Navy
- General Eric Smith, Commandant, United States Marine Corps

Question One:

What is the current anticipated timeframe for the Navy to initiate and complete modernization efforts to eliminate legacy TDM-based infrastructure?

Please include expected milestones, pilot-to-production transitions, dependency on base-level infrastructure upgrades, and any coordination efforts with the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA) or other Components to ensure interoperability and zero trust alignment.

DON Response: The DON has implemented a three-phased approach to include milestones associated with 1) the elimination of Time-Division Multiplexing (TDM) connectivity to commercial providers and joint DoD networks, 2) replacement of base infrastructure, and 3) end user equipment modernization. To date, Navy efforts have prioritized the first phase to address contractual changes and cost growth in the commercial service providers. Phase 1 is expected to be completed in 2025. Phase 2 and 3 will be performed base-by-base aligned with critical mission performance. To alleviate the impacts of mission specific systems, and accelerate the TDM elimination timeline for Phase 2, a conversion approach will be leveraged to the maximum extent possible while TDM specific endpoints remain in place. The timeline for total TDM elimination, including Phase 3, is dependent on modernization of mission system endpoints which do not yet have a confirmed timeline. Where applicable, our efforts have been coordinated with DISA.

USMC Response: The timeline for modernizing the Marine Corps' legacy TDM-based infrastructure remains uncertain, largely due to dependencies on external coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Air Traffic Control (ATC). Of the remaining 104 circuits, 22 require FAA/ATC updates before transitioning to Internet Protocol (IP) can occur. While the Marine Corps is currently prepared to upgrade its side of these circuits, both ends must be modernized to complete the transition. These circuits provide critical services, and improper disconnection could result in severe consequences, making careful planning essential. Installation Air Traffic Controllers are actively collaborating with DISA engineers to develop a standardized IP-based solution, while also ensuring compliance with Security Requirements Guides (SRGs) for voice connections to commercial carriers. The remaining circuits are expected to be fully modernized by July 2026, pending successful interagency coordination.

Question Two:

What resources will the Navy request or utilize this modernization effort?

Please identify if additional appropriations, contracting authorities, or enterprise procurement vehicles are required to meet modernization mandates in accordance with DoD CIO priorities and the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE) process.

Response:

DON resourcing for modernization efforts has been prioritized by critical locations, with just-in-time delivery of required resources for each base, post, camp, and station within the Navy's PPBE process. The specific estimates for each site vary widely depending on the implementation details at that location, requiring timely site surveys for an accurate account of required resourcing.

The Marine Corps will not require any additional resources through PPBE.

Question Three:

How is the Navy addressing the replacement of TDM specialty lines, including those supporting fire alarms, life safety systems, and security alarms, for infrastructure across its installations, facilities, and operational commands?

DON Response: The Navy is addressing the replacement of TDM specialty lines with two primary solutions aimed at transitioning to modern Internet Protocol (IP)-based systems.

The first solution involves adding TDM converter devices to existing analog lines and convert their signals to digital within the building or installation. This solution enables continued operation of legacy systems—such as fire alarms, life safety systems, and security alarms—that are still functional or lack digital alternatives. The Navy is implementing this solution at 10 key locations to harden their critical infrastructure using cyber hardening funds and doing smaller rollouts at other locations using local installation funds.

The second solution mandates that all new installs and system replacements be IP-based, ensuring that outdated TDM devices are directly removed and replaced with modern IP-capable equipment.

USMC Response: The Marine Corps only has 1 TDM specialty line supporting a security alarm left. This circuit is pending an upgrade from San Bernadino County's Sheriff department but could be transferred to an IP voice solution as early as June 30, 2025.

Question Four:

For specialty lines specific to infrastructure, how is the Navy ensuring that redundancy, survivability, and failover capabilities are maintained or enhanced as these functions transition from legacy TDM to IP-based services?

DON Response: The Navy uses the process known as Mission Assurance Assessment to identify and prioritize improvements to communication lines used to connect critical Department of the Navy assets, ensuring backup systems are in place as upgrades are made to newer technology. This helps the Navy pinpoint the most important lines and necessary equipment to maintain reliable communication. However, due to limited resources and higher DoD priorities, the Navy has had to accept increasing risk in this area.

As an interim solution, the Navy partners with industry by using real estate instruments to establish telecommunications leases to bring commercial wireless services onto bases. Through this partnership, the Navy can enable commercial wireless (5G) coverage on installations without paying for towers directly. While this is a helpful short-term solution, there are numerous inherent risks. Commercial wireless isn't designed for national security, and relying on it could weaken the Navy's ability to maintain reliable communication and backup systems. However, this is currently the best option available while the Navy works to modernize its communication systems.

USMC Response: The Marine Corps' base infrastructure is set up as a mesh network, which means that there are multiple paths outbound and adjacently for connectivity. The Base Area Network (BAN) provides hardware in high availability pairs to ensure redundancy, survivability, and automatic failover capabilities even before the transition from TDM to IP-based services. The transition to IP-based solutions adds in scalability as a service for easier growth.

Question Five:

What approach will the Navy take to collect comprehensive data on the current inventory and status of TDM lines to ensure modernization efforts are both effective and efficient?

DON Response: To ensure that modernization efforts are both effective and efficient, the Navy intends to leverage existing Navy Mission Assurance reports to identify priorities and consolidate requirements into a comprehensive Installation Telecommunications Plan. A cross-disciplined board has been established at the 3-Star level to drive this accountability, and a Lead Capability Integrator (LCI) is assigned to coordinate with all relevant organizations in support of this effort. The LCI will leverage existing inventory and circuit data maintained by the Navy Circuit Management Office to establish an authoritative data source for the status of TDM lines.

USMC Response: The Marine Corps compiled the data from all 27 of its installations. As of January of 2025, the Corps had 442 TDM circuits from multiple contracts and providing various

services. With the data received, we used numerous DOD circuit repository databases, primarily the Telecom Certification Office Support System (TCOSS), to form plan and priorities of effort to eliminate the TDM circuits. With a monthly reconciliation and driving efforts, the Marine Corps has reduced its amount of TDM circuits from 442 to 104 as of May 2025. Future tracking of all circuits will be consolidated and utilized solely on TCOSS.

Question Six:

What testing, validation, and qualification processes will the Navy implement to ensure modernization solutions are fully compatible with legacy systems?

DON Response: The Navy and Marine Corps employ structured, risk-informed testing and integration processes to ensure modernization efforts are fully compatible with legacy systems. Across the Department of the Navy, Program Executive Offices and Systems Commands apply established engineering standards and interoperability practices as part of modernization and acquisition activities. These organizations manage integration with existing infrastructure throughout the lifecycle of a system. User acceptance testing is built into agile development cycles, while integration is assessed during structured piloting activities. Operational testing is conducted through both traditional test venues and increasingly during live operational exercises to validate performance under real-world conditions. Much of this work is also conducted in virtualized and lab-based environments. The DON uses a robust change management approach tailored to the service undergoing modification. Systems are only transitioned after deliberate planning, targeted testing, and coordination with local and external stakeholders to ensure full functionality and mission continuity. Legacy capabilities are sustained until replacement solutions are fully engineered, tested, and verified in representative environments.

USMC Response: The Marine Corps employs a robust change management system tailored to the specific services undergoing modification. For the transition from time-division multiplexing (TDM) voice solutions to Internet Protocol (IP), test calls are directed to individual devices to verify connectivity, including calls to the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) and Defense Switched Networks (DSN), before the full system migration occurs. For emergency services such as Next Generation 911 (NG911), test calls are conducted to validate Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) discovery and ensure accurate location data is provided via Automatic Location Identification (ALI), sourced from the updated Configuration Accounting Information Retrieval System (CAIRS). Remaining circuits, particularly those managed by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Air Traffic Controllers (ATC), depend on coordinated upgrades and testing in collaboration with local agencies at each installation to ensure seamless integration. No legacy system will be migrated until a solution has been properly engineered, tested, and verified.

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing – The United States Navy and Marine Corps

Witness(s) being Asked (if Multiple):

- The Honorable John Phelan, Secretary of the Navy
- Admiral James W. Kilby, Acting Chief of Navy Operations, United States Navy

Question One (for Secretary Phelan):

I'm especially encouraged by the recent investments in Mobile, AL to expand our nation's Maritime Industrial Base. Since the initial investment in September 2024, what are the next steps to develop the Mobile Navy Yard site and expand shipbuilding capacity? Specifically:

- a) Since the initial investment in September 2024, what specific actions have been taken to develop the Alabama Shipyard (ASY) facility and expand shipbuilding capacity?
- b) What are the respective roles and responsibilities of the Navy and CapZone Investments in redeveloping the Mobile Navy Yard site?
- c) Does the Navy have a Master Plan for the next 24 months of development?
- d) What is the Navy's long-term plan for the use of the Mobile Navy Yard?

Response: The Gulf Coast is a critical hub of Navy shipbuilding. The groundbreaking public-private collaboration announced last September, which includes the acquisition of the assets of Alabama Shipyard in Mobile, Alabama is a key component of our strategy to bolster U.S. maritime dominance and grow production capacity to meet our submarine and other shipbuilding construction needs.

Since September 2024, the Navy and our partners have initiated efforts to develop a site plan and identify potential tenants that will help revitalize the Mobile Naval Yard to strengthen the maritime industrial base. In February 2025, the team kicked off a site assessment to evaluate the property, waterline, and existing facilities, including a Geotech assessment to help inform development options. In addition, over the past several months, the Navy and its partners have had an ongoing dialogue with prospective submarine-centric tenants with expertise in advanced manufacturing to discuss potential uses for the site to support shipbuilding capacity development.

CapZone Investments, as general partner of the United Submarine Alliance Fund (USA Fund), is actively purposing redevelopment of the Mobile Naval Yard. The Navy is supporting CapZone in this effort to ensure that the development is aligned with all the goals of the maritime industrial base.

Development of a site master plan for the next 24 months is underway pending selection of the primary tenant(s) of Mobile Naval Yard. The site master plan will formalize the strategy to transform this area that once built more than 120 ships during World War II into a state-of-the-art hub for submarine, ship, and component production and a model for factory of the future operations and manufacturing technology, while creating approximately 3,000 new sustainable

jobs. While this crucial effort is initially focused on platform building capability/capacity, the infrastructure, equipment, and learning from this effort will benefit the entire Navy industrial base long-term. Planned initiatives and development will be phased and is expected to be operational and online by 2027.

This initiative also demonstrates the tremendous opportunity of public-private partnerships, where we can work together with non-traditional partners like private capital and leverage authorities like Opportunity Zones to amplify government investment and support our national defense. P3s are of particular value to states such as Alabama, where broad ecosystem development that engages external partners to support submarine production is a critical component of our mission.

Question Two (for Secretary Phelan and Admiral Kilby):

The Satellite Terminal (transportable) Non-Geostationary (STtNG) program shows the Navy can rapidly adopt of innovation. Can you elaborate on how you are accounting for a contested environment and electronic warfare (EW) threats into account as you define tactical SATCOM terminal solutions?

- a) Will your tactical SATCOM solutions use multiple satellite constellations of different types OR are you relying on a single provider?
- b) Can you leverage both military and commercial satellite constellations, should either be unavailable in a contested or denied environment?

Response: STtNG is the Navy's program of record for commercial and military multi-beam, multi-orbit satellite terminals. This dual-use approach is crucial for maintaining communication pathways in contested or denied environments, ensuring operational resilience by diversifying access to satellite resources.

STtNG Increment 1 uses the SpaceX Starlink constellation that provides satellite resilience and anti-jam protections. Increment 2 of STtNG incorporates the All.Space antenna with advanced modems to counter EW threats in contested environments.

Increment 2 can access multiple providers and constellations across multiple bands. It is designed to access low earth orbit (Ku-band) and geosynchronous/geostationary (Ka-band) constellations and is currently undergoing software updates to access medium earth orbit (Ka-band) constellations. Increment 2 currently uses commercial constellations and is capable of leveraging military constellations pending Wideband Global SATCOM certification.

Question Three (for Secretary Phelan):

How does the Navy intend to adopt and scale autonomous maritime drones in the near-term while traditional shipbuilding unfolds over the longer term? Please address how that process would be different from -- and more rapid than -- current budgeting and acquisition timelines.

Response: The Navy continues to use rapid prototyping authorities for many of our autonomous maritime systems in order to experiment with and develop concept of operations. This approach

is accelerating fleet adoption while simultaneously working through the Doctrine, Organization Training, material, Logistics, Personnel, Facilities and Policy considerations prior to fielding or executing Programs of Record.

Through collaboration with the fleet, industry and our allies and partners, we are discovering scaling through capacity for manufacturing, supply chains, interoperability standards and potential forward based logistics.

This learning is informing our fleet requirements, budgets and establishing the 'urgency' for many of our autonomous capabilities based on wargames, fleet exercises and experimentation.

In order to accelerate fielding, we are increasing the use of other transaction authorities including pre-positioning agreements, optimizing top level requirements, and increasing transparency with Congress for immediate budgetary needs.

As the lead contributor to Replicator, the Navy is taking increased technical risk in order to move faster than historical norms and will continue to exercise this strategy to include leveraging commercial manufacturing and smaller shipyards to build our maritime craft/ships.

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing – The United States Navy and Marine Corps

Witness(s) being Asked (if Multiple):

- The Honorable John Phelan, Secretary of the Navy
- Admiral James W. Kilby, Acting Chief of Navy Operations, United States Navy

Question One (for Secretary Phelan):

Torpedo manufacturing has been dormant for 20-years, depending instead on refurbishing current supplies. What is the U.S. Navy doing to re-establish torpedo production capability and to build torpedo counter measures to ensure the industrial base can scale to meet INDOPACOM needs?

Response: The Navy is committed to maintaining a robust and capable undersea warfare advantage, and the torpedo and torpedo countermeasure portfolios are critical to achieving that objective. The Navy has had major successes in re-establishing torpedo production capability. All components of the Heavyweight Torpedo with the exception of warheads are in production and new All Up Rounds are being delivered for the first time since 1996. The MK 54 MOD 1 lightweight torpedo was approved for full rate production in 2023. Countermeasures for both submarine and surface fleets are also in active production. The Navy continues to evaluate options for further development and industry engagement to ensure the Fleet's inventory requirements are met. The Navy's torpedo and torpedo countermeasure programs are strengthening the industrial base through advanced development efforts and continuous production.

Question Two (for Secretary Phelan):

Sonobuoys have perpetually been underfunded by the Department of Defense, resulting in Congressional action to maintain critical stockpiles and come close to meeting the U.S. Navy's Total Munitions Requirement. How will the U.S. Navy address the current gap in meeting the operational demand?

Response: The U.S. Navy thanks Congress for its continued support. A 2018 Department of Justice mandate dissolved the ERAPSCO Joint Venture in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 and transitioned the Sonobuoy Industrial Base from a predominantly sole-source Joint Venture to multiple independent designs and production lines. The Navy believes this approach will broaden the industrial base and institute competition, ultimately driving down future procurement costs and creating long-term efficiencies. However, the immediate impacts of this independent manufacturing line approach for sonobuoy production resulted in loss of efficiencies, increasing short term costs and impacting production capacity. Recent independent Sonobuoy design certification and vendor competition yielded reduced pricing for independent sonobuoy design, and increased purchasing power, which will result in increased production levels. The Navy

continues to address operational demand and will continue to work with Congress to ensure critical stockpile levels are maintained.

Question Three (for Admiral Kilby):

Given the large number of vendors entering the attritable USV market, is the U.S. Navy performing on-water “swim offs” to ensure taxpayer dollars on down-selected assets like Global Autonomous Reconnaissance Crafts (GARCs) are well spent? If not, why not?

Response: Yes, the Navy is working with industry to evaluate prototype USV platforms in a coherent and consistent manner. In order for a prototype to be determined “successful,” the vendor must demonstrate their platform can achieve required capabilities provided from the Navy. These demonstrations typically occur onboard our facilities, for example Naval Station Norfolk, during Fleet exercises, and in partnership with engineers from our Naval Surface Warfare Centers. The Navy is open to multiple vendors who can provide the required capability and build the required capacity.

Question Four (for Admiral Kilby):

What is the Navy doing to combat cost overruns for Global Autonomous Reconnaissance Crafts (GARCs) and ensure these systems meet Combatant Command Concept of Operations?

Response: The Navy is not experiencing cost overruns on the Global Autonomous Reconnaissance Craft (GARC) contract, which it awarded as a firm, fixed price (FFP) contract. Prior to the award of the production contract, the Navy completed the two phases of Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) contracts to mature production capability with the vendor and conducted a manufacturing readiness assessment of their production capacity. As a result of these early engagements with the vendor, the Navy ensured that the production baseline GARC configuration meets the COCOM requirements. I personally visited the GARC production facility and saw the investments they made to meet Navy demand on cost and on schedule.

Question Five (for Admiral Kilby):

The U.S. Navy relies on government and commercial Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) to make timely decisions. The Commercial Synthetic Aperture Radar (COMSAR) industry has significantly supported the services by fulfilling persistent, unclassified, all-weather, day/night monitoring capabilities. Historically, COMSAR data has been supported through supplemental funding bills, but persistent dedicated funding is now needed.

How critical is commercial ISR to maritime domain awareness and is there a need for a projectable, minimum funding baseline to enable it?

Response: The U.S. Navy greatly values the significant contributions that commercial Synthetic Aperture Radar (COMSAR) brings to our larger maritime domain awareness efforts. The unique capabilities provided by the COMSAR industry enhance our ability to make timely and informed decisions, strengthening our operational effectiveness across diverse maritime environments.

To ensure a cohesive and efficient enterprise approach, the Navy relies on Combat Support Agencies, principally the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) and the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), to manage contracts for these critical services. This collaborative framework allows the Navy to leverage commercial ISR capabilities effectively and cost efficiently, ensuring a sustainable and integrated strategy to meet our maritime domain awareness needs.

The Honorable David Joyce
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing – The United States Navy and Marine Corps

Witness(s) being Asked (if Multiple):

- The Honorable John Phelan, Secretary of the Navy

Question One:

Aircraft Carrier Procurement Schedule

Question: What is the Navy's current aircraft carrier construction schedule? If delays are expected, how can Congress help ensure that there is minimal disruption to the industrial base?

Response: Congress has authorized four Ford Class aircraft carriers (CVN) to date. Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) delivered in May 2017 and the remaining three ships (CVN 79, 80, 81) are under construction at Huntington Ingalls Industries – Newport News Shipbuilding (HII-NNS).

CVN 79 will not deliver by current contractual delivery date of July 2025, driven by critical path work in Advanced Weapons Elevators and Aircraft Launch & Recovery Equipment. Navy is evaluating schedules and delivery options. CVN 80's construction schedule is challenged by delayed sequence critical material. Delays of 18-26 months assessed as part of the 2024 45 Day Shipbuilding Review have eroded to 28+ months with considerable risk to go for overall ship construction.

One important lever to preserve construction schedule and the nuclear shipbuilding industrial base is Advanced Procurement funding in appropriate amounts and phasing to ensure long-lead time material is available at the construction yard when required and sustains hot industrial base production lines. Strengthening the nuclear shipbuilding workforce demands aggressive funding for recruitment, training, and modernized yards. Robust investments in workforce programs and shipyard infrastructure are essential to optimize and grow our nuclear shipbuilding base.

Question Two:

Using Technology to Boost Shipbuilding

Question: Does the Navy have a plan to accelerate the use of new technologies as part of a comprehensive strategy to build ships faster? Are there any specific technologies or advanced manufacturing processes that you believe are particularly promising in their potential to improve both the quality and cost-effectiveness of ship production? For example, what are your thoughts on the use of Press Connect Fittings in the shipbuilding process?

Response: The Navy is indeed actively pursuing strategies to accelerate shipbuilding through the adoption of new technologies, working closely with industry partners to achieve this goal. This

effort is multifaceted, encompassing funding initiatives, collaborative research and development, and the incorporation of advanced manufacturing techniques.

Driving advanced manufacturing technology at scale into the supply base and operationalizing technologies like additive manufacturing (AM) as an interchangeable manufacturing process is a critical focus area for the Navy to reduce maintenance delays and new construction schedules, alleviate chokepoints in key marketspaces, and help mitigate the demand for manufacturing workforce.

The Navy's investments in advanced technology, such as the Additive Manufacturing Center of Excellence (AM CoE), are already helping get our ships back to sea with more than 15 examples of AM CoE printed parts delivered in response to emergent ship and submarine needs. The AM CoE printed a replacement for a damaged helicopter hanger door bracket for USS HALSEY (DDG 97) in just 19 days, while acquiring the part via the stock system would take 40 weeks. Similarly, the Navy is investing in efforts to implement and scale advanced technologies like robotics, automation, artificial intelligence and machine learning to streamline production workflows, improve efficiency, and support the next generation workforce.

Press connect fittings are already being used in the shipbuilding process and have the potential to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of ship production. These fittings offer a faster and more reliable alternative to traditional welding or brazing, reducing labor costs and minimizing the risk of leaks.

Question Three:

Missile Industrial Base

Question: How is the Navy preparing to quickly ramp up production of solid rocket motors when necessary? What is the status of the Navy's efforts to develop and qualify additional production sources for solid rocket motors?

Response: Recently, the solid-rocket motor industrial base has begun to grow significantly in response to new demands driven by the commercial space industry. Through close collaboration with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Services, and industry, we have been able to begin mitigating production risks that will enable trade space for senior leadership to make informed decisions. Beyond investments into the infrastructure and capital equipment supporting the solid-rocket motor industrial base, a major area of focus will be on industry's ability to attract, train, and retain a workforce such that it is capable of supporting concurrent development programs across the conventional and nuclear enterprises in conjunction with the demands of commercial vendors.

The Navy is in process with multiple efforts to increase the production base for solid rocket motors. The first of these is a Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC) partnership with X-Bow to develop prototype solid rocket motor capabilities, awarding X-Bow nearly \$60 million for facility and process enhancements to remove bottlenecks and unlock latent capacity in the solid

rocket motor industrial base, aligning with the Navy's Energetics Capacity Modernization Program and the National Defense Industrial Strategy. This investment focuses on improving facilities and processes for solid rocket motor production, thus increasing the industrial base for manufacturing.

Additionally, the Navy is in the process of qualifying second suppliers for 21-inch solid rocket motor production in support of the Standard Missile. Both Anduril and Northrop Grumman have completed static test firings of candidate motors. Data evaluation is in progress in support of a potential future contract award to supply these motors to the government. The Navy understands Anduril is preparing to open a self-funded production facility this Summer that will allow for significant increases in their production capability.

The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann
 Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
 Questions for the Record
 Oversight Hearing – The United States Navy and Marine Corps

Witness(s) being Asked (if Multiple):

- The Honorable John Phelan, Secretary of the Navy
- Admiral James W. Kilby, Acting Chief of Navy Operations, United States Navy

Question One (for Secretary Phelan and Admiral Kilby):

Navy's Demand for Tactical Nuclear Weapons

- Our SSBNs are the “survivable” leg of the triad, and they will continue to be a critical deterrent to nuclear-armed adversaries.
- The SLCM-N program provides INDOPACOM with a flexible capability to deter adversary escalation. The ability to deploy non-strategic nuclear warheads on a fast-attack submarine, and perhaps eventually surface ships, greatly increases our credibility.
- Recognizing we are limited on launch tubes afloat, it is only necessary to have a small number of tactical nuclear weapons to significantly complicate our adversaries’ decision calculus.
- The emphasis should be on speed – we do not need to reinvent the wheel when we are talking about a capability we recently had in service only 15 years ago.

Question: Secretary Phelan and Admiral Kilby, can you share your vision for the SLCM-N program and how the warhead would be deployed? How is the Navy working to ensure this program does not stall in development purgatory for years when we need a capability as soon as possible?

Response: The Navy is working with OSD, Joint Staff, INDOPACOM, EUCOM, and STRATCOM to build the operational concept and provide additional deterrence value as quickly as possible. I envision a system that is installed on selected attack submarines (SSN) which are then able to deploy as needed to meet the combatant commander’s requirements. We are examining a range of options for employment to balance operational availability of conventional assets, lifecycle costs, and responsiveness.

The Sea-Launched Cruise Missile-Nuclear (SLCM-N) program is working to effectively deliver the required capability as soon as feasibly achievable. For example, the SLCM-N program’s missile system acquisition strategy is using Other Transaction Authority contracts to quickly award multiple missile concept design and prototype contracts prior to the Technology Maturation and Risk Reduction phase. This tactic creates opportunities to down-select to promising candidate airframe designs as they are competitively developed in parallel. As part of this strategy, program has funded key development and test events as well as procurement of long-lead hardware to enable risk reduction early in the program. The program is also planning to leverage assets from other programs, such as the Underwater Launch Test Facility under construction at NSWC Crane, that will provide synergistic effects.

Question Two (for Secretary Phelan):

Logistics Challenges in a Protracted Conflict

- When it comes to war in the Pacific, our energy supply chain will perhaps be the most critical resource to sustained operations.
- I am concerned about the depth of our infrastructure, both land- and sea-based, to sustain our forces throughout a protracted conflict.
- In 2022, the Navy made the decision to defuel the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility in Hawaii. This removed a strategic fuel reserve of over 250 million gallons of fuel for military operations in the Pacific.

Question: Secretary Phelan, what is your assessment of the sustainability of our supply chains for both our aviation fuel and ship fuel in the context of a protracted conflict in the Pacific? Specifically, it is my understanding that JP-5 production is particularly challenging because only our forces and NATO forces use it. What changes or investments does our Navy need to make to ensure we can adequately supply our ships and aircraft in a protracted war?

Response: DLA Energy has taken several actions to continue supporting the Navy's operations globally and has mitigated short-term impacts related to supply chain. For example, DLA Energy has adjusted planned lift volumes and repositioned JP-5 stocks globally to maintain inventory availability. The Navy foresees the potential for long-term risks to JP-5 supply chain resilience stemming from a diminishing supplier base, increased fuel and transportation costs, and extended sea lines of communication, and is working with DLA on mitigating those risks.

The Secretary of Defense's decision to defuel and close Red Hill redistributed consolidated fuel storage and enabled the dispersion of strategic fuel inventories to multiple locations across the Pacific. This has enhanced operational flexibility, reduced single-point-of-failure risks, and increased resilience against potential adversary strikes.

Sustaining fuel supply in a contested Pacific scenario requires the Navy to take a layered approach and make sustained investments in expanded petroleum war reserves, Combat Logistics Force oilers, U.S. Transportation Command's Tanker Security Program to ensure commercial tanker availability in crisis and conflict, expanding the supplier base for JP-5, training and retention of qualified civilian mariners, and strengthening alliances and partnerships.

Question Three (for Secretary Phelan and Admiral Kilby):

MSC Workforce

- Our Naval logistics infrastructure relies on MSC to resupply our ships at sea. However, the MSC is plagued with both workforce shortages and an aging fleet.

Question: Secretary Phelan, how will your FY26 budget invest in the Military Sealift Command? What programs are you looking into that will increase the supply of the workforce?

Response: I am encouraged by the focus on shipbuilding and the maritime industry as reflected in the budget reconciliation legislation that recently passed the House and is under consideration by the Senate. Within my purview, in FY 2026, Military Sealift Command's (MSC's) Maintenance & Repair (M&R) budget will shift from Navy Working Capital Fund to General Fund. This transition will help integrate MSC into the larger Navy M&R budget structure, increasing transparency and allow better planning and execution of required M&R. Over time, this approach to MSC ship M&R is expected to increase ship material condition, mission readiness and platform availability.

Regarding the Civilian Mariner (CIVMAR) workforce, my office and I, in collaboration with Admiral Kilby and the senior Navy leadership, have been in close coordination with MSC to address the CIVMAR recruitment and retention challenges. Recruitment and retention are imperatives for getting MSC's workforce healthy again, and these are the areas currently being focused on by the workforce initiatives being executed. To make MSC the employer of choice, in the midst of a nationwide mariner shortage, its compensation package and essential quality of life benefits must be competitive with industry. Retaining the current workforce is the priority given their unique training, qualifications and experience that take years to replace. The FY 2026 budget provides the means to continue ongoing CIVMAR reform initiatives. In January 2025, we received approval from the Office of Personnel Management to offer group retention incentives up to 50% for 27 of the CIVMAR positions, and that increase is being implemented. MSC has been working with the Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service to revise some aspects of the pay system to address CIVMAR concerns. Historically, unlicensed CIVMARs received two different rates of pay based on whether they were assigned to the East Coast or the West Coast. MSC is now implementing the One Pay initiative, which will have one schedule of wages for all unlicensed mariners, meaning the rate of pay will pertain to position and class of ship, not coastal assignment. The National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2024 included a statutory increase in the CIVMAR shore leave accrual rate, which will allow MSC to implement a four-month ship assignment with two months of paid leave (a. 4:2 rotation). MSC has also been installing CIVMAR Wireless Network (CIVMAR WiN) on their ships, which will provide internet access to support mariner education, training, and quality of life needs. MSC has completed three installs on Fleet Oilers, including T-AO 206, with two additional ships in progress. The plan is to have CIVMAR WiN on all MSC ships operated by CIVMARs.

Admiral Kilby, what is your plan if we need to surge supplies in a Pacific conflict? Recognizing that resupplying at sea is a challenging evolution, have you looked into partnering and training with other nations in the Indo-Pacific to meet demand?

Response: The Navy has several resources at its disposal to surge logistics support to the Pacific in the event of a conflict. The combat logistics force (CLF), which consists of 18 Oilers (T-AOs), 2 Fast Combat Support Ships (T-AOEs), and 12 Dry Cargo/Ammunition Ships (T-AKEs) is the Navy's primary force to support afloat logistics requirements. All available CLF ships would be surged if needed during conflict. Additionally, the Navy uses contracted commercial tankers to move fuel into theater and refuel the CLF during consolidated tanking operations (CONSOL). These ships can also refuel CVN and LHA class ships.

The Navy and Defense Logistics Agency are working with INDOPACOM on prepositioning additional supplies in the Indo-Pacific region to reduce the distance that supplies need to travel during conflict, and the Navy is developing optimal spares packages to put on ships to ensure their ability to maintain critical systems for extended periods without resupply.

Additionally, the Navy currently conducts underway replenishment operations with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region, including Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea to practice procedures and develop familiarity as logistics interoperability with allies and partners provides Fleet Commanders with operational flexibility.

Question Four (for Secretary Phelan):

Operation Looking Glass

- The Navy is in the process of replacing the E-6B Mercury aircraft with the E-130J. This new aircraft will conduct the “Take Charge and Move Out” role, but it will not conduct the “Looking Glass” role, which the E-6B has filled since the 1980’s.
- Transitioning away from the E-6B with no replacement for this mission will create a critical gap in our Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications capability.
- There has been no official replacement named that would be able to fill this mission.

Question: Secretary Phelan, as the E-6B starts to get phased out, what is the Navy doing to make sure we do not have a gap in coverage of our NC3?

Response: The E-6B Mercury aircraft supports both the Navy Take Charge and Move Out (TACAMO) and STRATCOM Looking Glass missions. In accordance with the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2023, the Navy will “...ensure that E-6B aircraft continue to meet the operational requirements of the combatant commands...”. The Navy is supporting ongoing DoD-led efforts to determine the path forward for recapitalization of the Looking Glass mission and will continue to maintain the fleet of E-6B aircraft until a relief for Looking Glass is fielded. Concurrently, the Navy will introduce the E-130J to singularly recapitalize the Take Charge and Move Out (TACAMO) mission while the E-6B will support the Looking Glass mission until a replacement is fielded.

The Honorable David Valadao
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing – The United States Navy and Marine Corps

Witness(s) being Asked (if Multiple):

- The Honorable John Phelan, Secretary of the Navy
- Admiral James W. Kilby, Acting Chief of Navy Operations, United States Navy

Question One (for Admiral Kilby):

Combat Search and Rescue Deficit in the Pacific

Question: Admiral Kilby, how is the Navy addressing the combat search and rescue gap in the Pacific, particularly as aircraft crews face longer-range missions and self-supported recoveries without the close support of a full Combat Search and Rescue task force, as seen in previous conflicts?

Response: The current INDOPACOM CSAR architecture relies on distributed helicopter units providing maritime rescue response to the Joint Force. The Navy has focused CSAR training during the Optimized Fleet Response Plan (OFRP) to support these long-range maritime missions conducted without the full support of a Combat Search and Rescue Task Force (CSARTF). Navy Helicopter Sea Combat (HSC) Squadrons are configuring aircraft to be able to carry more fuel, increasing their combat radius. Additionally, the Navy and the Joint Force are currently growing their distributed maritime operations (DMO) framework and will grow the CSAR force posture to meet the new challenges posed by updated adversarial weapons technology.

Question Two (for Secretary Phelan and Admiral Kilby):

Operation Cattle Drive – IT Modernization

Question: Can you provide an update on the progress of Operation Cattle Drive, particularly regarding the modernization of Navy IT systems? How many vulnerable legacy systems have been decommissioned to date, and which key systems are currently being prioritized for transition or onboarding?

Response: In December of 2020, the Acting Under Secretary of the Navy directed the implementation of Operation Cattle Drive, which is an effort to accelerate the modernization and transformation of IT capabilities by ensuring that decisions made to sunset or rationalize unneeded, obsolete, unproductive, unsecure, and un-auditable IT applications are realized. Since its inception, Operation Cattle Drive has decommissioned 113 Defense Business Systems (DBS) across multiple Navy and Marine Corps business functional area portfolios (i.e., Financial Management, Human Resource Management, Supply Chain & Logistics, Installation Management, and Acquisition Management). In FY 2024, we decommissioned 18 Navy and

Marine Corps DBS with an estimated divestment exceeding \$26M. The Department of the Navy (DON) Cattle Drive Plan for FYs 2026-2028 is to decommission another 41 DBS across the Navy and Marine Corps (11 in FY 2026, 14 in FY 2027, and 16 in FY 2028). The cost savings and cost avoidances are planned to be re-invested back into modernization efforts to drive down technical debt, continue the modernization of Legacy capabilities, and reduce duplication across technical solutions.

The Financial Statement Audit and financial management system consolidation efforts have been, and remain, a DON prioritized effort since Cattle Drive began. The Financial Management portfolio has focused on General Ledger (GL) and audit relevant feeder system consolidations, which were broken out into phases and milestones spanning across FYs 2021-2028. Phase 1 was completed in FY 2021, resulting in the decommissioning of nine GL legacy systems totaling cost savings of ~\$70M over the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP). Phase 2 was focused on non-GL systems and was completed in FY 2022, resulting in cost savings of ~\$30M across the FYDP.

In addition to leveraging Cattle Drive within the Business Mission Area, the DON has also leveraged the effort within the Enterprise Information Environment Mission Area. Between FYs 2019 to 2023, the DON has been able to reduce our service offerings from 157 to 138 through rationalization. Divesting of those 19 IT Platforms, IT Infrastructure, Digital Workplace, and Cyber Security, and IT Lifecycle solutions resulted in a reinvestment of ~\$116M. Additionally, cost avoidances of ~\$10B across the DoD were achieved through contractual efficiencies associated with these offering divestments.

Question Three (for Secretary Phelan):

HomeSafe Alliance – Delay in Household Goods

Question: I want to address a serious concern about military moves affected by the new HomeSafe Alliance system. The delays and low reimbursement rates service members are facing, especially younger service members struggling with upfront costs, are directly impacting readiness and undermining our commitment to take care of our troops. How are the Navy and Marine Corps working with TRANSCOM to address these issues?

DON Response: The Department of the Navy shares your concern regarding the challenges service members are facing under the new HomeSafe Alliance system. The Secretary of Defense's memo dated May 20, 2025, directed several actions that the DoD is implementing to address the Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Household Goods move program. These include adjustments to the government-constructed cost for reimbursement of personally procured moves to increase reimbursement rates and ease concerns about PCS costs; holding Global Husbanding Contract (GHC) and Tender of Service (ToS) programs accountable to meet performance indicators; and creating a PCS Task Force to ensure the DoD provides quality service to personnel.

Considering the ongoing issues with implementation of the GHC, the Navy is coordinating with USTRANSCOM to immediately report failures and seek resolutions; reassigning existing

shipments to legacy ToS contracts; assigning new shipments to the legacy ToS during the peak moving season that started in May and runs to August; working with local Household Goods offices for mass notifications through various channels to include social media; and encouraging the use of satisfaction surveys to document contractor shortcomings.

We recognize any challenge with a PCS move directly impact readiness and the well-being of our personnel. The Department remains committed to taking corrective action and advocating for solutions that better serve our service members and their families.

USMC Response: The Marine Corps, through the Deputy Commandant for Installations & Logistics, has coordinated with USTRANSCOM to develop processes and procedures to support moves deemed “at risk” in important performance standards, such as missed pickups and missed deliveries. Discussions with USTRANSCOM have continued as a part of efforts to determine a more effective way ahead. They have well-trained inspectors on the road to validate the services being provided to Marines and their families. They are also taking steps to ensure all available capacity is being employed to support peak moving seasons. In partnership with USTRANSCOM, the Marine Corps continues to review performance indicators and monitor shipments to ensure Marines and their families have a positive PCS experience.

Question Four (for Secretary Phelan):

Navy Acquisition

Question: How is the Navy accelerating the requirements, acquisition, testing and fielding process within NAVAIR enterprise?

Response: The Navy is embracing digital transformation, streamlining acquisition processes, enhancing testing and evaluation, fostering collaboration, and investing in workforce development. These efforts are aimed at delivering capabilities to the warfighter more quickly and efficiently. The Navy is also embracing rapid prototyping, commercial off the shelf solutions (COTS), and tight collaboration with industry and other government partners.

The Navy is also capitalizing on the use of digital model-based systems engineering, which enables thorough and robust understanding of technical baselines, use of modeling and simulation to identify deficiencies earlier, and ultimately accelerates delivery of capability to the Fleet. By leveraging advanced digital modeling, programs can test multiple configurations, optimize performance, and accelerate decisions before committing to physical designs.

Question Five (for Admiral Kilby):

Loss of assets

Question: What steps are being taken to prevent the unnecessary loss of assets in low-intensity conflicts? Do you believe that factors such as under manning and a high operational tempo, which can lead to crew fatigue and burnout, are contributing to these losses?

Response: Both under-manning and high operational tempo may increase crew fatigue and contribute to such losses. To prevent the loss of assets in low-intensity conflicts, the Navy takes a comprehensive approach to operational risk management, including tracking Fit/Fill to ensure that personnel with the proper skillsets are assigned to the proper billet. If manning does not meet Fit/Fill thresholds, an exception to policy (ETP) is routed through the Operational Commander with risk mitigations.

With respect our Sailors, the Navy is making efforts to improve Sailor health and productivity including the use of biometric data and improving existing programs. Navy is evaluating the feasibility and efficacy of using wearable technology to collect biometric health data at scale for additional use cases. Testing has been ongoing since 2020 with operational demonstrations including 39 units (surface and aviation), two joint international exercises (i.e., Talisman-Sabre 23, RIMPAC 24), two Carrier Strike Groups, and more than 5000 Sailors and Marines. Results indicate that the availability of biometric data to Unit Commanders improves unit readiness and Operational Risk Management decisions. Additionally, we are investigating the opportunity to consolidate Sailor optimization programs to deliver combined effects akin to the Army Holistic Health and Fitness Program. The Navy's effort in this area is in the early stages of development but we are committed to maximizing our Sailors' health and productivity.

Finally, the Navy has increased recruiting efforts to lessen manning shortfalls, while also focusing on maximizing the effectiveness of Fleet training to reduce associated Time-to-Train. This enables properly trained Sailors to man our deployed platforms. Throughout the certification process leading to deployment, Navy units are trained and assessed on the ability to preserve our assets-especially our most important asset, the Sailors whose care we are entrusted with. Adequate and sustained resourcing of personnel and platforms is critical to risk mitigation across procurement and sustainment.

Question Six (for Secretary Phelan and Admiral Kilby):

Navy Retention

Question: What is your assessment of the current challenges related to aviation retention, and how significant do you believe this issue is for overall force readiness?

Response: Naval Aviation saw a decrease in overall officer retention in FY 2024 with challenges persisting for certain Type/Model/Series. Aviation Department Head (DH) Screen Board declination rates remained above the historical average with the Strike Fighter (VFA) community continuing to experience DH gaps in 27 of 34 squadrons, mitigated by slating 3 vice 4 DHs per VFA squadron and utilizing Lieutenants (O-3) in place of screened Lieutenant Commanders (O-4). We suspect unusually high levels of airline hiring in recent years and a stronger economy post-COVID-19 is driving lower retention in both mid- and senior-grade aviators.

Over the last three years Naval Aviation has experienced smaller cohorts reaching eligibility for aviation DH and lower retention. FY 2024 O-4 and O-5 control grade losses were above 3-, 5- and 10-year averages for the third consecutive year. The FY 2024 Aviation Department Head Retention Bonus (ADHRB) contracted 222 of 577 aviators (38.5%) resulting in a take rate 3.7% below the 3-year average, but still a slight improvement over the FY 2023 rate of 37%.

Major revisions were made to the ADHRB in FYs 2023 and 2024 to increase the total value of the bonus. In FY 2023, the maximum contract length was extended from five to seven years. In FY 2024, the maximum annual payment amount was increased to \$40K per year with an additional \$10K per location incentive paid to those assigned to Japan, Guam, and Naval Air Station Lemoore. Not all aviators are eligible for the maximum contract amounts, based on the health of individual communities.

Year	Eligibles	Goal # / %	ADHRB takers / take rate	Max Annual Bonus	Max Contract Length	Max Contract Value	Percent eligible for Max Contract
FY22	661	470 / 71%	277 / 41.9%	\$35K	5 years	\$175K	46%
FY23	617	451 / 73%	228 / 37.0%	\$35K	7 years	\$245K	46%
FY24	577	334 / 58%	222 / 38.5%	\$50K	7 years	\$350K	24%

Note: The VP and VQ communities are not based at locations eligible for location incentive, substantially decreasing the percentage eligible for maximum contract amount. However, those communities still saw an increase in maximum contract value from FYs 2023 to 2024.

Actions to increase retention are recurrent review/proposals to adjust the Aviation Bonus (AvB), a recommended change to SECNAVINST 1421.3 (Temporary Spot Promotions of Officers) to include aviators filling tactical air DH billets, as well as continuation of non-monetary incentives, such as increased professional growth through in-residence graduate education, Career Intermission Program, and the Professional Flight Instructor program. Despite these challenges, Naval Aviation continues to meet operational requirements.

Enlisted Aviation Retention remains high. As recruiting rebounds, we will see manning levels for Enlisted Aviation ratings continue to improve. Across the board, our Enlisted Force is on a positive path to improvement; therefore, our overall force readiness is on a trajectory for steady incremental improvements.

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing – The United States Navy and Marine Corps

Witness(s) being Asked (if Multiple):

- The Honorable John Phelan, Secretary of the Navy

Question One:

What material support has the Navy provided to Ukraine in 2025 regarding surface and subsurface maritime assets?

Response: Since 2023, the Navy has provided comprehensive security assistance solutions to fulfill Ukraine’s priority maritime interdiction, coastal defense, riverine combat, air defense, long-range fires, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance needs. Deliveries of these critical capabilities continue throughout 2025. Additional information can be provided at a higher classification level.

The Navy directly enables Ukraine’s maritime capabilities with a key focus on the development, testing, and employment of autonomous systems exercising considerable anti-access/non traditional sea denial effects over the majority of the Black Sea.

Question Two:

How does the Great Lakes fit into the Navy’s maritime industrial base?

Response: The Great Lakes is a critical center of gravity for the maritime industrial base, with thousands of maritime suppliers in the region. Since FY 2018, the Navy has infused more than \$300 million in maritime industrial base investment into the region, including efforts to add capability and capacity to many critical maritime suppliers and implement targeted workforce development programs like the Michigan Maritime Manufacturing initiative which implements accelerated trades training to meet the workforce needs of regional suppliers. The Navy is also partnering with industry and academic partners across the Great Lakes to leverage the region’s expertise in advanced manufacturing technology. The Navy continues to evaluate opportunities to collaborate with partners to further support the maritime industrial base, such as leveraging existing automotive and steel manufacturing capacity.

Question Three:

How does the Navy envision our NATO and other global Allies contributing to the fulfillment of the Navy’s mission in EUCOM, CENTCOM, and INDOPACOM?

Response: Allies and partners have a key role to play in helping the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps reestablish deterrence through enhanced cooperation, interoperability, warfighting

readiness and greater burden-sharing in the maritime domain. Through operations, joint exercises, force posture initiatives, foreign military sales, and cooperative sustainment efforts, we are strengthening interoperability and ensuring a collective approach to shared security challenges and imperative to protect our trade routes around the world.

As Secretary Hegseth has stated, it is time for our NATO allies to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense. It is imperative for NATO to refocus on its core mission of deterrence and defense with European powers leading from the front. By re-framing our approach to Europe, we will build a stronger Alliance that is sustainable into the future.

Ensuring a stronger, more balanced ownership of conventional security and division of labor between the U.S. and our allies and partners will be necessary to maximize our comparative advantages across all Combatant Commands, allowing the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps to focus where they are needed most.

Question Four:

How can Congress assist in addressing workforce challenges in the shipbuilding industry to ensure the U.S. maintains a competitive edge in producing the next generation of naval assets?

Response: Encouraging young Americans to seek careers in the skilled trades will require the collective efforts of federal, state, and local governments, as well as our industry partners. Next generation workforce members must see a viable career path that is adequately compensated, has clear purpose, and provides opportunities to advance. We must fundamentally change how we view skilled trades – they must be seen as a critical component of our national security, and the Navy team is actively working to elevate those conversations at a national level through messaging and partnership.

The Navy has made significant investments to attract, recruit, train, and retain the maritime industrial base workforce. The FY 2025 Continuing Resolution (Pub. L. 118-158) funded wage productivity enhancements for nuclear shipbuilding programs. The Navy's six regional Talent Pipeline Programs have placed more than 10,000 workers in maritime industrial base careers, while partnering with small and medium suppliers to implement best practices to improve retention. Navy funding is also being provided through special contract incentives to support "Quality of Life" improvements at the shipyards, such as a new childcare facility near Bath Iron Works.

The Honorable Joseph Morelle
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing – The United States Navy and Marine Corps

Witness(s) being Asked (if Multiple):

- The Honorable John Phelan, Secretary of the Navy

Question One:

Display Supply Chain

Secretary Phelan, display technologies have become foundational to our defense—embedded in everything from cockpit interfaces to next-gen wearable systems. A recent report, *Displays Are the New Batteries*, makes a compelling case that the U.S. defense posture is vulnerable due to a fragile and heavily outsourced display supply chain—particularly advanced OLED and microLED components.

- a) Can you speak about the importance of securing our domestic display manufacturing base, and what steps the Department is taking to reduce foreign dependency in this space?
- b) How are you ensuring that display technologies critical to national security are prioritized in current defense industrial base resilience initiatives?

Response: Displays are critical to weapon systems, providing operators with battlefield awareness, system status, and essential safety information. These systems rely heavily on COTS components, including displays, a significant portion of which are manufactured outside the United States.

This reliance on foreign sources, including nations with potentially adversarial relationships, introduces several significant risks to our national security. These risks include supply chain disruptions, potential sabotage and malicious insertion, counterfeit components, and cybersecurity vulnerabilities.

To mitigate these risks, the DON is working to increase the number of domestic manufacturers and suppliers capable of producing displays to military specifications. By fostering a robust domestic display industry, we can ensure a secure and reliable supply chain, protect against malicious intrusion, and maintain the integrity of our training systems.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2026

TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2025.

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVES FORCES

WITNESSES

LIEUTENANT GENERAL LEONARD F. ANDERSON IV, COMMANDER, U.S. MARINE CORPS RESERVE, DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
LIEUTENANT GENERAL ROBERT D. HARTER, CHIEF OF ARMY RESERVE AND COMMANDING GENERAL, U.S. ARMY RESERVE COMMAND
LIEUTENANT GENERAL JOHN P. HEALY, CHIEF OF AIR FORCE RESERVE, DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
VICE ADMIRAL NANCY S. LACORE, CHIEF OF NAVY RESERVE, DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
GENERAL STEVEN S. NORDHAUS, CHIEF OF THE NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN CALVERT

Mr. CALVERT. I want to apologize. We had a meeting with the President of the United States this morning. So I was detained along with the rest of the committee. Hopefully, they will be coming in shortly, as the meeting is ongoing. We couldn't get out of there.

But now the Subcommittee on Defense will come to order. Today, the subcommittee will convene for an open oversight hearing to receive testimony on the National Guard and Reserve Forces. I am pleased to be joined by General Steven Nordhaus, Chief of the National Guard Bureau; Lieutenant General Robert Harter, Chief of the Army Reserve; Vice Admiral Nancy Lacore, Chief of Navy Reserve; Lieutenant General Leonard Anderson, Commander of the Marine Corps Reserve; and Lieutenant General John Healy, Chief of the Air Force Reserve.

Warm welcome to all of you, and thank you for years of distinguished service.

The men and women of the National Guard and Reserve Forces wear the uniform not only in times of war but in times of peace, recovery, and crisis. The Guard and Reserve are not simply backup forces. They are citizen soldiers who are neighbors, coworkers, constituents who stand ready to serve at a moment's notice. They fight overseas, but they also fight wildfires in California—I can attest to that—and respond to hurricanes and natural disasters throughout our country. And the National Guard serves with our partners around the world through State partnership programs to build critical capability for our allies, as we saw in Ukraine. Most impor-

tantly, they have also been on the front lines protecting our border to ensure the flow of deadly fentanyl is stopped.

What makes these servicemembers unique is not just their versatility but their dual commitment. They balance civilian careers and military obligations with extraordinary professionalism. But that balance is not without a cost. That is why we must ensure that the Guard and Reserve receive the same level of equipment, modernization, and training resources as their Active Duty counterparts. That will require smart sustained investment.

This committee has long supported the Guard and Reserves throughout the National Guard and Reserve equipment account, including 850 million in fiscal year 2025. I am interested in hearing from you what more can be done through that account to ensure that you can continue your great work. I also look forward to hearing from all of the witnesses on how we are thinking about innovation, taking calculated risk, and retaining talent to address growing career areas such as AI and cyber. What additional resources could Congress look at providing to our organizations to make them more successful?

Last, I look forward to hearing your thoughts on specific areas that equipment and modernization efforts would apply to your organization. Where do you see current gaps that are preventing the Guard and Reserve from being able to train and integrate with Active Duty Forces?

So, with that, I now recognize distinguished Ranking Member Ms. McCollum for her opening remarks.

OPENING REMARKS OF MS. MCCOLLUM

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, Mr. Chair, I stated to our people testifying this morning that I will be leaving to go to Interior, which you and I both served on. Right after my opening statement, Mr. Case will be here in my stead. And I hope to be back.

So, good morning, again, to each and every one of you. Thank you for appearing before the committee. Thank you for your patience. As the chair said, you all play a pivotal role in the safety and security of our Nation. And I want to not only thank you but for each one of the service personnel under your charge for their dedication to our country in protecting the goals, objectives, the ideals of our Constitution.

As I have said in our previous meetings, fiscal year 2026 budget process is off to a very rough start. I think it has gone beyond rough. I think we are in more than rough shape now with the delays that we know are coming and knowing what the numbers are going to be. And this is because there is only four months left at the end of fiscal year 2025. And all that still hasn't been finalized yet. So this committee really doesn't know what foundation we are building on to get a budget done, as the chair has been asking us to do in June.

The skinny budget this year has been released, and there is, you know, rumors that full budget might not be released until June. And we were told yesterday soon. Well, soon is not soon enough. We have not been able to discuss in any detail the budget priorities. So, specifically, it is disappointing that we will be unable to

discuss each of your priorities in programmatic details for fiscal year 2026 at a time when some programs are facing long delays and others are facing setbacks. So I hope each and every one of you will reach out to the chair and the members of this committee as soon as the details are released to share your priorities for the coming year.

Our National Guard and Reserve Components are called upon to support a variety of missions, including humanitarian missions, overseas operations, increased support to the southwest border. And the Guard, in particular, the State partnerships, one in which the chair and I were just at with other members of this committee in Lithuania—and State partnerships, we work, quote/unquote, the regular, traditional trips, but they were talking about how important the State partnerships were to them.

So, given the announcement that the number of troops deployed to the southern border mission will dramatically increase, I would like to better understand how it will impact each one of your units and how it will also impact the pace and schedule of other deployments and exercises. I would also like to understand how this mission may be affecting our troops' morale, readiness, and retention efforts. It would also be helpful if each of you would share the impacts of the continuing resolution on the current pace of operations for each of your services, including training.

And, with the announcement of the Secretary of the Army there will be force structure change in equipment modification, I would really like to hear from the Army Guard and Reserve how this might impact troops in the units and the equipment under your command.

And, finally, it would be helpful to understand the impact of the civilian workforce. You already do a lot on a shoestring. And these cuts could, and I believe will, further—your ability to execute your missions with the success that you deserve to have.

In serving our country, on top of managing the civilian job, in many cases supporting a family, this is one of highest forms of service our citizen soldiers do. They are truly putting their country above themselves. So I thank you all for your efforts today to give us the best information you have, although I fear it will lack the substance and information we need to do our budgeting. I look forward to a productive dialogue today.

I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentlelady.

We will now begin with witness testimony.

Without objection, your full written testimony will be placed in the record. Please try to keep your remarks to 5 minutes or less.

General Nordhaus, we will begin with you for a brief summary of your remarks. General, you are recognized.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF GENERAL NORDHAUS

General NORDHAUS. Thank you, Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of 433,000 National Guardsmen and their families. Our National Guard is combat-ready, cost-effective, experienced, and dual-role both State and Federal like no other force. As a primary combat

Reserve of the Army and the Air Force, the National Guard delivers unparalleled operational capacity with strategic depth. We represent 20 percent of the Joint Force and four percent of the budget. And, since 1636, our unique force has served in every one of our Nation's wars.

The National Guard's mission triad—homeland, warfight, and partnerships—aligns perfectly with the President's vision of peace through strength and the Secretary of Defense's priorities and restore the warrior ethos, rebuild our military, and reestablish deterrence.

In today's complex and dangerous environment, the Air National Guard is 33,000 guardsmen globally engaged serving in every combatant command. We are building elite units and combat power to deter adversaries and, when called upon, win our Nation's wars. We will prioritize our warfighters, champion duty-status reform, full-time support, military technician modernization, and improving medical access to build readiness.

In the homeland, we operate 15 of 16 aerospace alert sites defending our skies. We are postured to support the Golden Dome Initiative, leveraging our expertise in air and missile defense and unique capabilities and strategic missile warning and ground-based interceptors. We currently have 6,000 guardsmen securing our southern border.

Additionally, our counterdrug program disrupted 13 billion in illegal narcotics just last year. And, in disaster response, the National Guard responded to six hurricanes and 62,000 wildfires supporting our communities, saving countless lives.

To sustain this ability, investments in foundational readiness accounts such as flying hours, facility sustainment, restoration, and modernization, weapon systems, sustainment, and base operating support are critical to rebuilding our military.

As a warfighting force, the National Guard provides 40 percent of the Army and 30 percent of the Air Force's operational forces. Our combat readiness was demonstrated on April 13, 2024, when D.C. National Guard forces neutralized enemy drones and missile defense in defense of Israel supported by Tennessee National Guard. This operation earned 11 distinguished flying crosses.

To continue to be interoperable, deployable, and integrated with the Joint Force, we must recapitalize and currently with our service into advanced platforms of helicopters, infantry squad vehicles, fighters, tankers, and cyber. These modernization efforts will help advance our warfighting capabilities, deter adversaries, and maximize the return on investment for our Joint Force and our taxpayers.

And, on partnerships, across nearly every ZIP Code, in 60 percent of the nation-states worldwide, we build trust, partner capacity, and resilience that strengthens national security. Locally, we collaborate with first responders across 2,500 communities. Federally, we work with interagency partners countering drug trafficking and defeating cyber threats.

And, globally, our State Partnership Program, with 115 partner nations, conducted over a thousand engagements in 2024. The National Guard's local-to-global partnerships ensures we are stronger together and stronger tomorrow. The National Guard is ready, le-

thal, and postured to ensure peace through strength and deliver decisive victory, if needed. With your continued support, we will transform at speed, will deliver an incredible value to America. Your National Guard is always ready and always there. Thank you.
[The information follows:]

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RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

GENERAL STEVEN S. NORDHAUS

CHIEF, NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU

BEFORE THE

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE

FIRST SESSION, 119TH CONGRESS

ON

THE POSTURE OF THE

NATIONAL GUARD

MAY 20th, 2025

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

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Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, and esteemed members of the Subcommittee—thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Soldiers, Airmen, Civilian teammates, and families of the National Guard.

The National Guard is a unique force in our Nation’s military. We are the indispensable combat reserve of the Army and the Air Force, bringing both operational capacity and strategic depth to the fight. The National Guard’s value proposition cannot be understated. At only four percent of the Department of Defense’s (DoD) budget, we provide twenty percent of the Joint Force. Our 433,000 Soldiers and Airmen live and serve in nearly every community in the 50 States, three Territories (Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam), and the District of Columbia (DC). Our geographic dispersion and the dual nature of our service—providing global combat capabilities to the Joint Force, and homeland defense and response capabilities under the management of a state’s governor—means we are postured and ready to respond to any mission, anywhere.

The National Guard’s myriad of missions fall into three key categories: the warfight, the homeland, and partnerships. All missions are integral to implementing President Trump’s vision of peace through strength and support the Secretary of Defense’s priorities of restoring the warrior ethos, rebuilding our military, and reestablishing deterrence. Moreover, the National Guard mission triad seamlessly aligns with the 2025 Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance (INDSG). At a

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strategic level, the INDSG directs the DoD to defend the homeland, deter China in the Indo-Pacific by prioritizing combat-credible military forces, and share the responsibility of countering threats with our allies and partners.

The INDSG is the Department of Defense's response to a dangerous, dynamic, and complex moment in history, with unprecedented challenges to our national security. We face vulnerabilities on our borders including illegal immigration, deadly narcotics trafficking, advanced air and missile threats, cyber intrusions, and critical infrastructure risks. China continues to build its military at an alarming rate, while Russia, Iran, North Korea, and terrorist organizations also contribute to the dangerous overall strategic environment.

Over the National Guard's 388-year history, we have continually adapted and evolved to meet the moment, protect our communities, deter our adversaries, and—when called upon—win our Nation's wars. Your continued support made this evolution possible, and we cannot overstate our appreciation to this Subcommittee and your Congressional colleagues' commitment to the National Guard. We continue to offer a remarkable value to our Nation, providing our Joint Force with combat forces, operational capabilities, and strategic depth. We also provide our Governors with crisis response forces to save lives and mitigate human suffering.

While we met and exceeded our goals with historic levels of recruiting this year, we cannot take our foot off the accelerator. We must continue recruiting the

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next generation of elite warfighters while retaining our most skilled and talented Soldiers and Airmen. We must prioritize concurrent recapitalization, investing in equipment across air, land, space, and cyber domains to ensure future lethality, survivability, and interoperability with our active component counterparts. We need to accelerate the pace of innovation, drawing on the unrivaled civilian expertise of our dual-status warfighters. The National Guard is a vital component of the Joint Force and the INDSG, and now is the time to maximize our lethal, professional, cost-effective force.

Defending the Homeland: A National Guard Mission, an INDSG Priority

The National Guard plays an integral role in homeland defense. The Secretary of Defense directed the DoD to defend the homeland, to include sealing our borders, protecting critical infrastructure, advancing the United States' interests in the Western Hemisphere, responding to natural and manmade disasters and cyberattacks, and defending the American people against the threat of attack by ballistic, hypersonic, and cruise missiles, and other advanced aerial attacks—the most catastrophic threat facing the United States, through a next-generation missile defense shield known as the Golden Dome. The National Guard plays an integral role in homeland defense, in addition to responding to natural and manmade disasters.

As part of the homeland defense mission, the National Guard operates fifteen of North American Aerospace Defense Command's sixteen Aerospace Control Alert

sites, defending America's airspace against air and missile threats for Operation NOBLE EAGLE. In 2024 alone, the Western and Eastern Air Defense Sectors, scrambled fighters to investigate 559 suspect aircraft and enforced 278 temporary flight restrictions across the East and West coasts of the United States. The National Guard is also poised to play a critical role in establishing a Golden Dome with our extensive expertise in air and missile defense. The National Guard holds the Nation's only Ground-Based Mid-Course Missile Defense Brigade and plays a critical role in integrating with space-based sensors and artificial intelligence-driven command systems, providing personnel for ground-based interceptors, and supporting interagency coordination.

We are also dedicated to securing and preserving the communities where we live and serve. The National Guard supports the defense of our borders, providing surveillance, logistics, and infrastructure support to the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Customs and Border Protection, with roughly 6,000 Guardsmen supporting border operations. In addition, the National Guard's counterdrug program has disrupted the flow of deadly narcotics in every state, territory, and the District of Columbia for more than three decades. In 2024, more than 2,700 Guardsmen supported nearly 2,600 Law Enforcement Agencies in Counterdrug Operations that led to the seizure of more than \$13 billion in currency, property, and illegal narcotics. The program trained more than 67,000 law enforcement agents from more than

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13,000 partner agencies We are expanding our footprint to assist law enforcement in combatting the opioid crisis and other illegal activities crossing our borders.

The National Guard is also the most capable and experienced disaster response force in the Nation. In 2024, the National Guard responded to 6 hurricanes, clearing more than 6,200 miles of roads, and 285,000 cubic yards of debris, as well as distributing nearly 2.7 million meals and 7.6 million bottles of water. In late 2024, when historic hurricanes and flooding devastated North Carolina, the National Guard mobilized more than 1,000 Guardsmen across 12 states to perform rescue missions and deliver food, water, and critical life sustaining supplies. Additionally, while the National Interagency Fire Center tracked nearly 62,000 wildfires impacting 8.8 million acres, t. The National Guard provided aerial firefighting support with 800 fixed- and rotary-wing sorties delivering 3.5 million gallons of water and fire retardant.

The National Guard provides critical cybersecurity and information technology support, including mission assurance, network assessment and protection and risk mitigation. The National Guard cyber force is principally organized, trained and equipped to support DoD cyber mission requirements, however, can be directed to provide threat mitigation support to critical infrastructure and other non-DoD entities. Many National Guard servicemembers hold cyber positions in their civilian jobs, allowing them to combine an intimate knowledge of leading-edge cyber technologies from the private sector with a deep appreciation of cyber tradecraft

that comes from high-level security clearances and years of military training. The Guard's cyber force is proud to fight on the frontlines of the cyber domain.

The National Guard also contributes to resilience in the homeland through Weapons of Mass Destruction prevention and response operations performed by specialized National Guard Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Response Enterprise forces. More than 10,000 National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are specially trained and equipped to prevent or respond to major or catastrophic domestic Weapons of Mass Destruction incidents.

The National Guard is a versatile and ready community-based force serving as force-multipliers in the defense and resilience of our homeland. We always rise to the occasion and meet our Nation's needs in both homeland defense and response. Our agility and responsiveness in the face of global and dynamic threats and hazards also serves as a deterrent to our adversaries, who see the strength of our national resolve.

**Deterring our Adversaries: The National Guard as a
Ready and Lethal Warfighting Force**

The National Guard provides combat-capable Soldiers and Airmen to every Combatant Command, and maintains the depth and readiness needed to rapidly surge for large-scale combat operations ensuring the Department is the most elite

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and lethal force. Our Soldiers and Airmen are formidable, experienced, and battle tested.

On April 13, 2024, during Operation TRUE PROMISE, the DC Air National Guard's 121st Fighter Squadron (FS) launched six F-16s to defend Israel, successfully neutralizing enemy drones and cruise missiles. Simultaneously, the Tennessee National Guard's 134th Air Refueling Wing provided critical in-flight fueling to U.S. and coalition fighters, ensuring extended patrols, successful intercepts, and deterrence of further aggression, saving countless lives. The operation was so successful that 11 Air Guardsmen were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and an additional 4 have nominations currently underway. This performance, made possible by Air National Guard-led modernization efforts like upgraded sensors, datalinks, and communications suites, underscores the 121st Fighter Squadron's pivotal role in integrated joint and allied operations across multiple theaters. The operation showcased not only the platform agility of the ANG's Block 30 F-16s, but also the strategic foresight behind efforts like Open Viper, ALR-69A, Angry Kitten Combat Pod, and Legion.

The National Guard's critical role as a combat-capable force is undeniable. We provide nearly 40 percent of total Army operational forces and 30 percent of total Air Force operational forces at merely four percent of the DoD budget. We continue to build our ranks through investment in recruiting and retention thanks in no small part

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to the incredible support of this committee and your congressional colleagues. We realize that when it comes to recruiting, we must pursue every opportunity to seek out the very best our Nation has to offer. To meet this need we are expanding our outreach, capitalizing on recent recruiting successes, and leveraging our community-based connections to attract top talent. Our value as warfighters is not strictly a matter of strategic depth; we represent the best warriors in our profession of arms – tested and proven on the training ground, on the battlefield, and in elite combat arms competitions around the globe. The National Guard has garnered an impressive set of victories in cyber, language, F-35, sniper, tank crew, small arms, and counter unmanned aerial systems competitions against international, Joint Force, and interagency teams, and recently received the AAAA Air/Sea Rescue Award for Kosovo operations.

Our warrior ethos embodied by strength, readiness, and lethality makes us a formidable part of the Joint Force and enhances our Nation's ability to deter adversaries. The National Guard will continue to uphold the highest standards as we rebuild our military and deter our adversaries.

Sharing Responsibility for National Security: Allies and Partners, Local to Global

The National Guard maintains partnerships at every level, from local to global, sharing collective responsibility for our national security. At the local and state levels, we maintain relationships with first responders and emergency managers to enhance

resilience and improve response and resilience in our communities. Our approximately 2,500 armories, bases, and readiness centers serve as hubs for community engagement and response and strategically posture our Service members to defend and serve our nation. Our Guardsmen live in nearly every ZIP code and serve in every state, territory, and the District Columbia—as well as in every Combatant Command. At the federal level, the National Guard collaborates with the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Justice, and other agencies to seamlessly respond to domestic crises, counter illicit trafficking organizations, and prevent cyber incursions. Our success at working across the air, land, sea, space and cyber domains coupled with our unique community based organizational structure makes our Nation stronger, which further reestablishes our deterrent posture.

Internationally, the National Guard executes the State Partnership Program (SPP), which pairs a state's National Guard with a partner nation. Today, the SPP has 115 partnerships in every Combatant Command, encompassing nearly 60 percent of global nation states. When we engage and train with our SPP partners, we make them more capable of their own security, and more lethal and interoperable with the United States. against shared adversaries. In addition, the SPP proves its value year after year. In 2024 alone, the program conducted more than 1,000 engagements at less than one percent of the security cooperation budget.

Furthermore, partnerships with key industry leaders, finance, technologists, engineers, and academics from across the United States and the technological breadth of this country. Currently, National Guard members with civilian careers have brought that expertise, industry best practices, and mindset to the Department to rebuild our military for potential future conflict. The National Guard also maintains a unique link to our defense industrial base. Specifically, many of our Guardsmen have civilian careers in the aerospace, cyber, and engineering sectors, bringing that civilian experience to military operations. Our citizen-Soldiers and Airmen develop corporate knowledge while working in the defense industrial base while these industry partners benefit from their years of military experience to develop the most lethal solutions of tomorrow. Sharing the burden of security across our partnerships at every level makes us Stronger Together, Stronger Tomorrow.

Looking into the Future

As I look towards the future, I plan to focus on four areas – Warfighters, Readiness, Partnerships, and Modernization – to execute the DoD’s objectives.

Warfighters are the foundation of the National Guard and the bedrock of an effective force. Developing lethal and elite Soldiers, Airmen, and Civilians is vital to our success. Strategic competitors and the changing character of war demand a laser focus on readiness. Investments in our foundational readiness accounts such as flying hours, Weapon System Sustainment, Facilities Sustainment Restoration &

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Modernization, Ground Operations Tempo and Base Operations Support—will play a pivotal role in the Nation’s ability to counter threats, deter adversaries and respond to domestic crises.

Partnerships advance the United States’ national security posture and interests both at home and abroad. Our partners provide asymmetric advantages locally and globally. We will continue to look for ways to expand our partnerships and leverage our relationships.

As we rebuild and modernize our military, in a challenging, fiscally constrained environment, the National Guard can serve as the ultimate force multiplier supplying combat-capable warriors at a fraction of the cost.

I look forward to working with the Service Secretaries, Service Chiefs, OSD and this body to modernize our aging weapon systems, air and ground platforms, and combat support infrastructure, recapitalizing them with systems such as the UH-60M, F-35, F-15EX, KC-46, AH-64E. Equipping our forces will remain a critical component of this strategy, bridging capability gaps and seams, and ensuring our warriors can operate effectively in contested environments by matching capabilities to evolving threats.

Conclusion

The National Guard’s mission triad—the warfight, our homeland, and partnerships— combines to ensure a force that’s Always Ready, Always There. We are

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fully aligned with the INDSG. We are focused on our vital role in the Joint Force and continue to provide remarkable value to the taxpayers in the communities we serve.

We must pour on the afterburners when modernizing our equipment and our approach to overcome tomorrow's challenges today. With your support, we will continue to transform, innovate, and adapt to meet the challenges of today's strategic environment, so we can achieve peace through strength and if deterrence fails, decisively win.

Your National Guard is Always Ready, Always There!

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.
General Harter, you are recognized.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF GENERAL HARTER

General HARTER. Good morning, Chairman Calvert and Congressman Case, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, on behalf of the more than 180,000 soldiers and civilians and their family members that make up your Army Reserve, it is an honor for me to be here today, along with my wingman, Command Sergeant Major Greg Betty.

Simply put, your Army Reserve exist for one purpose: to deliver combat-ready soldiers and formations at time of need in support of the Nation. First and foremost, I want to thank you for your continued support of our warrior citizens. NGREA specifically makes a tremendous difference for the Army Reserve as we look to keep pace with modernization efforts. We are thankful for the \$131μmillion appropriated this year. NGREA drives combat readiness for our formations. And our combat readiness is critical.

During a recent mobilization tabletop exercise, Army planners highlighted the 99 percent of all Army bulk fuel transportation support resides in the United States Army Reserve—99 percent. We are not a strategic formation. We are an operational force by design and necessity. We are the enabling force for the joint fight. To that end, nearly 9,000 Army Reserve soldiers are currently deployed globally across all combatant commands, including over 700 soldiers supporting operations on our southern border.

Our challenges have been relatively consistent over the last several years, with our largest problem areas being inadequate manning, aging facilities that don't support our training requirements, and poor equipment readiness. We are working hard to help ourselves.

Regarding manning, we are working with the Army—they recruit for us—to increase accessions and hold recruiters to account.

We are driving on retention, implementing health and holistic fitness programs across our footprint and revising processes for more deliberate and improved career management for our part-time TPU force.

On the facility front, we are thankful for our military construction and sustainment dollars. But we simply are not resourced adequately to maintain or sustain our aging Reserve centers.

As a result, we are relooking our stationing model with a focus on investing our precious facility dollars and locations that support recruiting, retention, and allow for readiness producing training.

Finally, maintaining our equipment is hard. Nearly 80 percent of our equipment is stored at equipment concentration sites located across the country. These sites are funded to just 50 percent of our full time mechanic requirement. To offset this challenge, we have initiated a pilot program to store and maintain critical fleets at four locations in Europe and in the Pacific. And we have remissioned our internal support maintenance companies to conduct their annual training at our centralized sites, turning wrenches, fixing our equipment, and improving readiness.

There are three areas that I would ask for your continued support: First, continued support of our Reserve Pay Accounts, RPA,

despite our end-strength challenges. We are aggressively managing our people and seeing increased participation rates at our battle assemblies. RPA makes a difference.

Continued support of NGREA. NGREA allows us to procure modernized equipment that drives lethality. We only receive about 1 percent of the Army's procurement budget. So NGREA has an outsized impact on our ability to procure modernized equipment. Over the past three years, we have purchased 2,300 mission command systems, significantly improving our formation's ability to communicate effectively on the battlefield.

Finally, we need consistent and predictable funding. Army Reserve soldiers balance civilian careers with military commitments, and continuing resolutions force us to delay, curtail, or cancel training events. Predictability is essential for our soldiers, their family members, and their civilian employers. So I ask for your continued support.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to be here, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The information follows:]

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RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

LIEUTENANT GENERAL ROBERT D. HARTER
CHIEF OF ARMY RESERVE
UNITED STATES ARMY

AND

COMMANDING GENERAL
UNITED STATES ARMY RESERVE COMMAND

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FIRST SESSION, 119TH CONGRESS

ON THE POSTURE OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY RESERVE

MAY 20, 2025

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE COMMITTEE

Two and a half centuries after the first shots of the American Revolution, the Army Reserve continues to embody the spirit of those original Minutemen. Like their predecessors, Citizen Soldiers stand ready to answer the nation's call – not as a force in reserve, but as a critical, integrated component of the Total Army, in support of the Joint Force and the Nation. Today, the Army Reserve delivers over half of the Army's maneuver support capabilities and over 90% of certain key theater-level enablers like sustainment, medical and engineering. In a large-scale conflict, our Warrior Citizens won't serve as *follow-on* forces in support of the Active Army – they will be needed alongside their Active teammates, early and often. This reality demands the Army Reserve be combat ready on day one, despite ongoing resourcing challenges. This statement will outline our efforts to build combat-ready soldiers and formations, and our strategy to mitigate risk and ensure our readiness.

Operational by Design and Necessity

The Army Reserve is a nationwide and globally-present force – more than 2,000 units across 50 states, five territories, and over 20 countries, and five key installations. Representing nearly 20% of the Total Army's personnel, the Army Reserve provides a quarter of the Army's force mobilization capacity – all while accounting for just 6% of the total Army budget.

The Army Reserve has one clear purpose: to deliver combat ready soldiers and formations at time of need in support of the Army, the Joint Force and the Nation. Currently, nearly 9,000 Warrior Citizens are deployed globally across all Combatant Command theaters, with approximately 200 units activated – including a dedicated force of over 700 soldiers supporting the Army and the Department of Homeland Security on our Southern Border. In addition to global and component command requirements, the Army Reserve stands ready to rapidly respond to domestic crises, with Soldiers and equipment in more than 1,000 communities nationwide. When it comes to supporting Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) operations, the Army Reserve is well-postured, offering capabilities such as aviation lift, search and rescue, logistics, and full-spectrum engineering support.

Furthermore, Army Reserve support to the Army and joint and allied forces will be critical in a contested logistics environment, where operations, facilities, and activities are targeted in the homeland, in transit, and in the theater. With eight of the Army's 14 Expeditionary Sustainment Commands and 95% of the Total Army's bulk fuel line-haul capacity, the Army Reserve is essential to set the theater for the Joint Force, enabling combat formations to seize and maintain initiative and extend operational reach in Large Scale Combat Operations (LSCO). Simply put, we don't exist to support ourselves. Our units are pushing food, fuel, ammunition, and repair parts to Active and Army National Guard (ARNG) combat formations in contact. ***We are essential to the total force fight.***

The Army Reserve Posture

The Army Reserve is a cost-effective provider of capabilities and specialties. Enhanced by civilian expertise acquired across businesses, industry and academia, the Army Reserve brings unique talents, skills, and capabilities, adding critical depth to the Army and the Joint Force. In a world increasingly defined by uncertainty and conflict, the Army Reserve will continue to drive on its purpose and, given adequate notice, continue to meet projected operational requirements. Preparing more than 174,000 Warrior Citizens and 11,000 civilians for large scale conflict is a significant task – particularly with 85% of the force serving on a part time basis. In order to deliver the capability our Nation requires, the Army Reserve must attack the chronic/persistent challenges that hinder our readiness: manning shortfalls, declining facility and equipment readiness, outdated stationing actions, and ineffective/inefficient use of our limited but critical collective training time. Meeting the evolving demands of modern warfare requires that we proactively transform the Army Reserve – its structure, facilities, and stationing to keep pace with our adversaries and threat environment. To that end, we’ve established four lines of effort to guide our transformation:

- Build Combat Ready Formations
- Mobilize and Deploy on Time and at Scale
- Adapt, Transform, and Modernize
- Invest in our Soldiers, Civilians, and Families

Building Combat Ready Formations – Man, Equip, Train

Manning

Based on the Army Reserve’s critical mission set, if we’re short people, the Army is short people. Our struggle to meet end strength requirements is due, in large part, to recruiting shortfalls. U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) recruits for the Army Reserve and has fallen short of its mission by roughly 4,000 recruits per year for the past eight years. To address this effort, we are committing 1,500 Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) recruiters and working closely with USAREC to better leverage AGRs to target Reserve recruiting.

We’ve had additional challenges within our internal retention and recruiting missions and retention which, when combined with the accession shortfalls, have created a cumulative 40,000-soldier gap in our collective formations. For context, we are currently short nearly 10,000 soldiers in the grades private through private first class. ***This equates to manning for 60 medium truck companies.*** We also have significant shortages in our mid-grade NCOs and officers – staff sergeants, sergeants first class, captains and majors.

To retain the force, we are maximizing Active Component to Reserve Component (AC2RC) accessions, strengthening integration at transition points and revamping the onboarding process for AC soldiers transitioning to the Army Reserve. In Fiscal Year (FY) 24 we were able to successfully transition over 4,500 soldiers to the Army Reserve. Through our Reserve Component Career Counselors, we are engaging with Active Duty Servicemembers scheduled to transition out and make them aware of opportunities within the Army Reserve so they can continue their service.

Equipping

Army Reserve equipment remains a top concern for senior leaders. With over half of the Army's maneuver support capabilities and over 90% of certain key theater-level enablers, any equipment shortfalls equates to operational risk during LSCO. For example, while we provide approximately 50% of Army Water Distribution and Storage capacity, we are currently filled to 28% (131ea on-hand of 468ea authorized) of Load Handling System Compatible Water Tank Rack System (HIPPO) requirements, with projected improvements to 50% in FY26. Additionally, our legacy Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Unit (ROWPU) is filled to 69% (37ea of 54ea) of its authorized quantity, but is beyond its economic useful life, experiences frequent operational failures, and suffers from parts obsolescence. The modernized replacement for the Reserve Osmosis Water Purification Unit (ROWPU) is the Tactical Water Purification System (TWPS) with expected fielding to all COMPOs in FY28. Overall, we must work on out-of-the-box solutions – analyzing structure, organization, posture, and resourcing solutions – to enhance combat readiness in support of the Army and Joint Force.

Maintaining our equipment across the Army Reserve's dispersed footprint is certainly challenging. To mitigate this challenge, we are exploring forward-positioning critical equipment and fleets in key theaters to improve maintenance and readiness. In partnership with the Army Materiel Command, we are also divesting excess, inoperable, and outdated equipment. This effort has already yielded thousands of pieces for repair and upgrade, with thousands more slated for divestment.

Training

The Army Reserve is prioritizing integrated training partnerships with active duty and National Guard forces to enhance force-wide interoperability. Operation Mojave Falcon exemplifies this approach, providing a realistic, large-scale training environment for maneuver support and sustainment forces across all echelons, replicating future battlefields and better preparing our formations for the spectrum of conflict.

The Army Reserve maintains a strong forward presence in support of U.S. Army Pacific and U.S. Army Europe-Africa, actively participating in joint exercises. In FY24, nearly 50 exercises were conducted as part of the Joint Exercise Program, involving over 8,000 Army Reserve Soldiers.

We anticipate continued high levels of engagement, particularly in the priority theaters of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and U.S. European Command. To further enhance our responsiveness, we are exploring opportunities to forward-position additional equipment in these key regions.

The Department of Defense Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) delivers valuable, non-traditional training opportunities. These initiatives provide critical full-spectrum support to communities across the nation and its territories, enhancing readiness while strengthening vital partnerships between the military and civilian communities. This year, the Army Reserve will lead multiple IRT exercises, including American Samoa Wellness, Healthy Broome in Broome County, New York, and MOWA Choctaw Wellness in Washington County, Alabama.

Adapt, Transform, and Modernize

Command and Control

The Army Reserve is actively adapting, transforming, and modernizing to prepare for the future battlefield. A key priority is streamlining our Command and Control (C2) structure, which is currently cumbersome and not optimized to build readiness. The U.S. Army Reserve Command currently oversees 28 geographically dispersed Major Subordinate Commands. We've already implemented a significant realignment, reducing reporting commands to 15 while maintaining functional oversight.

Modernizing the Force

In direct support of Army Futures Command, the Army Reserve's 75th Innovation Command continues to drive modernization efforts, combining a unique blend of civilian-acquired skills, certifications, and abilities, with functional military expertise to assess new capabilities and technologies in support of continuous transformation. The 75th IC recently hosted a "code-a-thon" with the 18th Airborne Corps, developing an AI tool that dramatically reduces intelligence analysis time – from 2-4 hours to mere minutes – enabling faster, more informed command decisions. Other successes include a secure AI system for special operations and blockchain technology providing 100% accuracy in Army equipment tracking. These innovations demonstrate how the Army Reserve leverages the skills of our Citizen Soldiers and innovative American companies to become a more capable and efficient force.

The Army Reserve is also a vital asset in cyberspace. U.S. Army Reserve Cyber Command (ARCYBER) routinely deploys Cyber Protection Teams comprised of soldiers with professional IT and security backgrounds. These teams contribute significantly to national preparedness through participation in exercises like Cyber Shield and support real-world operations defending critical networks against threats like ransomware. This combination of skill development and practical application ensures the Army Reserve remains at the forefront of cyber defense.

Facilities and Stationing

Our current stationing and facility model is challenging. For example, the Army Reserve's 300th Military Police Brigade is currently comprised of 3,200 soldiers living in 37 states, drilling at 31 Reserve Centers in 11 states, with 71,000 pieces of equipment across 22 separate locations.

The Army Reserve is a Reserve Center-centric force, organized around drilling at approximately 800 locations, many of which are in disrepair and a significant distance from quality training areas. This model, initially designed to facilitate manning (put units where the people are), is outdated and outpaced by changing demographics. Piecing together units in an attempt to counter demographic shifts has only exacerbated the issue.

The Army Reserve manages almost 4,000 buildings across the United States and territories, with an average facility age of 44 years. Thirty-one percent of these structures are rated as poor or failing condition. Most of these Reserve Centers are not near quality training facilities or ranges. Furthermore, the Army Reserve faces \$2.3 billion in deferred restoration and maintenance (R&M) costs and a \$9.3 billion backlog in military construction. Should the funding trend remain at this level across these lines of effort, the backlog will continue to compound and increase beyond our ability to properly sustain and build our critical infrastructure required to enable our readiness capabilities.

To mitigate this unsustainable challenging stationing and facility model, we are standing up an effort to review and adapt our stationing and facility model to be more agile and responsive – increasing investments in our major training areas, like Fort McCoy, while reducing investment in failing facilities. To counter demographic shifts, we are focused on leasing rather than fixed investments in stand-alone Army Reserve Centers (which normally costs \$45-\$60M to build).

Most importantly, we are looking to increase partnerships with our Guard and AC teammates and invest precious facility resources in locations like Camp Shelby or Fort Knox, where we can store and maintain equipment, providing soldiers with readiness-building training complexes.

Invest in Soldiers, Civilians & Families

Readiness relies on our families who support and sustain our soldiers and the employers who enable them to serve the Army and the Nation. The Army Reserve promotes quality of life programs to improve the Army Reserve experience while making it easier to integrate family, civilian work, and military life in our geographically dispersed force. The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, Private Public Partnership Program, (P3O), Health and Holistic Fitness (H2F) are among the resources that enhance readiness by supporting recruiting and retention, and inspiring confidence in soldiers and families.

To support work-life integration for our Citizen Soldier force, P3O provides an essential link to private sector expertise, connecting eligible team members to both immediate and long-term employment opportunities. These partnerships extend to over 350 businesses in more than 20 industry sectors, providing a diverse range of employment opportunities to soldiers and families. Additionally, P3O helps recruiting and retention, collaborating with the AC2RC program, which contracted 153 soldiers in FY24.

The Army Reserve continues to invest in H2F. We are piloting a “surge” model through our Readiness Divisions in which H2F teams will surge to units at their Home Station or training locations. H2F is key to enabling soldier resiliency; we will continue to revise our delivery model and seek opportunities to partner with our teammates in the National Guard and Army Reserve.

Conclusion

Should the Army be called to support LSCO scenario, Army Reserve soldiers and formations will be among the first to fight – and we must be fully ready to do so. As an operational force, by both design and necessity, the Army Reserve maintains the bulk of the Total Army’s enabling capacity and structure. It is imperative that the Army review its current capabilities by component; I believe that a rebalance of structure and capabilities across the components is needed to reduce risk and better posture our Army for LSCO.

We are grateful for Congressional support for defense spending, which remains vital to our modernization strategy, enabling readiness generation and interoperability. The Army Reserve understands the demands placed upon us, and we remain steadfast in our purpose: to deliver combat-ready soldiers and formations, at the point of need, in support of the Army and the Nation.

Twice the Citizen, Combat Ready – This We’ll Defend.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you, General.
Admiral Lacore, you are recognized.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL LACORE

Admiral LACORE. Good morning, Chairman Calvert, Congressman Case, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. For 110 years, the Navy Reserve has provided strategic depth for the fleet to deter aggression and, when required, to prevail in combat. We are globally a deployable and operationally relevant force integrated into operations on the southern border and filling critical gaps at sea.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you on this force of which I am extremely proud. And with me today is Force Master Chief Tracy Hunt, who, in keeping with his title, has been a forceful advocate for Navy Reserve sailors. He will retire in July after 36 years of exceptional service.

Over the past few months, Reserve C-130 crews transported thousands of pounds of ordnance into the Red Sea fight, keeping our ships on station, intercepting Houthi missiles, conducting precision strikes, and safeguarding global commerce. When the fleet needs logistics, whether to deliver firepower or staying power, the Navy Reserve answers the call.

Warfighting readiness is priority one for the Navy Reserve. As such, every drill weekend, annual training, exercise and training dollar is focused on generating warfighting readiness. It is an all-hands effort underwritten by our sailors, civilians, and their families.

In April, the Navy Reserve officially met our authorized end strength for the first time since 2020, resulting in an exceptional recruiting effort combined with high retention. Today, 15,000 of our nearly 58,000 reservists are in Active Duty orders serving in every AOR. We deliver half the Navy's intelligence and expeditionary combat capability.

And our Reserve logistic support wing flying the C-40 and C-130 operates 24/7, 365, in INDOPACOM, EUCOM, and CENTCOM. We are investing our warfighters because they are our strategic advantage. They bring tactical expertise and civilian experience that adds unique value to our force and expands the Navy's capacity. We deliver the training, resources, and quality-of-life initiatives that enable Reserve sailors to maintain their warfighting readiness, and we are doing it with a clear focus to deliver a force that is ready on day one.

The Navy is designed to operate as a distributed maritime force, which demands an agile supply chain. The Navy Reserve answers that demand. As I shared with many of you individually, the C-130 Tango Hercules operated exclusively by the Reserve, the Navy's only long-range intra-theater airlift for oversized cargo. This capability is in high demand from fleet commanders, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, playing a critical role in the contested logistics necessary to sustain a maritime fight.

Last year, Navy Reserve airlift transported more than 80,000 passengers and 20 million pounds of cargo, sustaining carrier strike groups in every theater, delivering salvage teams, resup-

plying critical munitions, and providing repair parts to keep F-35s flying in the Pacific and Aegis destroyers on station in the Red Sea.

However, our C-130 fleet is aging and lacks the survivability necessary to operate in a contested environment. Recapitalizing with a KC-130 Juliet is critical to ensuring that we can effectively and safely carry out the critical intra-theater logistics missions for the fleet today, in 2027, and well beyond that.

We are grateful for the strong bipartisan alignment on this priority. NGREA is an essential appropriation for the Navy Reserve, and we are grateful for it, but we need more. Our requirements greatly exceed the Navy's percentage in NGREA. We would benefit from a more balanced apportionment in NGREA because the Pacific site will undoubtedly stress the maritime services.

Chairman Calvert, Congressman Case, and members of the committee, thank you for your support of the Navy Reserve and the sailors, civilians, families, and employers who make our mission possible. We remain committed to deliver what the fleet requires precisely when the fleet needs it. I look forward to your questions.

[The information follows:]

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COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE

STATEMENT OF
VICE ADMIRAL NANCY S. LACORE, U.S. NAVY
CHIEF OF NAVY RESERVE
BEFORE THE
HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
FISCAL YEAR 2026 NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE
May 20, 2025

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COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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Vice Admiral Nancy S. Lacore
Chief of Navy Reserve
Commander, Navy Reserve Force

Vice Adm. Nancy Lacore, a native of Albany, New York, is a graduate of the College of the Holy Cross, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts and her commission from the Reserve Officer Training Corps program. She earned a Master of Arts from San Diego State University and is a graduate of the Air Command and Staff College and the National Defense University at the Joint Forces Staff College. She was designated a Naval Aviator in 1993.



Her flying tours include Helicopter Combat Support Squadrons Eight in Norfolk, Virginia and Three in San Diego, California as well as Commander, Helicopter Tactical Wing Pacific. She affiliated with the Navy Reserve (NR) in 2000.

Her reserve staff assignments include Naval Air Wing Pacific and Commander Amphibious Squadron 4 Detachment 104. She served as executive officer of Tactical Air Control Squadron 2186 and Commander Strike Force Training Atlantic, as chief staff officer for Commander Second Fleet Joint Force Air Component Commander, and reserve chief of staff U.S. Fleet Forces Command. Lacore was mobilized to Kabul, Afghanistan where she served as chief of Key Leader Engagement at Headquarters, International Security Assistance Force.

Her reserve command tours include Commander Destroyer Squadron 40 Headquarters, Naval Forces Europe / Africa / U.S. SIXTH Fleet Maritime Partnership Program Detachment 413 and U.S. Fleet Forces Command Maritime and Air Operations Headquarters. She was mobilized to serve as commanding officer, Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti.

Lacore's Flag assignments include Vice Commander, U.S. SIXTH Fleet, Chief of Staff, U.S. Naval Forces Europe / U.S. Naval Forces Africa, and Commandant, Naval District Washington.

Lacore became the 16th Chief of Navy Reserve on 23 August 2024. As Commander, Navy Reserve Force, she leads approximately 59,000 Reserve Component personnel who support the Navy, Marine Corps and joint forces.

Her awards include various personal and campaign medals. She also served with teams awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation Medal and Battle "E" ribbon. She accumulated approximately 1,300 flight hours in military aircraft.

Introduction

Chair Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the 57,700 Navy Reserve Sailors who are the strategic depth and strategic advantage of the world's most powerful Navy. I want to express my deep gratitude for your unwavering support of our mission, Sailors, civilians, and their families. Your continued leadership ensures the Navy Reserve remains agile, lethal, and indispensable to the Navy Total Force, ready for missions across the globe, in both steady state and conflict.

In December of 2024, I released Navy Reserve Strategic Advantage (NRSA), which lays out my vision for the next four years. NRSA underscores Warfighting Readiness which remains priority one – ensuring the Navy Reserve is fostering an adaptive, accountable, and innovative warfighting culture to win decisively from the outset of any conflict. The Navy Reserve continues to transform our Force, improving and modernizing the way we organize, man, train, equip, and mobilize to generate the combat power and critical strategic depth the Navy requires. This transformation is focused on preparing to mobilize a world-wide deployable Force, delivering strategic depth at scale, trained and ready to contribute to the fight on Day One. The Navy Reserve is the strategic depth our Navy needs and we are continuously assessing our contributions to national security and developing skills to ensure alignment with Navy Fleet Commanders' and Joint Force priorities. We will continue to posture for warfighting, strengthen our warfighters, and accelerate refining the foundation that supports them.

Throughout its rich 110-year history, the Navy Reserve has demonstrated its role as the strategic depth of the Navy – ready to defend this great nation and to prevail in competition, crisis, and conflict. Navy Reserve Sailors are our strategic advantage, bringing specialized skillsets and capabilities unique to our Force and delivering increased capacity as the Navy's

strategic depth. As we continue to transform the organization, training, and mobilization processes of the Force, we remain committed to recruiting, retaining, and promoting Sailors that embody our nation's very best talent.

On any given day, the Navy Reserve has about 57,700 Sailors, 2,300 Strategic Sealift Officers, and 415 civilians. The Reserve Force provides critical operational support through a wide array of capabilities, including 2 SEAL teams, 3 Expeditionary Medical Facilities, nearly 130 aircraft and approximately half of the Navy's Expeditionary Combat Command and intelligence capacity. The Navy Reserve is ready 24/7/365, with approximately 15,000 Sailors serving on active-duty orders on any given day supporting current operations around the world. Navy Reserve Sailors are supporting operations at the Southern Border, throughout the Indo-Pacific region, in the Red Sea, and in Europe showcasing the flexibility, readiness, and operational support our citizen Sailors contribute to our national security. I am incredibly proud of the dedication and professionalism of Navy Reserve Sailors, civilians, and the families that support them and enable their service. Reserve Sailors provide the foundation that underwrites more than a century of critical support and strategic impact to the Navy and our Joint Force.

Timely and predictable funding from Congress enables the Navy Reserve to deliver strategic advantages and meet operational mission requirements. We are grateful for your continued support and enduring interest, including the single KC-130J in fiscal year (FY) 2024 and the two KC-130Js in fiscal FY2025. However, Continuing Resolutions degrade our readiness, disrupt training cycles, and limit access to the capabilities needed to fight and win – negatively impacting the warfighting readiness of the Navy Total Force. Maintaining the Reserve Personnel, Navy account funded at President's Budget levels ensure the Navy Reserve remains a modern, lethal, and rapidly deployable Force – ready to meet the demands of a persistently

complex security environment. The National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account affords the Navy Reserve agility in rapidly procuring and implementing equipment solutions that provide parity with active-duty equipment and fill mission-critical shortages in generating readiness. Continued Congressional support today will determine our nation's ability to deter aggression and, if necessary, decisively prevail in conflict. I look forward to working with this Committee to ensure the Navy Reserve remains the enduring strategic advantage for our Navy, our Joint Force, and our Nation.

Posture for Warfighting: Multi-Domain Lethality

For more than two decades following the unprovoked attacks of September 11th, and throughout our global fight against violent extremism, the Navy Reserve provided critical operational support in land-based combat environments. While proud of this legacy, we recognize that the challenges of facing strategic competition in the maritime domain are now more complex and demand readiness and excellence. When the call comes, we must be prepared to respond decisively and effectively on Day One.

With the resurgence of strategic competition in the maritime domain, Warfighting Readiness demands a force design process focused on modernization, integration, and the accelerated delivery of current, relevant capabilities for naval operations. We are deliberately posturing our Force to meet the Fleet's evolving operational requirements – ready to mobilize at speed and deliver decisive advantage across all domains. By optimizing our force structure and refining and focusing our training toward mobilization billets, we are delivering a combat-credible, lethal, and agile Reserve Force that is aligned with the Navy's maritime mission.

Multi-Domain Warfighting Capability and Capacity

Ensuring the Navy Reserve delivers relevant, modernized capability and capacity is essential to achieving multi-domain lethality and sustaining maritime superiority. As we posture for warfighting, we are deliberately investing in capabilities that directly contribute to future warfighting success, including Maritime Operations Centers, contested logistics, integrated fires, Naval Special Warfare, Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadrons, and unmanned vehicle operations. We are expanding capabilities in emerging technologies and mission-sets such as space, cyber, imagery analysis, battle damage assessment and repair, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and data analytics. These emerging capabilities leverage the unique expertise of our Reserve Sailors and the civilian workforce that enables our operational success, ensuring the Navy Reserve delivers unique operational advantages that enhance the Fleet's competitive edge and resilience.

The Navy Reserve delivers these modern capabilities through three employment models: readiness units that integrate directly with active component commands, individual Sailors with unique skills that enhance the Total Force, and stand-alone operational units that supplement active component operational capabilities. Targeted investments in modern equipment, platforms, and training are required to ensure Navy Reserve operational units remain combat-credible and strategically relevant. This includes advancements in contested logistics, aviation, security, medical capacity, special warfare, and other critical warfighting enablers. With the continued support of Congress, we will ensure the Navy Reserve remains postured to deliver integrated, multi-domain lethality when and where it matters most.

Navy Unique Fleet Essential Airlift

Operated exclusively by the Navy Reserve, the Navy Unique Fleet Essential Airlift (NUFEA) category consists of 27 C/KC-130T Hercules and 17 C-40A Clipper aircraft, comprising the entirety of the Navy's organic intra-theater air logistics capability. The C/KC-130T Hercules aircraft serves as the Navy's only long-range aerial logistics platform capable of transporting bulk cargo including missiles, torpedoes, sonobuoys, boats, diver recompression chambers, submarine masts, and F-35 Lightning II engines. Recapitalizing the aging C/KC-130T Hercules fleet with KC-130J Super Hercules aircraft is essential to enabling contested logistics in support of Distributed Maritime Operations and remains the Navy Reserve's number one equipment priority.

In fiscal year (FY) 2024, Navy Reserve NUFEA aircraft transported 80,449 passengers and 20.3 million pounds of cargo in support of the Navy and the Department of Defense. This capability resulted in an estimated cost avoidance of \$1.55 billion compared to the cost of using alternative transportation methods. Despite its demonstrated value, the aging C/KC-130T Hercules fleet faces growing challenges including parts obsolescence, declining mission-capable rates, and rising operating costs, which are creating a widening gap between operational demand and the Navy's ability to meet it.

Compared to the legacy "T" variant, The KC-130J Super Hercules provides a modern and efficient solution delivering nearly three times the mission-capable rate, enabling greater aircraft availability, and faster response times. It offers enhanced survivability through the integration of modern survivability and communication protection systems, including the AN/ALE-47 Airborne Countermeasures Dispenser System, AN/AAR-47 Missile Warning System, AN/ALR-56M Radar Warning Receiver, Link 16, and secure Satellite Communications. In addition, it

provides aerial refueling capability and ensures seamless interoperability with Department of Defense and allied forces, all while operating at approximately \$5,000 less per flight hour compared to the legacy platform.

Maritime Expeditionary Security Force

The Navy Reserve's Maritime Expeditionary Security Force (MESF) provides over 60 percent of the Department of Defense's port security and harbor defense, playing a crucial role in protecting critical maritime assets and infrastructure across the globe. Central to this mission are our patrol boats, which provide agile and flexible force protection capabilities in harbors, ports, and littoral waters to include harbor security, high-value unit escort, and other critical missions to secure the maritime domain. In addition to the MESF's ongoing forward-deployed missions, since FY14, they have also been responsible for conducting high-value unit escort missions within the Continental United States, a mission they assumed from the United States Coast Guard. This responsibility spans five strategic locations across both the East and West coasts.

Our current fleet of 34-foot Patrol Boats is nearing obsolescence. To address this, the Navy began procuring the modernized 40-foot Patrol Boat (40PB) in 2017. These 40PBs are equipped with advanced sensors, communications, and defensive capabilities that provide enhanced situational awareness, increased speed and maneuverability, and improved force protection for our Sailors. NGRE funding has been critical in the recapitalization of the patrol boat fleet. Continued funding is critical to fully realize the 40PB's potential and ensure the MESF can keep executing its important missions.

Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance

The Navy Reserve completed its transition from the P-3C Orion to the P-8A Poseidon in 2023. The P-8A aircraft is the nation's only full-spectrum, broad-area Anti-Submarine Warfare platform. Additionally, it provides armed Anti-Surface Warfare and networked intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capability. The Navy Reserve's Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft (MPRA) squadrons mirror the active component units in design and mission and integrate seamlessly into the Global Force Management (GFM) deployment cycle.

In FY24, the Navy Reserve received two new P-8As and the sixth of six P-8A transfers from the active component, increasing the current inventory to eight aircraft. Production aircraft expected in FY25 and FY26 will bring the total inventory to 11 aircraft. Both Patrol Squadron Six Two (VP-62) and Patrol Squadron Six Nine (VP-69) achieved full operational capability in FY23. In September 2024, while serving as Commander Task Group 32.1, VP-69 launched on a high priority sortie against an adversary in direct support to Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet. In October 2024, VP-62 executed their first planned GFM obligation with Commander, U.S. Sixth Fleet, augmenting the active component with one P-8A, a single aircrew, and maintenance support.

Transitioning Reserve MPRA squadrons to the P-8A and building the hangars to support these airframes ensures equipment parity with active MPRA units and delivers operational resiliency. This transition and the hangars that support the P-8A sustains the Joint Forces' military advantage over our pacing threat by providing a worldwide, continuously deployed presence to deter adversaries and provide robust airborne support for maritime operations.

Recapitalizing the P-3C airframe to P-8As exemplifies the importance of modernizing our aging aircraft. Without this upgraded airframe the Reserve Force would have lost critical

maritime patrol and reconnaissance capability. Just like the P-3C, it is critical that we recapitalize our aging C-130T Hercules to modern KC-130J Super Hercules, preserving and improving the Reserve Force's ability to deliver intra-theater lifts in contested logistics environments. This capability is essential to succeeding in distributed maritime operations and if needed, winning the fight in the Indo-Pacific theater.

Strengthen our Warfighters: Invest in the Navy Reserve Team

Navy Reserve Force Sailors are our strategic advantage – delivering the foundation of warfighting readiness, through operational depth and surge capacity when and where our Nation needs it most. Strengthening the Navy Reserve begins with a deliberate investment in our greatest asset: our people. Recruiting, developing, and retaining top-tier talent is essential to sustaining a ready, lethal, and resilient Force.

We are committed to building elite warfighting teams by providing Reserve Sailors with world-class training, meaningful career opportunities, and the tools they need to seamlessly integrate into the Total Force. Strengthening the Navy Reserve means more than just preparing for the next fight, it means supporting Sailors and their families. This includes enhancing Quality of Service (QoS) through modernized training environments, career flexibility, a mission-driven culture, and family readiness initiatives that promote stability, predictability, and balance.

The Navy Reserve is a proven, cost-effective Force multiplier. Continued investment in our people, training, and support infrastructure will ensure our Sailors remain postured to respond with speed, precision, and strength, ready to fight and win whenever called upon.

Recruiting and Retention

In today's competitive labor market, the Navy Reserve is actively strengthening its recruiting and retention strategies to attract and keep top talent. By adopting an aggressive approach that ensures 100 percent contact with Sailors leaving active duty, the Navy Reserve preserves critical skills within the Reserve Component, increasing strategic depth and enhancing readiness. For example, to address end strength shortfalls, reserve component recruiters have implemented parallel efforts to access Sailors with and without prior service. To ensure we can fill critical gaps, the Navy Reserve must maintain a deep reservoir of talent, which requires Sailors with prior active-duty Navy service to affiliate with the Navy Reserve. To further bolster recruitment and retention, the Navy Reserve established Navy Recruiting Reserve Command (NRRC), along with subordinate Navy Reserve Talent Acquisition Groups. These entities focus on facilitating the seamless transition of active-duty Sailors into the Reserve Component, ensuring the Navy retains those valuable skills. Additionally, the creation of the Training and Administration of the Reserve (TAR) Permanent Professional Recruiter community has enhanced market penetration in key areas, effectively engaging potential recruits. NRRC also established Prior Service Detachments in the five stateside fleet concentration areas and at two locations outside the continental United States. These detachments are staffed with Reserve Benefits Advisors whose purpose is to educate Sailors on the transition process, and on the benefits and opportunities associated with service in the Navy Reserve. The results of these two initiatives are positive. Just last month, the Navy Reserve hit 100% end strength for the first time in five years and the Force is projected to end FY25 approximately 633 Sailors above the authorized end strength of 57,700.

The Reserve Force is proactively engaging in accession and retention strategies, including promoting transitions from Active Component to Selected Reserve in Transition Assistance Program sessions and mandatory career development meetings. Programs were launched to promote enlisted Selective Reserve (SELRES) members volunteering for critical mobilization positions to the next higher pay grade. Other efforts include increased bonus programs for affiliation and retention, adjusting High Year Tenure policies for greater flexibility, and the continuation of SELRES Sailors. Additionally, Tuition Assistance has been extended to SELRES members and exit surveys are reviewed quarterly to identify further improvements for recruitment and retention.

Administration and Management of the Individual Ready Reserve

A ready, adaptable, and surge-capable Force is essential to ensuring the Navy Reserve delivers warfighting readiness whenever and wherever it is needed. The Navy Reserve is comprised of 57,700 drilling SELRES and TAR Sailor billets, and 37,059 Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) members, totaling over 94,759 Ready Reserve Sailors. The IRR is a critical component of the Navy Reserve, enabling additional surge capacity for the Navy Reserve Force at a significantly reduced cost. The IRR is a component of a Sailor's Military Service Obligation, requiring them to maintain basic readiness standards while affording them opportunities to voluntarily perform training and/or active duty to provide strategic depth to the Navy. IRR Sailors also maintain many of the primary benefits associated with military service such as access to military exchange, commissary, Morale Welfare and Recreation facilities, Space-Available travel, Military OneSource, Psychological Health and Outreach Program (PHOP), and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response services.

The Navy Reserve's multi-year transformation includes changing the management of the IRR to better align with the warfighting readiness requirements and strategic competition. Accordingly, we have refined critical skills for the IRR, shifting the focus from the Global War on Terror and Individual Augmentee-specific skills to those focused on maritime operations. Additional enhancements include a web-based application that improves the screening of IRR members by centralizing personnel data and providing real-time readiness data for the IRR Force, which helps ensure accurate strength reporting. Since its implementation, screening has improved mobilization availability and contributed to recruiting and strategic depth.

Quality of Service

The Navy Reserve is steadfast in its commitment to enhancing the QoS for our Sailors, recognizing that their well-being directly influences warfighting readiness and operational excellence. At the heart of QoS are the dual pillars of Quality of Life and Quality of Work, which encompass Sailors' time both in their professional work environments and outside the workplace. These efforts are critical for ensuring our Warfighters and teams are unequivocally prepared to excel in their missions and that their families are supported.

The Navy Reserve has significantly improved support for Reserve Sailors and their families through the launch of the Weekend Drill Childcare (WDCC) which directly supports the well-being and operational preparedness of our Force. The WDCC program provides low cost, critical childcare support during drill weekends, effectively removing a major barrier to our Sailors' participation. Launched in 2023, the WDCC has transitioned from a pilot initiative to a formal program, providing affordable, government-approved childcare for Reserve Sailors. Initially available to eligible Reservists at Navy Reserve Centers (NRC) San Diego, Ventura

County, Jacksonville, New Orleans, Baltimore, Fort Worth, Kitsap/Bremerton, the WDCC program has expanded to Everett, North Island, Washington, D.C., Whidbey Island, Great Lakes, and Norfolk. WDCC phased expansion is planned quarterly through March 31, 2027, with a goal of availability for all NRCs.

In addition to the WDCC, the extension of Tuition Assistance program for SELRES Sailors demonstrates the Navy Reserve's commitment to investing in our Sailors, including their professional growth and higher education aspirations. This program fosters personal development and enhances the collective expertise and readiness of our Force. This initiative and WDCC are not solely retention benefits; they represent strategic investments in our Force's professionalism, skills, and Warfighting Readiness.

Suicide Prevention

Ensuring the mental health and well-being of our Reserve Sailors, civilians, and their families remains a top priority for the Navy Reserve. Despite an increase in 2024 from 2023, we've seen consistent year-over-year decrease in suicide-related behaviors since 2019. We recognize the ongoing need to destigmatize mental health treatment and ensure accessible support for all service members and their families. The PHOP provides counselors, coordinators, and resources 24/7/365. Electronic behavioral health screenings are available to every Sailor and family member for immediate access to PHOP services while Resiliency Check-ins provide screening and referrals as necessary. In FY25, PHOP staff have completed a total of 109 NRC site visits and 2,460 Navy Reserve referrals.

The Navy Reserve has implemented several initiatives to enhance mental health support including transitioning the Sailor Assistance and Intercept for Life (SAIL) program to a fully

virtual model in January 2024. The SAIL program provides dedicated remote counseling, increasing accessibility and privacy for Sailors seeking assistance.

Our commitment to the health, wellness, and safety of our personnel is unwavering. Through continuous investment, proactive initiatives, and a culture that promotes seeking help, we strive to maintain a resilient and ready Force.

Accelerate Refining the Foundation: Build Trust, Align Resources, Be Ready

The Navy Reserve continues to evolve into a more agile, lethal, and operationally integrated Force. Training has shifted from routine monthly drills to dynamic, scenario-based exercises, ensuring Reserve Sailors are proficient in their warfighting roles and ready to contribute effectively on the first day of mobilization. The Navy Reserve Force is focused on Warfighting Readiness, ensuring that Reserve Sailors are prepared and proficient in their designated mobilization billet. To sustain this momentum, the Navy Reserve has modernized legacy mobilization processes, streamlined personnel and pay processes, and optimized NRC functions and locations to enhance operational support to the Fleet. By accelerating building the foundation and aligning resources efficiently, the Navy Reserve is committed to ensuring its Sailors are relevant and ready to deliver maritime dominance in today's unpredictable security environment.

Adaptive Mobilization

The legacy mobilization model of processing individual Reserve Sailors through a centralized facility over several weeks no longer meets the demands of today's rapidly evolving security environment. To ensure the Navy Reserve is postured for warfighting and ready to mobilize at speed and scale, we have fully implemented the Adaptive Mobilization (AM) model.

This decentralized, billet-specific approach accelerates the activation process, ensuring that Reserve Sailors can rapidly transition into their warfighting roles within 30 days – a capability that is vital in an era of strategic competition. Employing the AM model, six regional Readiness and Mobilization Commands (REDCOM) and their subordinate NRCs support distribution of current and future-activations by mobilizing the entire SELRES population – with a goal of doing so within 30 days. This model capitalizes on the TAR staff, located at the REDCOMs, NRCs, and within the Fleet, and leverages the nationally distributed NRC infrastructure unique to Reserve Forces to execute the AM model across the country. The Navy Reserve is aggressively exercising these processes through Force-wide mobilization exercises (MOBEX) that test our capabilities and drive future improvements. In 2024, the Navy Reserve Force conducted four MOBEXs designed to identify and address barriers within the AM process and continue to incorporate and refine our processes and training for future activations. In 2025, five MOBEXs are testing additional barriers. Two of the five MOBEXs will be conducted in conjunction with Large Scale Exercise 2025 and will build upon the lessons learned from the previous MOBEXs as well as look at the Reception, Staging, and Onward Integration to successfully integrate the Reserve Component on active duty at their assigned commands.

Navy Reserve Center Optimization

The 107 NRCs maintain a presence in each of the 50 States, Puerto Rico, and Guam, and make up a critical support network for Reserve Sailors across the world. In FY20, the Navy Reserve began an effort to optimize this network by strategically realigning TAR personnel to better support reserve Sailors at under-staffed NRCs and REDCOMs and strategically closing a small number of NRCs. The effort supported and aligned with the Secretary of the Navy's 10-year infrastructure reset strategy, which directed the divestment of the Navy's facility footprint,

in this case reducing the Navy Reserve infrastructure footprint by 10.3 percent. Additionally, the NRC optimization effort reduces the number of stand-alone, off-installation NRCs, decreasing risk to the Force and eliminating the expense and Sailor dwell impact of Armed Watch Stander programs. FY25 is the last year of this effort, and we will close our final two NRCs, bringing the total to 105 NRCs.

Conclusion

My strategic vision is clear, Warfighting Readiness is Priority One. We will continue to transform the Navy Reserve by fostering an adaptive, accountable, and innovative warfighting culture which will allow for a fully integrated Force, ready on Day One. Through Force-wide equipment and technology modernization, AM, scenario-based training, and QoS initiatives we will ensure that Reserve Sailors are proficient, ready, and seamlessly integrated into Fleet operations from the first day of mobilization. NRC modernization has enhanced our ability to align resources where they are needed most, while efforts in recruiting, retention, and QoS initiatives continue to strengthen our Warfighters and sustain the Force. However, transformation must continue, through focusing on our warrior ethos, rebuilding our military, and reestablishing deterrence. To maintain our competitive advantage and remain postured for warfighting, we must accelerate efforts to build our foundation, strengthen the Navy Reserve team, and optimize our Force structure to meet evolving threats.

Today, strategic competition requires us to adapt with urgency while preparing for the high-end fight of tomorrow. QoS, mental health support, and suicide prevention improvements remain paramount, ensuring that Reserve Sailors, civilians, and their families are supported, valued, and mission ready. Investments in modernized training, cutting-edge technology, and the sustainment and upgrades of critical capabilities – such as the KC-130J Super Hercules

recapitalization, 40PB recapitalization, and P-8A fleet expansion – will ensure that the Navy Reserve continues to provide strategic depth and combat power to the Fleet and Joint Force. With congressional support, we will continue to advance these priorities, ensuring that the Navy Reserve remains a lethal, globally deployable Force capable of deterring aggression and, if necessary, winning decisively in combat.

For over 110 years, the Navy Reserve has delivered operational readiness, strategic depth, and warfighting capability - projecting power globally and responding whenever and wherever our Nation has called. Today, that legacy continues, strengthened by your steadfast support and investment in the Reserve Force.

With your continued advocacy, we will build on this proud tradition by modernizing our capabilities, sustaining readiness, and ensuring we are postured to fight and win if called upon. Your support enables a cost-effective, combat-ready Force that delivers real-time value to the Navy and the Joint Force, across every domain and every theater.

On behalf of the men and women of the United States Navy Reserve, thank you for your commitment to our Sailors, civilians, and families. Together, we will ensure the Navy Reserve remains a lethal, integrated, and agile Force that is ready to meet the demands of today and prepared for the challenges of tomorrow.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you, Admiral.
Next General Anderson, you are recognized.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF GENERAL ANDERSON

General ANDERSON. Good morning, Chairman Calvert, Congressman Case, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Commandant of the Marine Corps about your Marine Corps Reserve. I am honored to be here with my senior enlisted leader, four-star Major Edward Mota, and my Command Master Chief Michael Mussett, who will retire next month after 32 years of service.

The Marine Corps Reserve is a critical element of a total force, it is essential to meeting current operational demands while enabling the deliberate modernization of the active component. We serve as a scalable, ready-force provider, reinforcing all three Marine Expeditionary Forces. We prioritize by battalion-level deployments but retain the flexibility to deploy smaller, mission-tailored elements to our most emerging requirements.

It has been a busy year since my last testimony. The Reserve Marines are increasingly assuming operational missions that give active units the time and space to retain and modernize appropriately. And this balance, between crisis response and future force design, is fundamental to our service strategy.

Initiatives like the Littoral Craft Companies exemplify how we are integrating new platforms and capabilities into Reserve formations while supporting experimentation and innovation. But the time is not on our side. From a Reservist perspective, the 2027 Davidson window is only 72 drills and 30 days of annual training away. That is all the time we have to build and maintain the lethality required to maintain—meet the pacing threat. Every repetition counts.

Every dollar matters. Our training must be deliberate. And our Reserve Marines, already balancing civilian careers and family commitments, must have access to modern platforms and realistic training to be lethal on day one. Continuing resolutions and budget uncertainty introduce challenges to these opportunities.

We thank the subcommittee for its continued support, especially through the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account. For the Marine Corps Reserve, NGREA is not just a funding line, it is a warfighting requirement. These funds allow us to field and sustain the platforms, communication systems, and equipment that Marines need to train as they fight. NGREA enables Reserve Forces to integrate with active forces by quipping them with modern capabilities at pace. And, with a 99 percent execution rate across recent fiscal years, the Marine Corps Reserve has proven its ability to execute with discipline and speed while maintaining our service's clean audit.

The commandant has made clear that fully leveraging the Reserve Component is one of our top priorities. Reserve Marines bring unmatched depth, resilience, and asymmetric advantage to the fight. With your continued support, they will remain not only a force in readiness but a force in consequence. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The information follows:]

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE**

**STATEMENT OF
LIEUTENANT GENERAL LEONARD F. ANDERSON IV
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS RESERVE
BEFORE
THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE
CONCERNING
THE GUARD AND RESERVE
ON
20 MAY 2025**

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED
BY THE HOUSE
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE**

LIEUTENANT GENERAL LEONARD F. ANDERSON IV

Lieutenant General Len “Loni” Anderson was commissioned in 1993 upon graduation from the Illinois Institute of Technology. He was designated a naval aviator in October 1995 and selected to fly the F/A-18 Hornet.

Lieutenant General Anderson's previous assignments as a general officer include Assistant Deputy Commandant for Plans, Policies and Operations; Commanding General, 4th Marine Aircraft Wing; Deputy Commanding General, Marine Corps Forces Cyberspace Command; and Deputy Commander, Joint Task Force-ARES.

Assignments in the Operating Forces include: Schedules Officer, Assistant Operations Officer, Air Wing Landing Signal Officer, and Weapons and Tactics Instructor with the “Fabulous Checkerboards” of VMFA-312 while deployed on USS Enterprise and USS Truman during Operations SOUTHERN WATCH, DESERT FOX and DELIBERATE FORGE; and Training Officer, MAG-31. In 2006, he transferred to the Marine Forces Reserve where he has served as the Assistant Operations Officer, Marine Aviation Training Support Group-42; Operations Officer, VMFA-112; and Commanding Officer, MALS-41.

Assignments in the Supporting Establishment include: Demonstration Pilot, Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron; Flight Instructor, VT-86; and Operations Officer, Marine Aviation Training Support Group-41.

Headquarters and staff assignments: Senior Reserve Advisor, MAG-41; Reserve Branch Head, HQMC Aviation; and Assistant Wing Commander, 4th Marine Aircraft Wing.

Joint assignments include two deployments in support of Operation INHERENT RESOLVE as the Deputy Director, Combined Joint Operations Center-Baghdad, Iraq; and Battle Director, 609th Combined Air Operations Center, Qatar.

Lieutenant General Anderson is a graduate of the Weapons and Tactics Instructor Course, the Navy Fighter Weapons School (TOPGUN), Command and Staff College (DEP), Air War College (DEP), Advanced Joint PME, Senior Joint Information Operations Application Course, Harvard Kennedy School's Cybersecurity: The Intersection of Policy and Technology, Combined Force Air Component Commander Course, Leadership at the Peak, Syracuse University Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs National Security Management Course, U.S. Naval War College Advanced Flag and Senior Executive Course, and Johns Hopkins University Leading Data and AI-Enabled Organizations: For Senior Leaders.

He was promoted to his current rank and assumed duties as Commander, Marine Forces Reserve and Marine Forces South on 21 March 2024.

Introduction

Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, it is my privilege to testify on behalf of the Commandant of the Marine Corps. This testimony will provide an overview of the current state of the Marine Corps Reserve and the responsibilities that your Reserve Marines and Sailors have in our national security and the significant progress we have made since I took command a year ago.

The role of the Reserve Component (RC) within the Marine Corps Total Force is critical to achieving our Nation's strategic objectives in an era defined by strategic competition, rapid technological advancement, and shifting operational demands. We are not merely a Strategic Reserve held in readiness for a distant future—we are a globally engaged Operational Reserve, supporting Combatant Commander requirements and delivering capabilities wherever and whenever needed.

Our commitment to readiness remains resolute and action oriented. We are continuously refining our activation and mobilization procedures to ensure speed, precision, and flexibility in response to evolving operational demands. At the same time, we are investing in advanced training, modernized educational tools, and realistic exercises to sharpen the warfighting proficiency of our Marines and Sailors. Central to this effort is our focus on talent—identifying, developing, and retaining individuals with the skill sets and leadership qualities essential to winning in a complex battlespace. Our Marines and Sailors are the foundation of our combat effectiveness, and we are unwavering in our obligation to equip them with the capabilities, resources, and support they need to excel.

I am confident that the Marine Corps Reserve is ready to meet the challenges of the future as we provide combat-ready forces, capable of seamlessly reinforcing and augmenting the Active Component (AC).

Talent Management

Our commitment to readiness is deliberate and enduring. The Marine Corps Reserve continually refines its activation and mobilization processes to ensure units are ready to deploy rapidly and integrate seamlessly with the Total Force through a predictable, repeatable, and budgeted process. We are advancing training standards, incorporating emerging technologies, and expanding opportunities that strengthen individual and unit proficiency across all domains. At the heart of this readiness is talent—our Marines and Sailors are our greatest asset. We remain focused on attracting, developing, and retaining skilled, adaptable leaders and ensuring they are equipped with the tools, support, and resources required to meet the demands of a dynamic global security environment. In fact, the strength and appeal of Reserve service are reflected in our numbers—the Selected Reserve is currently exceeding the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) National Defense Authorization Act authorized end strength of 32,500. This over-execution underscores both the demand for meaningful service opportunities and the continued relevance of the RC in today's force design.

The Marine Corps Reserve plays a unique and strategic role in expanding the Service's access to high-demand skillsets. Reservists bring with them critical civilian-acquired expertise in areas such as cyber, finance, law, medicine, logistics, communications, and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—competencies essential to operating effectively across all warfighting domains. This intersection of military service and civilian experience enhances the Corps' ability to respond to complex challenges with speed, precision, and depth.

Aligned with overarching Service goals, the Marine Corps actively embraces new initiatives to enhance career flexibility and cultivate talent within the RC.

Substantial progress has been made to maximize permeability across the total force by streamlining the processes for enlisted Marines and officers to request transition to and from the AC and RC. Specifically, administrative processes and timelines have been simplified to streamline the application and acceptance into the Prior Service Enlistment Program (enlisted) and Return to Active Duty Program (officers).

The Marine Corps Reserve will continue to develop innovative policies, pathways, and tools designed to incentivize, recruit, and retain Marines with high-demand skills while seeking creative ways to capture, catalogue, and maintain visibility over the Reserve talent pool. One notable example is the Marine Innovation Unit's (MIU) use of GigEagle, a Department of Defense talent-matching platform that identifies Reservists with specialized expertise for mission-critical innovation projects. Tools like GigEagle improve visibility over the Reserve talent pool and enhance the Marine Corps' ability to surge talent as needed. Concurrently, the Marine Corps has increased inactive duty training travel reimbursements and continues to reduce other administrative and policy-related barriers that have historically limited RC participation.

Modernization

The Marine Corps Reserve, operating as both a Strategic and Operational Reserve, is a critical component of the Total Force Marine Corps. The Marine Corps fights as a Marine Air Ground Task Force, bringing together balanced air-ground, all-domain, combined-arms formations under a single commander to create effects across the battlespace. The greatest strength of this warfighting system is its ability to be rapidly tailored to purpose and scaled as necessary to meet the demands of the operating environment or the threat. The RC remains an essential element in enabling that flexibility.

While not organized as a traditional Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), the Marine Corps Reserve serves as a critical force provider in a manner no different from the standing MEFs. Operationally, the Reserve will continue to reinforce, augment, and sustain all three MEFs. Reserve units will continue to prioritize battalion-level deployments as the foundational construct for force generation and employment. However, the Reserve also retains the flexibility to source and deploy smaller, mission-tailored elements to meet emerging operational requirements, enhance joint interoperability, and enable AC formations across the full spectrum of competition and conflict.

The Marine Corps Reserve plays a vital role in supporting the Commandant's priority of balancing immediate crisis response with the modernization of the force. Increasingly, Reserve units are activated to assume operational missions that allow AC formations the time and space needed to modernize, retrain, and reconstitute for future challenges. As the AC divests legacy platforms in pursuit of Force Design objectives, the RC retains select legacy capabilities—providing essential firepower that mitigates risk to capacity and preserves operational flexibility across the Total Force. Through this operational relief and capability preservation, the Reserve directly contributes to sustaining the Marine Corps' global posture today while enabling the deliberate modernization necessary to fight and win tomorrow.

This operational flexibility is matched by an equally strong commitment to modernization and innovation within the RC. The establishment of Littoral Craft Companies represents a forward-leaning innovation initiative that integrates multiple lines of effort across the Marine Corps Reserve. This effort directly supports several strategic priorities, including Site Optimization, Talent Management, the integration of new platforms and technologies,

enhanced experimentation and wargaming capability, and deeper alignment with Total Force modernization initiatives.

In partnership with the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU)—to include MIU Marines currently serving at DIU—the Reserve has leveraged the Commercial Solutions Opening process via Other Transactional Authority to prototype and deliver expeditionary small craft on an accelerated timeline, with initial deliveries underway and full training allowances expected by the end of FY25. This initiative highlights the Reserve Component’s ability to rapidly adapt and contribute to Service-level experimentation, capability development, and operational flexibility—while leveraging alternative acquisition pathways to accelerate the delivery of emerging capabilities

The Marine Corps Reserve also continues to modernize its aviation portfolio in support of Force Design priorities and Total Force readiness. Within this portfolio, the F-5N/F and upgraded F-5N+/F+ (collectively, F-5) remain some of the most cost-effective assets available. As a legacy platform with a proven record, the F-5 provides critical adversary air support for both RC and AC training. This enhances aircrew survivability, joint force integration, and training realism—at a fraction of the cost of using front-line tactical aircraft.

To expand this capability on the East Coast, the Marine Corps Reserve stood up VMFT-402 at MCAS Beaufort in late FY24. This new squadron, staffed and supported by Reserve Marines, fills a growing need for adversary air support as more F-35 squadrons come online. Future upgrades—like newer cockpit systems and simulator integration—will ensure this squadron stays relevant for years to come. Despite the age of the F-5, recent avionics and safety upgrades have extended its service life and improved its ability to replicate modern threats. Its

agility and low operating cost make it an ideal platform for preparing Marine aviators for high-end conflict.

Congressional support remains essential to sustaining this platform. Stable and timely appropriations ensure the F-5 continues delivering training value without pulling AC aircraft away from operational tasking. As the Marine Corps evaluates long-term aviation requirements, the F-5 remains a smart, cost-effective solution for providing professional adversary support from within the RC.

Fiscal Stewardship

Every investment and capability outlined in this testimony is grounded in a demonstrated commitment to fiscal responsibility and transparency. For the second consecutive year, the Marine Corps has earned an unmodified—or “clean”—audit opinion, the highest possible rating and a distinction no other military service has achieved. This outcome reflects the rigorous evaluation conducted by independent public accountants, who reviewed our financial statements, validated budgetary balances, and physically verified equipment, facilities, munitions, and supplies located at Marine Corps installations and sites worldwide. These favorable audit results are the product of disciplined financial management, a culture of accountability, and the tireless efforts of both uniformed Marines and civilian personnel across the Service. They affirm our longstanding position: when Congress provides the Marine Corps with a taxpayer dollar, we invest it wisely, we account for it fully, and we can clearly demonstrate how that investment supports readiness, modernization, and global operations.

The continued modernization of platforms, facilities, and training systems is essential to preserving readiness. As we implement new technologies and streamline business processes—including system automation and data integration—we are not only increasing efficiency, but also reinforcing our ability to sustain clean audit opinions in future years. The Marine Corps

remains committed to fiscal discipline, transparency, and delivering maximum strategic return on every dollar invested.

A Total Force

Throughout the past year, the Marine Corps Reserve supported Combatant Commander requirements by providing Reserve forces for global deployments that span the spectrum of conflict. In FY24, 395 Reserve Marines joined their AC counterparts in deployments supporting 23 operational requirements across five geographic Combatant Commands. Thus far in FY25, the Marine Corps Reserve has activated 1,083 Marines in support of five Combatant Commands and is forecasting the activation of more than 549 additional Marines to support 19 separate formations through the remainder of the fiscal year. Today, Reserve Marines make up approximately 15% of all deployed Marine Corps forces—underscoring their critical role in sustaining global posture and enabling crisis response. This represents a more than fourfold increase in Reserve deployments from FY24 to FY25.

In addition to supporting operations, the Marine Corps Reserve conducts a wide array of combat-focused training exercises around the world. These exercises enhance the RC's combat readiness, strengthen talent retention, and build critical interoperability with allied and partner forces. In FY24, the Marine Corps Reserve led or participated in 58 exercises spanning every warfighting domain across 25 countries, deploying 10,219 Reserve Marines. For FY25, the Reserve is forecasted to support 60 exercises worldwide, involving 10,005 Marines—representing nearly one-third of the total Selected Marine Corps Reserve. This sustained level of participation highlights the strategic role of the RC in advancing international partnerships and Total Force preparedness.

The Marine Corps Reserve focuses on operational readiness within the Marine Air Ground Task Force and the Joint operational environment. Joint aviation assets from the Navy,

Air Force, Air National Guard, and the Marine Corps conducted Tactical Air Control Party training to sustain Joint Terminal Air Controller (JTAC) qualifications at 29 Palms, California and Camp Shelby, Mississippi, all of which was planned for and led by the Marine Corps Reserve. This training benefitted all participating Services by enabling fixed wing, rotary wing, and unmanned aviation platforms to achieve mission-essential training in close air support while certifying Reserve Marine JTACs.

The Marine Corps Reserve participates in the Department of Defense (DOD) Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) Program, which provides joint/military training in the United States and its territories to increase deployments and unit readiness. In 2024, the Marine Corps Reserve participated in eleven exercises under the IRT Program, two of which involved both Active and Reserve forces. Our participating units were able to train to mission essential tasks involving both horizontal and vertical construction, logistical support, communications, and medical care while making tangible, meaningful impacts in communities located in Alaska, Hawaii, Maine, West Virginia, Missouri, Indiana, Montana, and Mississippi. With Congress's continued support of these efforts, the Marine Corps Reserve looks to expand its footprint in this program.

The Marine Corps Reserve also supports the Total Force by executing the sensitive and crucial mission of providing casualty assistance to the families of our fallen Marines. There is no responsibility we treat with higher regard than this solemn mission. Inspector-Instructor (I-I) and Reserve Site Support staffs are geographically positioned to accomplish the vast majority of Marine Corps casualty assistance calls and are trained to provide compassionate and thorough assistance to families. Most Marine Corps casualty notifications and follow-on assistance calls to the next of kin are made by our Reserve Marines. During FY24, I-I and Reserve Site Support

staffs supported over 80% of the 298 active casualty calls performed by the Marine Corps, and Marine Corps Reserve units performed 93% of the 21,704 total funeral services provided by the Marine Corps for former Marines.

Equipment

The Marine Corps Reserve is designed to be equipped at near parity with its AC counterpart due to the Total Force approach to equipment fielding. Equipment modernization and improved readiness are key factors that allow the Marine Corps to keep pace with future threats and preserve operational agility. However, the high demand for Reserve units and the resulting high operational tempo stress the Marine Corps Reserve's ability to maintain equipment and replenish deficiencies. Delays in appropriations have affected the Marine Corps' modernization efforts, as well as its ability to divest legacy equipment. The Marine Corps Reserve's cost to maintain its legacy equipment beyond exceeded life cycles and sustainment plans continues to increase, adversely affecting unit training and overall readiness. Inadequate or delayed fielding, coupled with delays in the appropriation of funds, disrupts our ability to program long-term equipping activities and challenges our efforts to improve current and future readiness.

The Marine Corps Reserve mitigates risk and ensures material readiness through Training Allowances (T/A). Reserve units maintain equipment based on the unit's T/A, which is the portion of the unit's full Table of Equipment (T/E) necessary for maintaining training readiness at Reserve Training Centers. This method balances the necessary amount of equipment to train with the Reserve Unit's ability to maintain and store it within personnel and facility constraints. All equipment above the T/A (the difference between the T/A and the T/E) is stored at Marine Corps Logistics Bases and other "in stores" locations. However, after multiple Presidential Drawdowns and Continuing Resolutions the availability of stored equipment has dwindled by

43.2%. This reduction in availability has influenced Reserve units to maintain higher than normal T/A equipment. These factors increase demand on limited personnel to identify and perform preventative and corrective maintenance, operation and exercise of the equipment sets, and targeted fiscal resourcing decisions. Leveraging Operation and Maintenance, Marine Corps Reserve (O&M MCR) funding to employ Marine Logistics Command mobile maintenance support teams helps augment our limited organic maintenance capacity. We also utilize a Service-managed third-party logistics provider to repair secondary components that cannot be repaired organically due to limited intermediate maintenance capacity. Congressional support for Reserve funding as specified in the President's Budget Request is paramount to our continued success in sustaining equipment and maintenance readiness.

Facilities

The Marine Corps Reserve occupies 148 Reserve Training Centers in 47 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Among these, 30 sites are owned and maintained by the Marine Corps Reserve, while the remaining 118 Reserve Training Centers are categorized as "tenant" status and owned by other Services. Through support agreements, the Marine Corps Reserve assumes maintenance responsibility for facilities at 98 of these tenant sites. Over the past two years, the Marine Corps Reserve has dedicated significant efforts to rectifying and ensuring the accuracy of our real property records, aligning them with our complete sustainment funding requirement. Among the total 148 sites, some Reserve Training Centers are situated within major DOD installations, but the majority are dispersed across civilian communities, encompassing residential neighborhoods to industrial and commercial districts.

Traditionally, the Marine Corps Reserve has committed 100% of the facilities budget to support the sustainment, maintenance, and modernization of existing infrastructure and day-to-

day operating costs. Despite these investments, the average building condition for the Marine Corps Reserve portfolio is classified as “poor.” Through the comprehensive utilization of the Facilities Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization (FSRM) program, we have focused efforts to maintain facilities that are deemed vital to support the Marine Corps Reserve’s mission. Presently, our focus is on identifying significant FSRM projects for future funding. Simultaneously, we are actively engaged in efforts to maximize efficiency. This includes a strategic approach to cost reduction and funding savings through the realignment of facilities and the demolition of excess footprint.

As we capitalize on utilizing the Military Construction, Navy Reserve (MCNR) program, our focus is on providing construction for new and enduring capabilities and recapitalizing our aging facilities. The construction projects enabled by the annual authorization and appropriation of MCNR funding are a significant factor in advancing our facilities support mission, especially as we optimize our force laydown throughout the Nation. Continued support for our MCNR program funding requests is essential for planning and execution to modernize our capabilities and, when needed, to divest from infrastructure or facilities that no longer meet the mission.

The combined effects of our targeted site consolidations, FSRM, and MCNR Programs have slowed down the decline of our aging facilities and reduced the number of inadequate or substandard Reserve Training Centers. However, as our infrastructure ages, the operating costs have steadily increased due to the requirements for more secure communications and classified spaces within these facilities. This demand for secure spaces will continue to rise as the Marine Corps modernizes to meet its obligations under the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance.

The safety of our Marines, Sailors, and their families is of utmost importance, and we are actively engaged in ongoing efforts to improve the overall force protection at all our sites. We take pride in working with our Service partners and the National Guard to improve security at our sites where joint occupation is optimal. Throughout the last ten years, numerous force protection assessments have been conducted at our facilities, and security-engineering reports have been generated to assist in developing designs that mitigate protection concerns, specifically within the realm of physical security. These assessments identify requirements and serve to prioritize enhancements, ultimately improving the overall facility security for our Marines, Sailors, and their families.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

For the Marine Corps Reserve, improving the health and safety of our service members by fostering a culture of safety and respect are top priorities, as they are vital to reducing and ultimately eliminating sexual assault within our ranks. The Marine Corps Reserve's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program provides training, advocacy, guidance, and support services across our geographically dispersed force.

The Marine Corps Reserve SAPR Program is undergoing many vital staffing and structure changes that align with DoD policy and direction to field the prevention workforce and also to shift victim assistance duties from collateral duty to full-time personnel. These changes strengthen the effectiveness of prevention and response efforts within the force.

The Marine Corps Reserve operates a dedicated Sexual Assault Support Line that is staffed 24/7 by their professional SAPR team. It also actively publicizes the DoD Safe Helpline, a completely anonymous, confidential, 24/7, specialized service providing help and information anytime, anywhere for members of the DoD community affected by sexual assault.

Quality of Life

The Marine Corps Reserve is dedicated to ensuring that quality of life programs are designed to effectively assist all Reserve Marines, Sailors, and their families—whether deployed or on the home front. Marine Corps Community Services programs remain flexible and responsive to the evolving needs of a geographically dispersed force. Virtual resources, including online training, outreach, and mobile platforms, now account for the majority of family engagement touchpoints. The recently expanded USMC Reserve Connect mobile app provides Reserve Marines and their families with centralized, on-demand access to key information and support tools. Additionally, the Family Readiness Council—now conducted virtually—offers a reliable forum for Reserve families to engage directly with command leadership regardless of location.

The training programs provided to commanders, Marines, Sailors, and their families help foster a ready and resilient force. The Marine Corps Family Team Building Program enhances readiness through non-clinical preventive education, professional training, and community-building support that spans a wide array of mission, life, and career events. In FY24, the Marine Corps Reserve conducted 348 training and community outreach events, reaching 16,187 Marines, Sailors, and family members with essential resources to support them through all phases of the deployment cycle—from pre-deployment preparation to successful post-deployment reintegration.

The Marine Corps places a strong emphasis on holistic readiness—supporting Marines and families across all aspects of personal and professional life. Personal and Professional Development Programs deliver essential resources in areas such as financial management, voluntary education, transition readiness, and information and referral services. These programs promote self-reliance, resilience, and sustained well-being across the Reserve force.

Additionally, like their active duty counterparts, all Reserve Marines, Sailors, and their families have 24/7 access to a variety of personal and professional readiness resources through Military OneSource.

The Transition Readiness Program is a comprehensive initiative designed to assist Marines and their families in successfully navigating the shift to civilian life. It helps individuals develop and pursue goals in employment, education, and entrepreneurship. The Marine for Life Network connects transitioning Marines to employment and educational opportunities in their hometowns, while a virtual course remains available to those not located near a military installation. In FY24, transition staff supported 851 Marines through pre-separation counseling and completed capstone assistance for 587.

Conclusion

As the operational environment continues to evolve, the Marine Corps Reserve remains committed to innovation, adaptability, and forward-looking transformation to meet emerging challenges and deter the pacing threats outlined in the 2025 Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance. At the heart of our continued success are the individual Marines, Sailors, and families who serve with unwavering dedication. They are the foundation of our readiness and the strength behind every mission. With your continued support, Reserve Marines and Sailors will remain ready to answer our Nation's call—anytime, anywhere. *Semper Fidelis.*

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you, General. General Healy, you are recognized.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF GENERAL HEALY

General HEALY. Chairman Calvert, Congressman Case, distinguished members of the subcommittee, on behalf of the 67,000 members, men and women of the Air Force Reserve, it is an honor for me to be here today with my senior enlisted advisor, Chief Master Sergeant Israel Nunez.

The Air Force Reserve embodies warrior ethos through operational capability, strategic depth, and search capacity across every corps mission both overseas and here at home. With a 72-hour response time proven, we are always ready. Whether it is combat operations, hurricane hunting, or fighting wildfires from the air, we are supporting Federal, State, and local agencies, ensuring the safety of our citizens here at home.

From those citizens, we recruit and train from the best our Nation has to offer, holding them accountable to uncompromising standards. If properly resourced, citizen airmen are the cost-efficient solution to the DAF, providing more Air Force. We operate our installations 28 days a month with just 25 percent of our force. Compared to our Active Duty counterparts, we deliver mission-ready airmen for only 30 cents on the dollar. We are efficient. We are accessible. We are experienced, and we are lethal.

The Flying Hour Program is at the foundation of our mission readiness and lethality. However, the \$145 million O&M mark in the 4-year CR left us \$26 million in the hole. Flying our required plan will likely exhaust program funding by early September, putting aircrew proficiency at risk.

Our fiscal year 2026 budget request outlines flying-hour requirements to train agile, combat-ready aircrew. The best operators need the best equipment, though. So thank you for the \$132 million in NGREA this year. But their readiness still remains at risk.

Disproportionate Air Force Reserve legacy aircraft divestment without program recapitalization fails to provide equipment parity. By 2030, our cap portfolio will decrease from a 20-year average of nine percent to just three percent. This represents a 44 percent loss in operational surge capacity, sidelining the world's most experienced title 10 fighters.

Concurrent and proportional fielding provides significant return on investment through affiliation and retention. But that is not happening. Modernizing platform drives the DOD's competitive advantage to deter Chinese aggression. Strong international relationships underpin deterrence.

In the past year, we have established the Reserve Allies and Partners Program, RAPP, to formalize international partnerships and conducted 28 bilateral engagements with 19 partner nations. We are building partner capacity through key leader and mil-to-mil engagements, deliberately planned exercises, and force development.

Our allies' and partners' interest in the Air Force Reserve integrated base defense and a professionalized NCO corps helps build successful global partnerships and serves as a powerful deterrent.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and for your continued support of the Air Force Reserve, our citizen airmen and their families, and I look forward to your questions.
[The information follows:]

United States Air Force Reserve



Testimony

Before the House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense

Guard and Reserve Hearing

Statement of
Lieutenant General John P. Healy
Chief of Air Force Reserve

20 May 2025

OVERVIEW

Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, it is my privilege to testify on behalf of the United States Air Force Reserve (AFR). The AFR is a combat-ready force of 67,000 Airmen committed to defending the Nation, deterring aggression and – should deterrence fail – defeating our adversaries. We are an efficient, accessible, experienced, and above all, lethal force. Our trained and qualified personnel provide surge capacity and strategic depth to the Joint Force and Active Component (AC) when our Nation calls. We will restore peace through strength by reviving our warrior ethos, rebuilding our military and reestablishing deterrence against the threats posed by China and our adversaries.

The AFR is reviving the warrior ethos through assured access, force management and readiness. We have a proven 72-hour response time and are exceeding our current global force management allocation plan commitments by 245 percent. We recruit, train and retain the best our Nation has to offer and hold our Airmen accountable to uncompromising standards. Sustaining a force ready to prevail against any adversary, anytime and anywhere, means retaining our Airmen and their families with resources such as the Yellow Ribbon Program, access to childcare and spouse employment support.

We are rebuilding our military through organizational reform while maintaining focus on the mission. Reserve experience, depth and surge capacity provides lethality at one-third the cost of our AC counterparts when not mobilized to augment the AC. We operate our installations 28 days a month with just 25 percent of our force. Our force structure prioritizes every dollar spent, freeing up resources to invest in Next Generation Air Dominance while modernizing capabilities across the Department of the Air Force (DAF). Our special missions in aerial spray, weather reconnaissance and aerial firefighting, or “Earth, Wind and Fire,” expand DAF capacity that supports multiple Federal, State and local agencies and directly impacts the health and well-being of our Nation’s civilian population.

Furthermore, we are reestablishing deterrence through deliberate international Reserve partnerships. Through these partnerships we are maximizing training opportunities to exercise Agile Combat Employment to increase the survivability of aircraft and personnel to outpace the targeting cycles of our adversaries. Growing our Reserve-led joint and international exercises such as Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) and NEXUS FORGE are examples of our international capability to fight tonight and defeat our adversaries in any domain.

Timely, consistent authorizations and appropriations for defense spending are necessary to organize, train and equip the most lethal force in the world. We are deliberately integrating our force design to meet future Air Force needs in the fast-paced race for technological, geopolitical and economic superiority against our adversaries but are losing valuable time. Your continued advocacy for concurrent and proportional fielding of the AFR will give us the time we need to recapitalize our fleet and build a force that can win any fight. Without time and resources, China, a well-resourced strategic adversary, will close the gap or even surpass us.

Support of Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance

The AFR is a proven part of the Total Force. We deliver capability across the full spectrum of DAF missions through a framework that provides strategic depth and operational surge capacity at a fraction of the cost. The AFR continues to be a combat-ready force-multiplier, available to meet the demands of rotational requirements and Combatant Commanders in any theater at any time.

Air Superiority and Global Precision Attack

The AFR delivers the most experienced fighter pilots to the DAF. Reserve fighter pilots have flown an average of 1,200 flight hours in the F-22 compared to our AC counterparts' 400 hours. Additionally, every AFR F-22 pilot is a qualified mission commander and instructor pilot – they are the most lethal and experienced F-22 cadre in the world. In just the past two years the AC lost just under 200 pilots that we were unable to retain in the AFR due to a lack of modern aircraft.

Divestment without recapitalization to modern platforms such as the F-15EX, F-35 and post-block F-16 is creating mission disconnects and hinders the DAF's ability to retain experienced pilots. For example, we are divesting the Reserve Aggressors at Nellis Air Force Base (AFB), who provide 60 percent of 4th Generation F-16 training assets and close to 50 percent of all instructor pilots in training the DAF on adversary tactics, techniques and procedures.

Space

In response to the Space Force Personnel Management Act, we are amid a multi-year effort to transfer space operations-related programming to the U.S. Space Force and divest from space operations activities. All theater mobilization support is expected to end in Calendar Year (CY) 2026. Part-time AFR support will continue into FY28.

Global Strike

Nuclear Deterrence is a no-fail mission that allows the United States to project military power rapidly around the world. The AFR currently supports Global Strike with the B-52, B-1 and MH-139, encompassing over 1,700 positions across three states, flying 3,200 hours annually. The AFR operates the only DAF B-52 Flying Training Unit (FTU), training all Total Force (TF) B-52 aviators which provides a foundational training node and enabling continuity of strategic deterrence. Our experienced cadre of instructors train and certify an average of 24 pilots annually to man the backbone of the U.S. nuclear triad. B-52s and B-1s are the preponderance of the strategic bomber fleet and are the only strategic heavy bombers among allied nations. In FY24, AFR B-1s and B-52s from the 307th Bomb Wing at Dyess AFB, TX executed agile combat employment in conventional and nuclear exercises as well as bomber task forces and show of force missions around the world.

As the AC divests the B-1, the AFR remains committed to sustaining this mission at Dyess AFB, TX. We provide 78 percent of B-1 aircrews, 54 percent of instructor pilots and 85 percent of evaluators for the DAF at 20 percent of the cost of our AC counterparts.

The MH-139 nuclear security operations mission is critical to supporting other Global Strike capabilities. As directed by the Secretary of the Air Force, the AFR stood up an MH-139 FTU to train AC and AFR aircrews in FY24. All MH-139 aircraft assigned to the AC at Maxwell AFB, AL will be transferred to Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC) in FY26. The AFR will accept sole flight training responsibility for the MH-139, equipping TF aircrews to execute standing nuclear security requirements.

Rapid Global Mobility

Power projection through Rapid Global Mobility hinges on a robust airlift enterprise and the extended range provided by a modern aerial refueling fleet. The AFR enables combat delivery through our Strategic and Tactical Airlift fleets. The AFR C-17 fleet provides 13 percent of the DAF Strategic Airlift capacity with 35 percent of the TF C-17 aircrews. Additionally, the AFR C-5M fleet provides 21 percent of the DAF Strategic Airlift capacity and 65 percent of the TF C-5 aircrews. The AFR's C-5 and C-130H fleets continue to face sustainment challenges due to aging aircraft, diminishing vendors and increased parts costs. Each of our mobility platforms requires continued investments in modernization to ensure survivability in contested environments.

In addition to mobility platforms, the AFR provides critical global capabilities with Aeromedical Evacuation (AE) and Aerial Port functions. The AFR supports over 60 percent of the DAF's AE requirements through 18 Squadrons and approximately 1,900 Reserve Airmen. AFR AE units deploy in every deployment cycle. Similarly, AFR Aerial Port squadrons account for 45 percent of the DAF's overall air transportation capability and fill 42 percent of Combatant Command (CCMD) rotational requirements. These functions underscore DAF's Global Power Projection and readiness.

Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance

Our AFR Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) support is critical to Joint and CCMD decision advantage against pacing threats. The AFR ISR and Targeting focused transformation effort is driven by current and future CCMD operations. We are realigning resources to stand up a Classic Association with the 17th Intelligence Squadron at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, VA. This restructure will increase Reserve targeting in support of U.S. European Command by 100 percent. AFR 5th Generation aircraft and advanced ISR operations require access to secure intranet systems requiring Secure Compartmentalized Information Facilities (SCIFs). The AFR is currently in the planning and execution phases to create four additional SCIFs in direct support of 5th Generation aircraft operations.

DAF demand is growing in several critical ISR missions including Over-the-Horizon Targeting (OTH-T). Increased AFR ISR manning would enable support to DAF OTH-T including the

closure of Long-Range Kill Chains at speed. We appreciate continued support and appropriation of the Military Intelligence Program.

Command and Control

The AFR is the sole airborne Tactical Command and Control (C2) surge capability for CCMDs, utilizing the E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS). Current Air Operations Center (AOC) requirements drive the need to consolidate resources to prepare for strategic competition and support multiple theaters. The AFR is committed to providing targeted and specific capabilities for Battle Management C2. AFR re-organization of the C2 portfolio enables optimization of the remaining AWACS mission and future Battle Management Command and Control capability. Additionally, the AFR is upgrading tactical data link systems to support the transmission of critical data for real-time decision making and response.

The AFR provides 20 percent of the DAF Initiative Airbase Opening Force Element Packages and 50 percent of the AFR for each Air Force Force Generation (AFFORGEN) cycle. By re-aligning existing resources and streamlining processes within the AOC portfolio, the AFR can provide consistent rotational forces to CCMDs without an increase in manpower.

Role in Reviving Warrior Ethos

Recruiting and Retention

The AFR remains focused on recruiting and retaining Airmen to ensure the right skills are available at the right time. Despite a challenging environment, the AFR successfully employed TF recruiting strategies and implemented a deliberate, multi-year Human Capital Management strategy to align recruiting and retention efforts against targeted manning shortfalls.

To retain trained and qualified Airmen in DAF service, the AFR received an additional \$13 million from Congress in FY24 to incentivize the affiliation of fully qualified Airmen from the AC through the Reserve Component Affiliation Incentive Bonus (RCAIB). RCAIB offers the capability to retain low-density, high-demand skills while avoiding formal training costs and spin-up time. In FY24, the expanded RCAIB program affiliated 933 trained and ready Airmen into the AFR. While RCAIB is just one initiative, historical data show that members who affiliate into the AFR are likely to remain in DAF service for up to 28 years, reducing pension costs to the taxpayer by 37 percent. This is a cost-effective value as an operational Reservist costs 32 cents on the dollar while a strategic Reservist only costs 28 cents on the dollar compared to our AC counterparts.

FY24 ended with an overall retention rate of 88.5 percent, which remains in line with our 10-year historical average of 88.2 percent. A barrier to service for many Airmen is the potential out-of-pocket cost for travelling 150 or more miles to attend drill weekends. In late FY24, an amendment to the Joint Travel Regulation authorized the AFR to increase the Inactive Duty for Training Travel Reimbursement maximum from \$500 to \$750 per trip. Continued support for

Reserve programs such as this is necessary to achieve our targeted retention rate of at least 89.5 percent, essential to support sustained end strength attainment.

Formal Training

Our Airmen provide a key competitive advantage over our adversaries. Initial skills and formal training programs serve as the foundation of our warrior ethos – our shared purpose and mission. Timely and consistent appropriations and funding are essential to keep the pipeline flowing for AFR recruits to attend Basic Military Training and Centrally Funded Schools (CFS). CFS includes flying and initial skills training courses as well as those required for functional and professional development.

Flying Hour Program

The flying hour program forms the bedrock of AFR's mission readiness and weapons system platform proficiency. Through this program we train agile and combat-ready aircrews, enabling them to operate in contested environments. However, aircraft availability continues to hamper the program. These limitations include depot throughput capacity, available parts, supply chain constraints and delayed aircraft delivery recapitalization for the F-35 at Carswell AFB, TX; KC-46 at Travis AFB, CA; HH-60W at Patrick SFB, FL and MH-139 at Maxwell AFB, AL. These limitations impact AFR's ability to reach combat mission ready status when required and has led to program under-execution in previous years. As the AFR recapitalizes its fleet and as aircraft availability improves, we are now faced with an underfunded flying hour program degrading both aircrew and maintenance proficiency and readiness.

In FY24, the AFR faced a different challenge to the Flying Hour Program with an excess of approximately 6,300 peacetime flying hours due to the C-5 overprogramming and transfer of KC-46 squadron at McGuire AFB, NJ to the Air National Guard (ANG). Further, aircraft availability and new weapon system delivery delays combined with real world CCMD requirements in the first half of FY24 prevented the execution of approximately 9,000 additional peacetime flying hours. While the AFR did not fully execute its 88,475 congressionally reportable peacetime hours, we flew a total of 92,770 hours including peacetime Operations & Maintenance, Transportation Working Capital Fund and CCMD requirements despite these challenges.

Last year, we introduced a flying hour program management tool that saves days of workload by providing our leadership with near real-time information to make data-driven decisions. This tool improves our efficiency and execution of the program by providing insight and transparency into our current flying hour execution. The AFR must make every dollar count towards readiness due to the tight margins in the flying hour program.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

The AFR Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) program provides victim response services to Airmen who have experienced sexual assault or harassment. Our experts are focused

on developing proactive, informed preventative action plans that address sexual assault and harassment concerns while also providing responsive victim support services. SAPR support enhances workplace safety, ultimately improving Airmen readiness, recruiting and retention.

Suicide Prevention

Through March 2025, there have been three confirmed suicides in the AFR. In CY24 there were nine confirmed deaths by suicide, an increase from seven in CY23. We are taking proactive measures to eliminate suicide across our workforce. As part of ongoing Reserve efforts to support the health and well-being of our Airmen, our expanded Integrated Primary Prevention Workforce (IPPW) initiatives incorporate suicide prevention as a core component of its mission. The IPPW is standardized, evidence-based training supported by the Center for Disease Control and proven to effectively address community risk factors.

Mental Health

The AFR promotes good mental health and well-being through the Director of Psychological Health (DPH) program which provides non-clinical services to Reservists and their families through early intervention, support programs and crisis response. In CY24, DPHs offered 50,006 consultations, hospital coordination, medical interventions for referral and supportive counseling sessions ensured our Airmen and their families got the care they needed in a timely manner. All efforts to identify and support members with mental illness and the promotion of early intervention will minimize disruption to the mission and promote retention of a skilled and trained workforce.

Spiritual Health

Comprehensive Airman fitness includes spiritual health. The AFR Chaplain Corps contributes to the spiritual fitness and readiness of Reserve Airmen through the Chaplains and Religious Affairs team. In FY24, the Chaplain Corps conducted 27,498 counseling sessions and 52,358 unit ministry activities. Despite the AFR's part-time nature, Reserve Airmen can access on-duty chaplains 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The AFR Chaplain Corps also provides significant support to the AC. In FY24, our Chaplains volunteered for and served almost 28,000 man-days – support equivalent to 72 full-time members – to provide spiritual support to TF Airmen and their families.

Role in Rebuilding Our Military

Force Presentation

Our Reserve Airmen, their families and employers deserve deployment predictability. The AFR uses the established Reserve Component Period structure to seamlessly adapt to the DAF's AFFORGEN model of deployment timelines and cycles. AFFORGEN enables the AFR to posture forces in a cyclical, predictable manner providing stability for 67,000 Reserve Airmen and continued support to achieve National Security Objectives. Additionally, the AFR has fully

leaned into DAF's target of restructuring into Units of Action and Deployable Combat Wings (DCW). The AFR is committed to producing one DCW per AFFORGEN cycle beginning in October 2026. Providing the requested resourcing for training, Military Construction (MILCON) and Reserve pay will allow the AFR to continue supporting DAF's target objectives while preparing our Reserve Airmen for deployments and mobilization in defense of our Nation.

Full-Time Manning

The AFR's full-time military support force structure prioritizes strategic depth while supporting cost-effective capability to sustain operational readiness. Our full-time force, consisting of Air Reserve Technicians (ART) and Active Guard Reserve (AGR) members, provides the necessary support for the training and readiness of the part-time force. With continued support from Congress the AFR can achieve requested ART and AGR end strength across the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP).

Pilot Manning

In FY24, the AFR retained 91 percent of its pilots to at least 20 years of service. A factor in this healthy retention was increased Experienced Aviation Retention Incentives for ART and AGR pilots to close the pay gap with the commercial aviation sector. Additionally, the AFR has created a Pilot Concierge Cell (PCC) to simplify the affiliation process for those AC pilots desiring continuation of service. The PCC provides a bridge between the transitioning AC pilot and the AFR flying squadron, creating a seamless process for both the rated aviator and the hiring unit. The PCC began operations in January 2025 and has already assisted approximately 50 AC pilots with the affiliation process.

Maintenance Manning

The AFR's funded maintenance ART authorizations have decreased by 606 positions over the last 10 years, an 11 percent reduction of the AFR's ART maintenance force. Adding to this, recruitment and retention of AFR ART maintainers continues to be negatively impacted by competitive private sector recruitment. This is evidenced by a steady decline in ART manning from 80.4 percent in FY14 to 73.3 percent in FY24, accounting for a cumulative loss of 826 full-time technicians over this timeframe. These long-term, on-going ART maintenance manning challenges have been directly tied to a 14.5 percent reduction in mission-capable and 12.5 percent reduction in aircraft availability rates. The AFR has been able to utilize Special Salary Rates, provide paid relocations and offer Recruitment, Retention and Relocation incentives to retain nearly 94 percent of its current ART maintenance personnel. Continued congressional support of these hiring and retention programs is necessary to rebuild AFR maintenance capability.

Equipment Parity

Credible strategic depth requires fielding of systems for the AFR alongside the AC. Effective support to the joint force demands continuous upgrades of communications equipment, support

systems and weapons to build and sustain long-range kill webs capable of delivering effects within the most contested environments. Currently, the AFR fleet consists of 88.5 percent legacy aircraft that have an average age of 39 years old. As the DAF continues to reoptimize its force structure, recapitalization of legacy AFR aircraft is essential to providing strategic depth and surge capacity. Without equivalent modernization pathways, AFR units risk capability and experience shortfalls which will continue to degrade overall combat effectiveness.

Strategic competition has rapidly advanced with our adversaries' technological capabilities. To counter this, the AFR depends on a stable budget to work towards equipment parity and platform interoperability alongside the AC and our Joint partners. The Reserve currently provides 20 percent of the TF capability to open airbases in austere locations.

Infrastructure and Facilities

Maintaining and modernizing our infrastructure is necessary for readiness, force protection and ensuring a safe work environment. MILCON appropriations enable construction and recapitalization of critical mission facilities. We have used Facility Sustainment, Repair and Modernization (FSRM) funds to repair and modernize facilities and extend the service life of existing infrastructure. Inflation and rises in labor and material costs also continue to reduce our purchasing power across validated MILCON projects.

Weapon System Sustainment

Concurrent and proportional fielding in Weapon System Sustainment (WSS) is vital for wartime readiness as aircraft modernization and system upgrades, repairs and component replacement ensure survivability in contested environments. We thank Congress for your continued support of this critical program, which allows us to modify our aging legacy fleet to maintain lethality against our peer competitors.

Modular Aerial Spray System

As one of the AFR's three special mission areas, aerial spray is colloquially referred to as "Earth" in the collection of Earth, Wind and Fire. The 757th Airlift Squadron (AS) from Youngstown Air Reserve Station (ARS), OH operates the Department of Defense's (DoD) only aerial spray capability. In FY24, the 757 AS conducted 15 Modular Aerial Spray System (MASS) and Electronic MASS (EMASS) operational training missions, accounting for a combined total of 131 operational, positioning and support sorties, treating 170,041 acres and applying 125,275 gallons of product. These missions control insect populations, eliminate undesired and invasive vegetation and disperse oil spills in large bodies of water. Through the Strategic Basing Process, two C-130Js have been delivered to Youngstown ARS, with eight total planned for delivery by March 2026. The C-130J's projected aircraft capabilities expansion will enable AFRC to meet increased sensor requirements. EMASS certification on the C-130J model is scheduled for completion in FY27, ensuring no gap in Aerial Spray capabilities as the C-130H divestment completes in late FY26.

Weather Reconnaissance

The AFR maintains the only operational military weather reconnaissance unit in the United States. The 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron (WRS) from Keesler AFB, MS, often referred to as the Hurricane Hunters, conducts aircraft reconnaissance missions into severe tropical weather during hurricane season and flies winter storm missions off both coasts of the United States. The 53 WRS C-130Js missions improve forecast accuracy by up to 30 percent, enabling commanders and civil authorities to make informed, fiscally responsible decisions to protect personnel and assets during extreme weather events year-round.

Over the last three years, the Hurricane Hunters flew nearly three times more hours than their historic average. In FY24, they flew in 16 tropical systems for 167 requirements and 50 winter season missions for 84 requirements, an increase over the past two years. These missions totaled 1,854 operational hours with continuous collection in regions void of other data collecting means, 574 of which were flown for Atmospheric Rivers.

Modular Airborne Firefighting System

As the only Title 10 aerial firefighting asset available for direct tasking, the AFR's Modular Airborne Firefighting System (MAFFS) mission supports U.S. Northern Command's Defense Support to Civil Authorities and represents 25 percent of MAFFS assets in the DoD. In FY24, AFR's MAFFS capability mobilized and flew 81 sorties and delivered over 216.3K gallons of retardant during the northern and southern California wildfires. In January 2025, these assets supported the National Interagency Fire Center delivery of 8,157 gallons of retardant in response to the southern California wildfires. AFR and Air Mobility Command have re-aligned DAF procedures with the National Wildfire Coordinating Group interagency aerial firefighting procedures to afford more safe and up-to-date integration with all participating firefighting aircraft.

Mission modernization and resourcing is essential for the increased demand of these three mission sets – Earth, Wind and Fire - that support multiple federal, state and local agencies and directly impact the health and well-being of our Nation's civilian population. The AFR has historically used a combination of WSS and National Guard & Reserve Equipment Account funds to sustain and provide for hardware and software upgrades.

Role in Establishing Deterrence

Teamwork begins within the DAF, where the AFR is an indispensable part of the TF. We provide an experienced and accessible Title 10 surge capacity to the AC of the United States Air Force and Space Force. We maintain readiness to support every core function. We also play a critical role as the DAF builds ties with partners and allies through training and military-to-military engagements.

Close collaboration with allies and partners is foundational for U.S. National Security interests. In summer 2024, the AFR launched the Reserve Allies and Partners Program (RAPP) to build

strategic depth. RAPP is a deliberate development of enduring relationships amongst international reserve forces, leading to improved interoperability, readiness and education. Through the RAPP initiative, the AFR has provided educational resources and best practices to support reserve force development and combat capability integration with our allies.

Security cooperation and expansion of international reserve forces is an efficient way to increase combined lethality, provide depth of force and deter aggression. Within its first year of existence, RAPP has facilitated 28 bilateral engagements with leadership from 19 countries, including Australia, France, Netherlands, the Philippines, Singapore and the United Kingdom.

Training with Allies and Partners

The AFR is focused on being ready now, which requires us to train alongside the AC, joint partners and international allies. During Exercise RIMPAC in summer 2024, 563 AFR Airmen participated with 25,000 U.S. Sailors, Soldiers and Marines along with 29 partner nations to evaluate joint and multinational responses to scenarios including disaster relief, maritime security, sea control and complex warfighting around the Hawaiian Islands. The AFR played a key role in this unique training opportunity. During this exercise, the AFR demonstrated its resolve to allies and partners by proving our ability to use specialized munitions to target and sink ships. RIMPAC is an example of how the AFR, in conjunction with partners and allies, fosters and sustains cooperative relationships critical to ensuring the safety of sea lanes and security on the world's oceans.

In February 2025, the Reserve developed and led Exercise NEXUS FORGE, a multi-theater, multi-domain, Joint event in the Indo-Pacific Command Area of Responsibility. More than 850 Servicemembers including U.S. Soldiers and Marines participated in this event, demonstrating successful joint and international interoperability while evaluating seven warfighting functions of the Expeditionary Air Base training and certification requirements. Our goal is for NEXUS FORGE and similar certification exercises to nest within larger DAF and DoD events such as Exercise BAMBOO EAGLE and RESOLUTE FORCES PACIFIC. The AFR's relationships with allies and partners play a critical role in our contributions to national security and defense of the Nation. Training events such as RIMPAC and NEXUS FORGE educate and support our allies and partners as they create and maintain their own Reserve forces within their spheres of influence.

CONCLUSION

The AFR is efficient, accessible, experienced, and lethal. We are the cost-effective solution for more Air Force in defending the homeland, deterring aggression, and if deterrence fails, defeating our adversaries. Thanks to your continued support, we can deliver effects anytime, anywhere to fly, fight and win in air, space and cyberspace. We are a can do force. We are the Air Force Reserve.

EQUIPPING THE NATIONAL GUARD

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you, General. And I will start the questioning, and then we will go down through the members.

As we all know, the California Guard, as I mentioned in my opening testimony, responded admirably earlier this year to devastating and tragic wildfires, as the Guard does throughout the United States, the respective Guard units. Given the increasing frequency of domestic disasters—and we have seen a substantial number of them just this last weekend—and civil support missions, is the Guard adequately equipped and trained to meet the growing State-level demands without compromising Federal readiness? So I think I will start with you, General Nordhaus.

General NORDHAUS. Chairman, thank you for the question. And I was able to land out at the California—right prior to the first MAF taken off for the L.A. Wildfires. And so the National Guard, as you know, is 430,000 strong, and across the board, are 50 States, three territories, and the District of Columbia. We get after the mission set, whether it is in the homeland or overseas. Currently, we have 34,000 engaged globally, which is less than 10 percent. So, as we look at the force, we are capable of being able to meet the needs within the States and around the globe as needed.

Certainly, we need help as we look at our foundational readiness accounts, flying hours, weapons systems, sustainments, facility sustainment restoration, modernization, and base operating support. So, as we continue to look to those things, to be able to make sure they are right so that we can build readiness, that every dollar you put in the National Guard gets after readiness not only in the homeland but around the world.

Mr. CALVERT. Any other comment?

General HEALY. Just with regard to the wildfire fights, too, I mean, it is a unified effort between the Guard and the Reserve our 302nd Airlift wing also, actually out of sequence, so out of the normal training cycle, participated in getting rid of those L.A. Wildfires. So great team effort on that, both the Reserve and the Guard, sir.

General HARTER. Mr. Chairman, I would just offer that the Army Reserve, we partner with our Guard teammates. We have immediate response authority where we can help in local communities. I think what is what critical on the equipping side is that a lot of our equipment is that enabling capability. We call it critical to use—water purification, engineer equipment, and so forth, logistics equipment. We used a lot of our engineers to respond to a hurricane in North Carolina, effects of the storm. So continued funding of NGREA and procurement dollars assist us in that effort. Over.

COUNTERDRUG PROGRAM

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you. Another quick question, as you all know—and this has been a bipartisan effort on all of us is on this counterdrug program, and we certainly appreciate the results that have been delivered so far. Congress provided 295 million to the Guard counterdrug program for fiscal year 2025 to provide funding for training and operations and also provided an additional 26 million for the National Guard Counterdrug School Program to pro-

vide necessary education to support combating and drug trafficking efforts.

General Nordhaus, how can the National Guard best utilize these resources to address this fentanyl crisis, as we are—obviously it is terribly killing hundreds of thousands of Americans.

General NORDHAUS. Mr. Chairman, thank you for highlighting this and incredible situation that we have to make sure we are laser-focused on all the time. And I want to thank Congress for all funds that go into Counterdrug. Each year the Counterdrug Program is across the States, and they build those Counterdrug Programs to use every dollar to get after helping local law enforcement and others take drugs off the street.

As I mentioned in my opening statement, last year, \$13 billion was credited with some help from the National Guard in taking that off the street. And I can only imagine how many lives that saved and families that were able to not have fentanyl or another drug hurt them. 67,000 local law enforcement agents were also trained through the five counterdrug schools through the funding that the Counterdrug Program.

We can never take our eye off the ball. We have to keep getting better each year. We do lessons learned. We continue to take those lessons learned and push those out across the 54. And then, each year, we are looking at where the dynamics are changing and where drugs are being pushed from one—maybe one State to another State, or there is more pressure. And then we move that money to make sure that we get the right resource to the right place at the right time.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you. Any other comments?

Mr. Case.

ISSUES WITH THE BUDGET

Mr. CASE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And, to each of you, thank you for your service and for that of the hundreds of thousands that you represent.

I want to focus on what Ranking Member McCollum said in her opening statement. She said, quote/unquote, that the fiscal year 2026 budget process is off to a very rough start. And it could get a lot rougher as we look out over the budget horizon. And she said that there are rumors that we won't get a full budget until June. There is also the concern that we would be required in this subcommittee and full committee to mark up before any effective oversight of the full budget. And there are even some concerns that some in the administration would prefer that the normal budget process not occur this year and move into another CR, which I think and hope we would all agree would be a disaster.

And so, from our perspective, we are, in the discharge of our oversight responsibilities, essentially having to shoot in the dark at oversight right now and do predictive oversight without knowing exactly what we are overseeing. And so that forces us into trying to get the information from you that you are in the middle of deliberating inside the Department of Defense right now and to understand what the issues are that you are facing with a CR. Because, as we stand here today, since we are in a full year of CR, we are in a situation where essentially the information and the decisions

that we are being asked to make right now are two years old. That is the last time we did effective oversight on a decision that was actually reflected in a full budget.

So I am just going to go right down the line here and ask each of you: What are the principal issues that you are dealing with right now in the budget that we can start to get a handle on before we have a full budget, before we have full information, and especially if we do not have the opportunity to provide full oversight before we have to make major decisions in this subcommittee?

General Nordhaus, what is the biggest issue you are facing today?

General NORDHAUS. Congressman, first I would like to thank Congress for adding some adds in the yearlong CR with SPP, NGRE, and our full-time manning to be able to use those in fiscal year 2025. Certainly, on the readiness accounts, the foundation, it is every part of readiness. So every dollar you put in that we can put a mechanic out on flight line to be able to get helicopters or the machines that we operate to get after readiness is critical. Weapon system sustainment as well on parts, those dollars matter. So whatever we can do to increase that capability along those lines.

And then, on the modernization, as we talked about fighters and tankers and cyber, those are all critical as we go into the future along with what we are doing with the Army.

And then, lastly, for our warfighters, there are things that we can do in the future, whether it is duty-status reform, full-time support, or mil-tech modernization that can have a big impact as we go forward into the next year.

Thanks, Congressman.

Mr. CASE. Admiral Lacore. Biggest budget issues you are facing right now.

Admiral LACORE. Thank you, sir. Congressman, I think the biggest issue for us related to people is the predictability in being able to get Reservists on orders. It impacts not just morale, but it impacts readiness. We are not able—you know, they can't commit to their civilian employer, and they take time off from their civilian employer, and then we can't come through with the order. So that is a big one as far as the people go.

As far as equipment, we are very grateful for the adds we have gotten in 2024 and 2025 for the C-130 because, as you heard, C-130 is our number one equipment priority. And we are behind glide slope for that recapitalization effort. So those are our biggest impacts.

Mr. CASE. Thank you. I am sorry I am doing this fast, but I need to get through all of you. General Harter?

General HARTER. Yes, sir, the biggest issue really to the Reserve Pay Accounts. So that runs across our formation as far as getting our soldiers' orders cut, getting them to training exercises. We have some big training exercises coming up. We are looking at how do we manage that. And then it gets to Class Nine repair parts for our equipment because that is all budgeted for and how do we order that? So those are the two biggest issues, followed closely by military construction and sustainment of our facilities. That is what we are looking close.

Mr. CASE. General Anderson.

General ANDERSON. Yes, thank you, sir. I echo the thanks on including NGREA in this year's CR. That was certainly beneficial. But, for us, we had to reduce our reenlistment incentives for the remainder of this fiscal year as the number one impact.

And I think, second, as we lose our operational funds, not only for the Reserve component but on the Active Component in the Marine Corps, our exercises are minimized, which gives us less time to train with our Active Component Forces like we are going to do when we are in the First Island Chain.

Mr. CASE. Thank you.

General Healy.

General HEALY. Sir, echoing much of what has been already said, the predictability and stability of being able to pay our participants is one of the biggest factors. With the O&M accounts, as I mentioned in my opening statement, we are going to be \$26 million short of flying out or flying hours this year. So we are working trying to figure that out.

In addition, quarterly authority during a CR doesn't work well with weapon system sustainment when you got large ticket items, like \$62 million to put a B-52 into periodic depot maintenance. So those continue to be challenges as we go forward.

Mr. CASE. Thank you very much.

Mr. CALVERT. And let me concur with Mr. Case. None of us like CRs. And so, obviously, we are looking toward the administration to get us numbers as quickly as possible. Any advice that you can give to folks, that would be appreciated.

Mr. Diaz-Balart.

HOMESTEAD AIR FORCE BASE

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. This has been helpful.

And, to echo what the chairman said, we hate CRs. They are devastating.

Let me first start by—to General Healy, Homestead Air Force Base. You know it well. You know, we have state-sponsored terrorism just 90 miles from the United States. We have all of the humanitarian issues that continue to arise in the hemisphere. And, yet, the airplanes there are—we have, what, 28 Block 30s that my staff actually reminded me that they first rolled off a production line the same year that IBM unveiled its first laptop. And it is insane.

And so is there a formalized plan for replacing those F-16s at Homestead Air Force Base? And, if not, what do we need to do to try to kind of move that in the right direction, General.

General HEALY. Well, sir, I appreciate the question. And Homestead has certainly got a place in my heart. We are going to plan on using that for our first deployable combat wing. The men and the women of the 482nd Fighter Wing are leading the charge for the Air Force Reserve getting after that.

With regards to the plan, the current program on record only has the F-16s pre-Blocks, as you mentioned Block 30s, only funded through fiscal year 2027. There is no program of record beyond that to date.

With regard to how we move forward and how we get beyond that, typically, I would recommend and advocate speaking to Congress, but I am doing that right now. So we are looking towards—we are trying to put everything we can towards getting F-35 potentially as a recapped item. But, as I mentioned in my opening comments as well, we are systematically being nonreinvested for divested aircraft. So anything that we can do in order to show the value associated with the Air Force Reserve—we manage our bases. Essentially, as I mentioned as well, you know, we can do 20 percent of the capability of the Air Force right now for only three percent of the cost. We can manage these at a cheaper rate than the Air Force, sir.

RECRUITMENT

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. And I will follow up with you, Mr. Chairman, about that at a later date. Let me also just now, though, with the time that I have, another question to all of you. And the issue is recruitment. And how are you all doing with recruitment? Is there something that we could be doing to assist in recruitment? And we already heard about your kind of financial crunches. But what else could we do, and how are you doing generally? Whoever wants to—if you all want to kind of just briefly touch on that.

General HEALY. Sir, from a recruiting perspective from the Air Force Reserve, we put quite a lot of resources into it. And, as a result, last year, we met our recruiting goals and exceeded them this year. This year, we are currently producing roughly 2.6 recruits per recruiter, which is actually the best in Air Force right now, exceeding the 1.9 per month that the Active Duty is doing.

We fully expect that we are going to exceed our recruiting goal for this year. The challenge for us is the retention rate. We are about 1 percent under our retention rate. And that is going to get down to the wire with regards to whether or not we meet end strength.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Anybody else want to?

General HARTER. Congressman.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Yes, sir.

Mr. HARTER. Thanks for the question. Our challenge in the Army Reserve is the Active Army recruits for us. We are part of the United States Army recruiting enterprise gets after it for us. We provided roughly 1,400 Army Reserve AGRs to support that effort. And, while they are making big strides with CAMPA 1 recruiting, they have continued to miss our number. They are delivering about 70 percent. And what that equates to is we are currently short about 9,500 privates. And what I tell folks is that is equal to about 60 truck companies.

And so we are working on our bonus program, and we are working closely with USAREC and getting the branding out. It is a wicked hard problem to recruit for the Army Reserve, but, again, we are working with our Army teammates to get after that.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Thank you.

Yes, sir.

General NORDHAUS. Congressman, the National Guard continues to see historic levels of recruiting and retention. The Army National Guard, when I came into the job seven months ago, was fo-

cused on getting to 325,000. We are at 328,000 guardsmen. On the Air National Guard side, we are at 105,000, which is our funded strength. And we are going to continue to do well through the rest of the year, and our retention continues to be strong.

A lot of those things deals with how we are getting after commands, the bonus criteria, and payments that we are doing, Army recruiter master trainers, and then also working to get our folks through MEPS as fast as we can.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Okay.

General NORDHAUS. We are going to keep our foot on the accelerator because we want to keep and retain the best warfighters out there.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Yes, please.

Admiral LACORE. Thank you for this question. Navy Reserve hit end strength last month, and we anticipate being about 600 personnel above end strength. And that is the first time since 2020. And we attribute a lot of that to our recruiting effort by which we established a Navy Reserve recruiting Reserve command. So we own the prior service mission now. So we are responsible for recruiting folks off Active Duty—

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Great.

Admiral LACORE [continuing]. Which has gone a long way.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. If the chairman will allow just a few more seconds.

Mr. CALVERT. Yes.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Ten seconds.

General ANDERSON. Thanks to success of Marine recruiting, we have maintained our numbers. Even through COVID, as you know, and Marine Reserves are no different. We are 5- to 600 over our NDAA for this fiscal year. We are healthy both in recruiting and retention. And part of that is due to the support from Active Duty recruiters. So where could we get help? Again, the CR affecting the budget for our recruiters has certainly hurt us this year.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. And thank you, Chairman.

PAY RAISES

Mr. CALVERT. On that subject real quick, we just did a recent pay raise for E-1, C-4s. Was that helpful?

General HEALY. Yes, sir.

General NORDHAUS. Yes, sir.

Mr. CALVERT. Ms. Kaptur.

NEED FOR TECHNICIANS AND MAINTAINERS

Ms. KAPTUR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome. You are always welcome here on both sides of the aisle. And we are very proud of you, and we are proud of your service and those under your command, your service to our country and to liberty.

I wanted to—all of us come from different parts of the country. The gentleman to my left, Hawaii. So that is Pacific, right? And the gentleman to my right, Texas. Well, I am Great Lakes. And we each look at the world in a different way based on where we come from.

But I was struck by your testimonies—and I read them all last night—how many of you mentioned in one way or another the

shortage and need for technicians and those that actually work and create the new technologies of the future.

And, General Nordhaus, when we spoke recently, I was struck by something you said related to the Guard base in my region, 180th Fighter Wing you know well, is because of the maintainers—you said, if I am quoting you correctly—that the unit scored as high as it did. Is that a correct quote? Am I quoting you correctly on that?

General NORDHAUS. Yes, ma'am. I believe the National Guard has incredible maintainers because of the experience that they have, how they work together as a team. But, yes, the 180th Fighter Wing certainly has incredible maintainers.

Ms. KAPTUR. Well, the reason I say I am going to ask each of you, in terms of recruitment as well as the situation our country faces—we can't produce airplanes on time; we can't get our ships built on time; each of you faces challenges within the units that you command—what programs do you have or could have that would better work with local assets, be they educational or otherwise, to help us create a stronger stream of people who build and maintain? There is a program called Star Base—some of you may be familiar with. I am not saying that is a good program that the military has, but it is something that started.

What other programs exist within the military that could be a better funnel to move people into these professions that are so desperately needed both by the military and the private sector?

We have a serious shortage of technicians and mechanically trained people. We see it in our region every day, even though we try. Is there anything any of you is aware of within your branch that might be expanded to help in this way? And I am talking about younger people—perhaps 13—12, 13 to 18—that could link to local organizations. What within the military exists or could be expanded?

General ANDERSON. Ma'am, if I could, locally near my headquarters in New Orleans, we have the New Orleans Military Maritime Academy. It is 100 percent Marine Corps JROTC school in New Orleans with over 900 students that bring in and introduce the trades early on to get them interested in that.

Because, to your point, ma'am, they make that decision early on in high school, which route they might want to take. And, even though they are not joining, they may not join the Marine Corps, they are interested in the maritime industry and the trades. Some of them go to Coast Guard and other services as well. But that is a program at least early on that we have got in the Marine Corps.

General HARTER. Ma'am.

Ms. KAPTUR. Excuse me, just one second, General. Who has the lead on that in that area?

General ANDERSON. Ma'am, the school, it is a privately run school. But the Marine Corps JROTC, the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, it is funded by the Marine Corps, by the service. We provide uniforms, boots, you know, all the basic things for the young students there at the school.

Ms. KAPTUR. Thank you. Yes, General?

General HARTER. Yes, ma'am. We use JROTC as well to navigate into that youth population and familiarize them with opportunities in the United States Army Reserve. I will tell you just like in To-

ledo, though, in Army Reserve, we have our private-public partnership program where we reach out into communities, and we try to, orient, you know, youth that want to join to opportunities in the Army Reserve but specifically in the technician area.

We are doing a hiring fair actually in Toledo in September where we will illustrate, "Hey, here are some of the technician mechanic jobs we need. We are only funded to 50 percent of requirement. We have a lot of shortages. You can join the Army Reserve, become a great American soldier. We will get you trained up."

So we will continue to drive on that.

Ms. KAPTUR. We will follow up on that.

Yes, General.

General HEALY. Junior JROTC just the same. That is run by the Active Duty Air Force Air Education and Training Command. And then it gets down to the individual bases that we are at for community outreach within any programs that they have in the local community, ma'am.

Ms. KAPTUR. Thank you.

General NORDHAUS. Congresswoman Kaptur, one thing I did in a previous job down at CONR First Air Force was Civil Air Patrol. And so that is another thing—that civil Air Patrol goes across from the Air Force. And then, as you know, our guardsmen and from each of Reserve Component here, we work out in the community. So I think it is about getting the word out across the board about what we do and how we do it and then continue to recruit and retain the best and the brightest.

Ms. KAPTUR. Thank you.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentlelady.

Mr. Womack.

STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, to the Generals, Admiral, thank you for being here today.

One of my favorite topics of the Reserve Components, and it is no surprise that, when issues regarding the Guard and Reserve come up in this subcommittee, that a lot of heads look in my direction because of my experience down through the years with the National Guard.

I want to ask General Nordhaus about the State Partnership Program. We have a lot of them scattered around the country. I think we have 18 down in the Indo-Pacific region. Arkansas just recently had a big exercise with Guatemala not terribly long ago.

I personally believe these SPP programs are just really important. And it is a two-way street. It is good for the State. It is also good for the host nation.

What are your thoughts about expansion, and what budget constraints could impact our ability, particularly as we look to the Indo-Pacific region?

General NORDHAUS. Congressman, thank you for the incredible question. And, to funding across the board, I want to thank Congress for State Partnership funding.

As we look to the future, right now, we have 115 partners around the globe. Sixty percent of the nations are partnered with a State

partner. And, last year, we did a thousand engagements that one percent of the theater security cooperation budget.

Like you talked about, whether it is an INDOPACOM. I just recently went out to Timor-Leste with Rhode Island. Their partnership is only three years old. And they are with the latest democracy on the planet in Timor-Leste, and that relationship was incredibly strong. And the President and the Minister of Defense all thanked me repeatedly for that incredible relationship.

Then I met with Hawaii and Guam, when I was over there, and also saw their incredible partnership with the Philippines. And so, as we look to the future, every time we get asked to partner with another nation through the State Department and through the combatant commands, multiple States are asking to be that State partner. So I don't think we are short on the ability to add State partners out there, but we do need consistent funding. As those partnerships grow, we need a little bit to kick it off each year to start those key leader engagements and then the additional funding.

And, as you look at the funding for the State Partnership Program, the combatant commands, I hear them talk all the time about how incredibly important it is. And I think a little bit of extra funding in there continues to robust that program across the board for our national security.

Mr. WOMACK. Are you still getting good comments, good reviews back from the host nation and from the units themselves?

General NORDHAUS. Absolutely, Congressman. Recently, I met with Norway in the Pentagon with Minnesota and just over the stop incredible relationship there. Sweden and New York came into town. That partnership is only 3 years old. I know Virginia and Finland, that partnership has kicked off since those two nations have joined NATO. And just over and over hear the robust coordination between our States—you know, our States have went to combat with their State partners. I know that, in an upcoming JROTC operation, they are going to have a couple State partners actually train with them. So it is not only do we do mil to mil, but we do it globally, but it also goes mil to civ and then civ to civ.

COMBAT TRAINING CENTERS

Mr. WOMACK. Another question, budget-related question, I have had some concerns about constraints on the budget and the impact it could have on our ability to get units to the combat training centers or to the exportable combat training centers. Is that a concern? Is this something that—I mean, I consider these combat center rotations to be very important to our readiness, and I would assume that you would agree that, for the Reserve Component, it is no different.

General NORDHAUS. Congressman, certainly the CTC rotations that we do are critical to our readiness each year. And, this year, we are doing two, and we are going to do one XCTC. And then, while that contract is expiring, we are going to go to CRC. So there are combat readiness exercises. And there are going to be 15-day deployments. We are doing force on force beginning after large-scale combat employment operations.

As I talked to Lieutenant General Stubbs, our Director of the Army National Guard, he thinks there is great opportunity here and that we are going to find good training and that it will make us more lethal and more ready for the warfighting if we are called upon.

Mr. WOMACK. Yeah, thank you. You referenced John Stubbs. For the benefit of my colleagues up here, a long, long time ago, when I was a battalion commander, John Stubbs was one of my lieutenants. And, since that time, he has become the adjutant general for the great State of Arkansas and now the director of the Army Guard. We are very, very proud of him. And I am assuming you are getting your money's worth from his service.

General NORDHAUS. Absolutely, Congressman.

Mr. WOMACK. Yeah, that doesn't surprise me. I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Cuellar.

ROLE AT THE BORDER

Mr. CUELLAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I want to thank all of ya'll for your service and the men and women that work along yourselves.

Two questions: One has to do with the role that you play at the border. I am from—I represent border areas. I live there at the border. And then the other one has to do with the impact of the Army Transformational Initiative on the National Guard. I will talk about the border.

The National Guard has provided border security for many years. Again, working with the Department of Homeland in a host of different missions, they have done that both in Federal, in a State status, performing a number of duties that include detection, monitoring, logistics, and transportation, enhancing the work that CBP, or Border Patrol, does down there. And that is to impede the denial or deny the illegal crossings, situational awareness. And we certainly want to thank you.

Now that the numbers have gone down, Border Patrol has pretty much, you know, it is not the way that we are trained, so I would ask you to, you know, continue doing the work you are doing there, but to look at some of the basic work. For example, let's assume this is the Rio Grande. Right now, the roads of Border Patrol come in this way. They need more river roads so they can patrol the river, is one thing I would ask you to consider, number one.

Number two, there is—you know, unless you are from the border, you are not familiar with the invasive carrizo-cane that just grows very high on both sides of the border. But one of the things that we could do is to get rid of that carrizo cane. And we have added moneys to get rid of that carrizo so Border Patrol can have a clear side of view.

So, since the numbers have gone down, I would ask you, besides the work you are doing, is talk to Border Patrol and talk to them about river roads and the eradication of carrizo-cane. And I think that would be extremely helpful.

Besides, keeping in mind that one-third of the cameras for Border Patrol are working, two-thirds of the cameras are not working. Think about that. Two-thirds of the cameras are not working for

Border Patrol. So those are some things that I think, living on the border, I think will be very useful.

And then the second question, General, I would like to have a better understanding of the impact of the Army Transformational Initiative on the National Guard. As you know, the Army National Guard has four Apache battalions, including the First Attack Recon Battalion 149 Aviation in the State of Texas. So there is more of us, a few of us from Texas, which currently is flying the D model Apaches that I understand are supposed to be divested.

So what is the Army's plan for the Guard to ensure that we have a full fleet of current Apache helicopters. And what is the plan to sustain and upgrade the fleet? So those are my two questions.

General NORDHAUS. Congressman, thank you for the questions. As we work super close with Secretary Driscoll and General George on the Army side, with Army Transformation Initiative, the Army National Guard is very synced in. And, obviously, National Guard is 325,000 really—really 328,000 strong. And so, as we look at going into the future, keeping that transformation very synced with the Army is important. And that has been synced across the board. As we look at Army aviation, I see that continuing to go in a very good direction. From the Apaches, as we look at the Echo models, we have transformed two of the four. A third is in transformation right now. And then Texas will transform in the future to Echo models. And I see a strong future for the National Guard as we go through this transformation with the Army.

Mr. CUELLAR. Okay. Anything on the border?

General NORDHAUS. Congressman, on the border, General Guillot. As the combatant commander, General Guillot and I know each other well, and we work very closely—1,500 of our guardsmen are in title 10 that fall underneath him. So we will certainly pass these comments forward on to General Guillot. And also I work with General Suelzer, who is the adjutant general for the State of Texas, and where we have about 4,400 guardsmen supporting Operation Lone Star in the State of Texas.

And so I have been down to the border twice to see our troops down there and how they are getting after the mission to seal the border.

Mr. CUELLAR. Yeah, and when the numbers were high coming in from the border, Border Patrol needed help in logistics, transportation, and all of that. The numbers have gone down tremendously. In fact, in the Laredo sector, a day, we get maybe 30, maybe 40 individuals. And so, across the board, the numbers are gone. So the logistics, the intelligence, and all that is very important. But I would ask you, again, everybody looks at the shiny objects. It is the basic things that should be done at the border that will have long-term effects. The river roads—imagine the river, right here—the roads run this way, not this way. And the carrizo cane, they go almost as high as this ceiling—and again they are on both sides. I am just talking about the U.S. side. Just clearing that up will provide a better view from cameras, eyesight, horse patrols by Border Patrol. So I would just ask all of you, whoever is involved in this, just to pass that on. And I have talked to General on this, but I think it is important that we keep the basics in mind.

With that, I want to thank all of ya'll for the work that ya'll do and thank the men and women that serve with y'all. Thank you.
 General NORDHAUS. Thanks, Congressman.
 Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentleman.
 Mr. Fleischmann.

TANKER FLEET

Mr. FLEISCHMANN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I would like to thank each and every one of you all for your service and your dedication and your excellence and for your time here today. I would like to especially thank Lieutenant General Harter for taking time to come and visit us in our office with your great staff yesterday and meeting with my staff. Very helpful and insightful, sir. Thank you.

I have got a couple of questions. So I am going to try to condense this a bit. First question is on the tanker fleet. As you know, I am from the great State of Tennessee. Tennessee's 134th Air Refueling Wing was rightfully honored for their role in Operation True Promise. I believe 11 air guardsmen were awarded the distinguished flying cross for their service. Just truly, truly outstanding.

The Navy's current tanker, the KC-130T, has a mission capable rate of about 30 percent. Apparently, it is, quite frankly, not a survivable aircraft in the contested environment. The KC-130T fleet is being recapitalized to the J model apparently.

My question for the Navy and Air National Guard, can you share with this committee your role in logistic sustainment and provide your assessment of our current tanker capacity to sustain protracted conflict in the Pacific?

And a followup question: The KC-130J and the KC-46 complement each other's roles. Is there a target number between the Air National Guard and the Navy Reserve that would be sufficient to fulfill our projective logistics demands?

Admiral LACORE. Well, thank you, Congressman. I appreciate your interest in our airborne logistics.

For the Navy, you are right; the KC-130 Tango mission capable rate is not great. It is not where it needs to be. And this is a Reserve-only mission, that we support the Active Duty for the inter-theater logistics.

So it is critical that we recap to the Juliets for their—a couple reasons. One is, they come with integrated survivability systems, which will allow us to operate in a contested environment. But, two, we are also anticipating a mission-capable rate of above 70 percent for those aircraft. So that will be essential to what we do.

The Pac Fleet Commander has already asked us, you know, to work on organic aerial refueling, and we are doing that with the Tangos, but it is a long haul. They are not all plumbed for that, whereas the Juliets will come with that plumbing already established.

We anticipate, with that, at least two times the aerial refueling rate, and if we include ground refueling as well, we are looking at probably eight times our refueling capability in theater, which will be a huge win for us in the Pacific.

Thank you.

Mr. FLEISCHMANN. Thank you.

General NORDHAUS. Congressman, as we look at the Air National Guard—and, in the previous role, I worked out at NORAD—and as you looked at tankers to support not only the homeland defense mission but then you have the nuclear mission that you need to support and then you have the other COCOMs, tankers are an incredibly vital capability and requirement for our Nation to be able to do air superiority.

The Air National Guard has 36 percent of the Air Force's air-refueling capacity. And so most of that is in the KC-135, which does amazing work, but it is an aging fleet and will be—need to be able to modernize in the future.

The KC-46, as you know, we have several units out there. NMOG-7 will be announced towards the fourth quarter of 2025. And we look forward to continuing to modernize the fleet in coordination with the Air Force as we go forward.

PACIFIC LOGISTICS

Mr. FLEISCHMANN. Thank you. Thank you both.

Now I have a question about the Army Reserve's role in Pacific logistics.

The Army's fleet of landing craft, logistics support vehicles, and utility vessels play a significant role in the military logistics ecosystem.

General Harter, yesterday, in my office, you emphasized that the Army Reserve delivers over half the Army's maneuver support capabilities and over 90 percent of certain key theater-level enablers like sustainment, medical, and engineering.

My question, sir, is: I am deeply concerned about the age and size of the Army's watercraft fleet. Can you provide us with your frank assessment on the health of the Army logistics fleet and ability to sustain a war in the Pacific? And what would you prioritize, sir, to improve your capabilities.

Thank you.

General HARTER. Thank you, Congressman, for the question.

So we have divested our watercraft fleet, although that might be coming back. So we are posturing for that, how we support Active Army, sir.

But with regards to the question, what we discussed yesterday, you know, I said 99 percent of bulk petroleum transportation support is in the Army Reserve. And in that tabletop exercise that we ran, it was focused on the Pacific theater. So what we are looking to do—again, NGREA plays a huge role in how we modernize our fleet and get after the new tankers that the Army is providing.

And then we are also looking at how we posture equipment forward. We have already tested it in the European theater, where we put some of our own equipment forward that will be needed early in the fight. And we are now starting the posture for INDOPACOM and in the Pacific theater, because we will not have time to get that equipment there in large-scale combat operations.

So I thank you for that question.

Mr. FLEISCHMANN. Thank you, sir.

And I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Cuellar, on that issue on the carrizo cane, we call it "arundo" in California. As you recognize, it is an invasive species, and it was brought in by the Spanish to use for thatch material back in the day. So, something we should—

Mr. CUELLAR. Pete and I were saying maybe it was "chorizo cane," but that is Mexican food.

Mr. AGUILAR. I support any chorizo cane.

Mr. CALVERT. There you go.

Mr. Aguilar.

F-15EX LOCATIONS

Mr. AGUILAR. Let's hope there are no tariffs on that carrizo.

Mr. CALVERT. Yeah. We should put a tariff on it, though. It is invasive.

Mr. AGUILAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for the testimony today.

General Nordhaus, I know Chairman Calvert thanked you for the support that the Guard has offered Los Angeles during the wildfires, and we appreciate that—to all of you.

General Nordhaus, as you are aware, the Air Force is in the process of decommissioning F-15Cs. The California Air Guard is scheduled to receive F-15EXs to replace their aging F-15Cs. I am concerned about recent announcements that appear to direct some of the F-15EX aircraft to Selfridge over Fresno and New Orleans.

My first question is: Can we expect to see delays in the delivery of the F-15EXs to Fresno? And how are you working with the Department to ensure that the Cal Guard doesn't have a gap in the F-15 mission?

General NORDHAUS. Congressman, thanks for the question.

In a previous role as the CONR First Air Force Commander, I understand the mission set very well and what Fresno does for NORAD/NORTHCOM in that mission space set. Incredible unit out there.

I recently was out in Portland and had the opportunity to fly in an F-15EX. So it is a great aircraft that will come into the Air Force. And the Air National Guard is bringing that on board.

We also work very closely with the Air Force as we continue to modernize the force, and we appreciate the additional F-15EXs coming into the Air National Guard.

We are working very closely with the Air National Guard, General Pirak, our Acting Director of the Air National Guard, working very close, hand-in-hand, with not only the Air Force but the Air Force Reserve about what bed-down for fighters looks like in that future.

As we look to the F-15EX and the C model transition there, they are working that very closely so there are no gaps or seams, and they are trying to mitigate any impacts.

TRAINING TRANSITIONS

Mr. AGUILAR. Will there also be—with the training courses for the A-10 pilots transitioning, could the A-10-to-F-15EX transition cause some manning shortfalls across the F-15 enterprise?

General NORDHAUS. Well, Congressman, I would say this: Transitioning from an A-10 to an F-15C, it will be a longer train-

ing program, and so that will have to be planned and really thought out very well.

Going from an F-15C to an F-15EX, like I am seeing up in Portland, is a very quick transition. And so the pilots up there, I was very impressed by them. They have 36 pilots at Portland; 22 of them are instructor pilots. So I know the vast capability and experience, and that will help make transitions from F-15C to F-15EX go very quickly.

Mr. AGUILAR. Are you passing any concerns, you know, up the chain?

I mean, I hear what you are saying, but, clearly, with the change in Selfridge, this could be a problem. When some of these transition from the A-10, it will have a longer education gap, a training gap there; and the potential for the gap with EXs to Fresno.

I mean, you are conveying any—any concerns you may have—I am not saying that you have any—but any concerns you have are being conveyed when it comes to timeliness?

General NORDHAUS. Certainly. All the bases are talking to the Air National Guard Readiness Center, and they are passing that information up to the Director of the Air National Guard, and we are working with the AirForce.

As we look to the future, understanding each of those pieces—and then you also have the production of the F-15EXs coming off the line. And so we want to understand what that looks like in the future, and then we will take that into consideration and minimize any gaps or seams so that we keep warfighters flying healthy aircraft to get after deterring our adversaries.

SPACE NATIONAL GUARD

Mr. AGUILAR. General—I don't mean to pick on you here—the administration has expressed interest in establishing a Space National Guard. Can you share how the Bureau is interacting with the DOD and the administration in establishing a Space National Guard?

General NORDHAUS. Congressman, yeah, thank you for the question.

Once again, in a previous role, I was the AFSPACE Commander for SPACECOM, so I understand the space mission pretty well. I know our Air National Guardsmen have been doing this mission set for 30 years.

NDAA 2025 has that transfer of 578 into the Space Force. We are working very closely with the Space Force and with the Air Force on that transition.

Mr. AGUILAR. Thank you.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

CONCERNS WITH F-15s

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentleman.

I also share Mr. Aguilar's concern about the F-15s. We haven't had a really good briefing on that and the Fresno situation. Some of us believe that rotation was changed, so we want to take a look at that.

And, also, how does that affect the air cap at March Air Force Base? Because those aircraft presently are coming out of Fresno, and how are we going to deal with that if there is a delay?

General NORDHAUS. Chairman, thanks for the question.

Working with General Guillot, the Air Force, and with the Air National Guard, those are pieces and things that we are going to have to work out and make sure that we have the right aircraft in the right location to be able to do the mission set for homeland defense and homeland security. And I am very confident that we will work out solutions in the future, Chairman.

Mr. CALVERT. I look forward to working with you on that.

General NORDHAUS. Thanks, Chairman.

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Rogers.

GRAY EAGLE DRONES

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, lady and gentlemen, to the subcommittee.

Let me focus my time on the Army National Guard securing funding for the Gray Eagle drones.

Since 2023, Congress has included funds to procure these platforms. And yet here we are, still awaiting a decision from the National Guard Bureau on where they will be stationed. There is a significant amount of infrastructure work that needs to be done to house the Gray Eagles, and we are at the point where we can't wait anymore.

When can we expect a basing decision? When do we expect that will be made, that decision? And what capability gaps might there be due to these delays?

Sir?

General NORDHAUS. Congressman, thanks for the question.

As far as the basing decision for the 12 Gray Eagles that were in the NDAA 2023, those have been pushed out, and the announcement, it was made to Arizona.

As far as the NDAA 2025, those will go through a basing decision and through the Army force structure, like we do with any basing decision. And so we are very deliberate, follow a strategic process, both on the Air Force side and the Army side, to make sure that we take everything into consideration, and then make funding decisions as we go into the future.

Mr. ROGERS. Earlier this month, the Army Transformation Initiative was announced, which included mention of canceling Gray Eagle procurement for the Active Component.

Tell us about the importance of the Gray Eagle drones for the National Guard. How might the Army Transformation Initiative affect your plans for Gray Eagle drones in the Guard?

General NORDHAUS. Congressman, as we look at the—Army has 18 divisions. Eight of those divisions are in the Army National Guard. And, currently, as we look to have UAS capability in those divisions in the future, we are looking to bed down and work with the Army on that.

So the first one was Arizona as we look at the Gray Eagle. And that will get bedded down over the next—you know, 2026, 2027, as we take that into the force.

And we look forward to learning from that and bringing UASes into the Army National Guard and working with the Army on the future on UASes in the other divisions as we go forward.

Mr. ROGERS. Well, we will be keeping an eye on it.

General NORDHAUS. Thank you, Congressman.

DETERIORATED FACILITIES

Mr. ROGERS. Quickly, let me ask you about deteriorated facilities.

You all would probably agree with me in saying that our facilities within the Guard and Reserve are old, deteriorated, lack the modernized infrastructure to support emerging missions such as cyber operations and domestic responses.

In Kentucky, the National Guard has been vital in the emergency response to natural disasters. As we speak, the Guard is on Active Duty in my home county in Kentucky due to heavy tornadoes on Friday night. So they serve a very important mission.

Despite their indescribable value, there are multiple facilities in my district which are all but obsolete. And yet it seems nearly impossible for National Guard and Reserve units to get the funds necessary to make these much needed improvements.

What is the current backlog of deferred maintenance for National Guard and Reserve facilities? And what percentage of Guard and Reserve facilities fail to meet modern standards?

General NORDHAUS. Congressman, on the National Guard, we have 2,200 armories across 2,000 locations. The average age of our armories are about 48 years old. So every dollar that comes in to get after facility sustainment, restoration, modernization is critical to the National Guard for our readiness and to be able to go forward.

As far as the exact rates, I will have to take those for the record and get those back to you, sir.

Mr. ROGERS. Well, my time has expired.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentleman.

And I also share the gentleman's concern regarding the Gray Eagle or the MQ-9. It has been a very effective platform both for ISR and for combat purposes over the years. I haven't met a combatant command around the world who doesn't want more of them.

So it is interesting that the higher up we go on the ladder, it seems that the less support—but when you get to the combat areas, they all want them. They all want them badly.

So, with that, Ms. Lee.

AIR REQUIREMENT AT NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE

Ms. LEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for being here and for your service and leading soldiers in our country.

And I wanted to turn to General Healy.

In your statement, you touched upon this, that the Air Force Reserve pre-block F-16s at Nellis, serving the 706 Aggressor Squadron, are being divested.

It is not clear what is filling the void at this time, and so can you tell me what the plan is to fill the adversary air requirement at Nellis Air Force Base?

And can you also touch on the impact that divestments like this have on the Reserve mission, on your ability for the Reserve to provide the depth, capacity, and capability?

General HEALY. Well, thanks very much, ma'am, for the opportunity to answer the question.

That is accurate; the 706 is scheduled for divestment. We will be divesting the 19 aircraft, pre-block F-16s, between October and December of this year. And there is no program of record to replace that right now.

So any options available to the Air Force are going to be year-of-execution funding to either have civilian contract air pick that up—at, I would expect, a higher cost, between \$12 million and \$18 million more a year, to manage it than our current cost structure for our F-16s there. There are also opportunities that we might be able to use additional aircraft participating using the ranges there to act as aggressors as well.

With regard to the impact to it, it is going to be about 88 people that are ops and maintenance folks currently working on the F-16 program that are going to be reprogrammed back into the Air Force Reserve coffers, so to speak, where we have holes.

We do have mission for most of them, whether it be CCA and bringing CCAs along or the RQ-170 programs, that are still within that same Nevada area.

But, ultimately, what we are going to be losing, too, with the reduction of those is about a 40-percent loss of instructor pilots that are currently providing adversary air for the fighting force in order to get them ready and trained to go.

TUITION PARITY AND RECRUITMENT

Ms. LEE. Okay. Thank you.

I wanted to turn to General Harter.

I had the pleasure of visiting our soldiers at the Dunaway Army Reserve Center earlier this year, and while I was there, it was highlighted that an issue impacting recruitment is tuition parity in the National Guard. It is my understanding that 33 States offer this for Guardsmen but there is no commensurate program for Reserves.

And so can you speak to the disparity and the impact this has on your recruitment?

General HARTER. Yes, Congresswoman. Thanks for that question. It was great having—General Kotulich got out there. So I appreciate you coming out and visiting our Army Reserve soldiers.

So recruiting for the Army Reserve is hard. I acknowledge that, right? Many young men and women who walk into a recruitment center are looking to either go Active Duty—and if they do want to go part-time, the benefits that our National Guard teammates offer are incredible.

And so we are working with local statehouses and Governors to try to create more parity in those benefits. I mean, an example would be—and I can't remember which State; it could be Virginia or Pennsylvania or both—but if you walk in and join the National Guard, your college tuition is paid for, your spouse's college tuition is paid for—if it is a State school—and all of your children.

And so, by the same token, an Army Reserve soldier that might want to join the Army Reserve and is a constituent of that State, those benefits aren't afforded. And I understand that, right? And we are not Title 32. But we continue to work it.

At the end of the day, the Army Reserve, the impacts of the shortage of manpower—I talked about it—60 truck companies. So we continue to work with our COMPO 1 teammates—they recruit for us—and then continue to work and partner with the National Guard.

I would offer, it is not a zero-sum game. We don't have combat arms formations, and so we are not in direct competition with our Guard teammates.

Ms. LEE. Uh-huh.

General HARTER. And so we continue to work that across the footprint.

NGREA FUNDING

Ms. LEE. Great. Thank you.

I will address this to the panel. Maybe, General Nordhaus, you would like to speak to this.

Something that you all touched upon is the NGREA appropriation being critical for readiness, from firefighting to rescue, to procurement of critical equipment, upgrading weapons systems. However, we know that the purchasing power of this account has fallen 83 percent since 2015.

I think you touched upon, we are sort of at even keel right now, but we still are at a disadvantage there.

Can you touch on how critical this funding is? And what level would allow you to achieve your goals?

General NORDHAUS. Congresswoman, thanks for highlighting NGREA. I have been in combat in an F-16 with an NGREA-bought Sniper pod, or LANTIRN pod, or Litening pod, an engine that is in the back of the F-16. And so, without those NGREA, I wouldn't have been able to accomplish the mission set that I needed to help save lives on the ground.

Ms. LEE. Okay.

General NORDHAUS. And so, when you look at whether the NGREA is purchasing things on C-130s or on fighters or other things in the Army National Guard to be able to give them the capabilities that we need to be able to communicate back and forth, it helps to make sure that we are interoperable and deployable and can be part of the joint team consistently across the board.

So that NGREA funding is critical for the National Guard and for the Reserve Component.

General HEALY. Yes, ma'am. If I could add on, too. So we have a \$1.5 billion backlog on modernization efforts for our aircraft. They are legacy airplanes, 38 years old. Eighty-eight percent of our fleet is over 38 years old.

So we typically are getting between \$150 million and \$155 million a year in NGREA. Greatly appreciate it. \$132 million this year. We can easily execute up to \$175 million, \$176 million in order to get after that backlog of modernization.

Ms. LEE. Great. Thank you for that.

I am over my time, so I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentlelady.
Mr. Ellzey.

MARINE CORPS RESERVE

Mr. ELLZEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
And thank you all for being here.

I was going to start serious, but then I looked at the panel, and I decided that, according to my written notes here, "Beat Army" and "Beat Air Force" are not just a slogan, it is a reality—this year. So I am sorry I had to say that in good fun.

Thank you all for being here.

As I look at this distinguished panel—and I mean that with all seriousness—I see combat leaders and corporate knowledge, the likes of which can't be replicated anywhere else. And as we start any fight or respond to any attack, after a sustained amount of time, it is the corporate knowledge and the aircraft and the men and women that are represented by you that are the ones who sustain that fight.

And so I think that you have an incredibly difficult job, especially when we talk about recapitalization, and it is never met, but when you come to the fight, you bring the second-rate stuff but the first-rate fighting men and women.

So thank you for being here.

General Anderson—"Loni," as I have known you for many, many years—in the short time that I have here, give me about 30 seconds of, if you could ask me to ask you a question, what would it be, and answer it real quick.

General ANDERSON. What are your Marine Corps Reserves doing today?

And, Congressman, 12 percent of the marines deployed forward are Reservists today. And that number is going to triple through 2027. So, as we continue to prepare for the fight, that is what the Marine Corps Reserve is focused on.

And we are part of the total force. Like the chairman mentioned earlier, we are not an afterthought; we are part of the solution. It is not something that we do later. We are forecasted in our deployments out through 2031 so our members can plan, prepare, and be ready for that deployment.

Mr. ELLZEY. That is the perfect answer.

General ANDERSON. Thank you for asking.

KC-130JS

Mr. ELLZEY. Yeah.

And those folks are dual-hatted. They are doing civilian jobs back at home with families, and then they put on the uniform, as all of you have, and go to the fight. And that is to be commended. And we have relied on that in every fight since Desert Storm and even before.

As we talk about the INDOPACOM, which is usually the first word that comes out as we are talking about China, we talk about contested logistics. The Marine Corps is going to play a very large role in that, but so is—"contested logistics" not only means cargo but it also means tanking.

And, Admiral Lacore—no slouch yourself in the cockpit. I think that you and I shared the round domes in San Diego at the same time when I was at HS-4.

We have tried to get you all some recap on your KC-130Js. Talk a little bit about the capabilities of the J versus what you have that you are trying to recap on and how many you need in fiscal year 2026 to accomplish that mission of contested logistics.

Admiral LACORE. Thank you, Congressman. Happy to talk about that.

As you know, the C-130 is only operating in the Reserve, and it provides the Navy's only intertheater airlift capable of moving oversized cargo. And we are not part-time. We are doing this 24/7/365, in all the major theaters.

We have 27 aircraft right now, the Tangos, with an average age of 34 years and a mission-capable rate of 40 percent. Recapping to the Juliets will get us, first and foremost, survivability systems which will allow us to operate in that contested environment, but we also anticipate a 75-percent mission-capable rate, which will go a long way.

We started this recap journey in 2024, and we are behind glide slope, honestly. The plan was to be at 32 aircraft by 2030. We got one in 20, two in 2025, and we are super-grateful for them. But, right now, for the out-years, we need to be looking at six per year in order to get us where we need to go.

And what are we going to get out of this? A lot. We anticipate doubling our sortie rate, getting three times the service radius in combat. And if you are looking at aerial refueling and ground refueling in an austere airfield, we are looking at eight times what we have currently available to us.

Mr. ELLZEY. Okay.

Well, I know that the KC-130J, for those who don't know, the J will only refuel Marine Corps and Navy aircraft. It won't—at least in this configuration, will not refuel our Air Force brothers and sisters.

So, as we talk about the INDOPACOM, which is—it is an all-services fight, but we talk about the Naval services a lot. So you said—what was the percentage of availability of the T?

Admiral LACORE. About 40 percent.

Mr. ELLZEY. About 40 percent. So we are just a couple years—if we fund you for what you need over the next 2 to 3 years, you are actually going to surpass your capability with far fewer aircraft because of the higher availability rate, right?

Admiral LACORE. Absolutely.

Mr. ELLZEY. So we need to be emphasizing getting you what you need in the next couple of years. Would you agree with that?

Admiral LACORE. A hundred percent.

Mr. ELLZEY. Okay.

Admiral LACORE. Absolutely agree.

Mr. ELLZEY. All right.

Admiral LACORE. Thank you, Congressman.

Mr. ELLZEY. Five minutes goes fast.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your time. I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentleman.

Ms. McCollum.

SUPPORT TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The New York Times reported last week that the Department of Homeland Security would be requesting the DOD to provide 20,000 National Guard forces to assist in the removal of immigrants from the United States. This was based on an order from the President to increase deportation forces. The article also stated that State Governors would ask for volunteers for this duty.

General Nordhaus and Guardsmen will be called up for this mission on the southern border. Are they being called up as law enforcement personnel to assist in the removal of immigrants, outside the United States, or both?

If they are to be called up for the removal of immigrants, can you share with the committee the following: Where will the Guardsmen be called up? What activities will they be executing? And will law enforcement be among them?

So the question becomes, having been a State Representative: Under what legal authority will the Guardsmen be utilized? Because some of the Guardsmen will have been maybe law enforcement, sheriff's officers and others, and they would have some arrest authority in certain circumstances.

So can you explain how you see law enforcement personnel being used, just folks that maybe don't serve in law enforcement in a regular capacity in their civilian job, and people who are law enforcement in their civilian job, if they will be given different duties or different duties expected of them?

General NORDHAUS. Congresswoman, thank you for the question.

I do know that the Department of Defense has received a request for assistance. It is just initial into the building and is being staffed. I don't have specific details or how the Department will execute on that request for assistance at this time.

I do know that the National Guard has supported law enforcement, whether it was in Presidential election, inauguration 60 or in 59, and multiple times across the States that the National Guard gets trained and ready. We operate under the authorities of either the State and the Governor or operate under authorities from Congress.

And so we take those things very seriously, and we make sure that we are following the Constitution, we are following the law and any policy and guidance, and then that our Guardsmen receive the training and are put on missions that they know exactly what they need to do, when they need to do it, and how they need to do it. And so we will be focused on that going forward.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Okay. Well, I think there are a lot of legal questions that our Guardsmen and -women need to know before they are assigned to duties, and I expect due diligence to be done.

Because there is also talk about using more Federal lands—using land and the Federal Government declaring it part of a national emergency and then putting military personnel on there. Then does that make it a military base?

I think there are a lot of areas which we don't understand as of yet. At least, I don't. And I feel I have an oversight responsibility to understand what the roles are going to be. Because I don't want

to put any person, military or whether they are Guards or non-Guards, in a position where they are given an order where things haven't been really thought out very clearly, because it is going to be their name in the paper, it is going to be their unit in the paper. And I just want to make sure that we do our due diligence and, when we give them a mission to fulfill, that we have thought of all the legal responsibilities and obligations they have.

TRAINING IMPACTS

The other question that I am concerned about is: As these activities increase, how does that affect their training and their qualifications for a near-peer fight? How do you work with the Department, with the President, to find that sweet spot.

And that is my only question that I have, Mr. Chair.

General NORDHAUS. Congresswoman, thank you.

As we talked about the National Guard being 433,000-strong and currently 34,000—just over 33,500 today around the globe, and so that is less than 10 percent. And as we see when hurricanes, wildfires, things hit a State, we are able to use Emergency Management Assistance Compacts and be able to go to wherever is needed to provide that support in a State also while we are training for the wartime fight.

And so, from your National Guard, we are always ready, always there. We are making sure that we are using every dollar that Congress gives us to maximize that training and readiness so that we can answer the call when called upon.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentlelady.

Mr. Cole was unable to attend today, but his statement will be placed in the record, and he wanted to emphasize his support for the Guard and Reserve over the years and his continued support.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you. I appreciate everyone here for coming out. I apologize again for starting late.

And, with that, we are adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 12:05 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

[The information follows:]

Chairman Cole Opening Statement

National Guard and Reserve Forces

Tuesday, May 20, 2025

Thank you Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum.

Welcome to our distinguished guests and thank you all for answering the call of duty on behalf of our great nation.

Let me begin by expressing gratitude to the men and women of the National Guard and Reserve. Your service – while balancing civilian life with military duty – represents the best of our country. All members of Congress see your impact up close, whether it's a deployment abroad or responding to tornadoes or wildfire, you are not just essential to our national defense – you are essential to our communities.

Today's hearing is an important opportunity to evaluate the current readiness, funding needs, and policy priorities of our Guard and Reserve components.

We know that the operational tempo for the Guard and Reserve has grown significantly. These forces are no longer a strategic reserve. They are part of our day-to-day defense operations – from cyber defense to border support to combat deployments.

We owe it to you to ensure that federal funding reflects your operational demands and the critical dual role you serve.

I also look forward to hearing about ongoing challenges with recruitment and retention, along with modernization of equipment. I hope for a frank discussion about your needs, your missions, and how Congress can be a true partner in sustaining and strengthening our Guard and Reserve forces.

“Always Ready, Always There” – it's not just a motto – but a promise you have proven time and again.

Whether you are in Oklahoma or serving abroad, our Guardsmen and Reservists deserve to know we have your back.

Again, thank you for being here today.

I yield back.

U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense
May 20, 2025
Review of the President's Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request for the National Guard and Reserve

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
General Steven S. Nordhaus
Chief of the National Guard Bureau**

Representative Betty McCollum

Question 1: I'm hearing reports both nationally and from my home state of Minnesota that the Army National Guard is facing funding shortfalls for both their military and civilian full-time workforce.

As you know, the vast majority of our National Guard technicians are dual-status military technicians who wear the uniform alongside their Active Guard and Reserve teammates. These military service members and civilian employees alike are expert logisticians, equipment maintainers, operators and support staff critical to the National Guard's ability to provide ready personnel and equipment for national and domestic operations.

1. Please provide information on the magnitude of this shortfall, how it evolved and most importantly, what the National Guard needs from Congress to ensure the shortfall is addressed in FY26 and beyond?

Answer 1: In FY25, the identified funding shortfall is \$180million, the result of many contributing factors. These include higher wage-grade hires; costs associated with relocation, travel, and training; recruiting and retention incentives; as well as unforeseen (unprogrammed) mandatory increases in salary for military members and federal civilians and in the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB).

In FY26 and beyond, the ARNG requests that Congress avoid negative Congressional marks against civilian compensation when determining sub activity groups. These actions reduce funding available for civilian and MILTECH compensation in year of execution and significantly hinder National Guard readiness for homeland defense, response, and warfighting.

U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense

May 20, 2025

Review of the President's Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request for the National Guard and Reserve

Representative Chuck Fleischmann

Question 1: The Air National Guard refueling wings provide readiness for our fleet at a fraction of the cost.

- As the Air Force recapitalizes their 60-year-old tanker fleet, I am concerned that the Air National Guard's contribution is being reduced.
- The Air National Guard currently accounts for 40% of the KC-135 fleet. The current recapitalization plan to the KC-46 would reduce Air National Guard's representation to 17% of the fleet.
- We all recognize how important tankers are when you are considering operations across the vast distances in the Pacific. The tanker fleet is also a critical component of our nuclear deterrent by enabling the flexibility and responsiveness of the air leg.

1. General Nordhaus, based on the current plan to modernize the tanker fleet, do you feel the Air National Guard will be appropriately recapitalized?

Answer 1: Due to delayed recapitalization and the significant production delays that have challenged the KC-46 program, the KC-135 and its Airmen will remain the backbone of the Aerial Refueling fleet well into the 2040+ timeframe. Therefore, the Air Force must concurrently prioritize investing in connectivity and survivability programs to keep the KC-135 fleet viable and maximizing the Defense Industrial Base's capacity for continuous uninterrupted tanker recapitalization.

Specific to the Air National Guard's (ANG) portion of the KC-46 fleet, CAO the FY26PB the ANG has only been apportioned 32 of the 188 KC-46s currently funded in the Air Force's program of record (PoR), accounting for 17% of the fleet. Additionally, the Air Force intends to maintain a tanker inventory of 466 aircraft, after all 188 KC-46s are delivered, 82% (143 aircraft) of the ANG's 175 tanker force structure will lack a recapitalization plan.

Question 2: I am excited by the National Guard's role in the advancement of the Small Modular Reactor program known as Project Pele.

- These SMR's would not only be an incredible tool for disaster response, but they could be the cornerstone of providing sustained energy to bases in austere environments.

2a: General Nordhaus, can you provide this committee with an update on Project Pele?

2b: What does the National Guard need to ensure this project is a success?

U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense

May 20, 2025

Review of the President's Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request for the National Guard and Reserve

2c: As we have heard consistently throughout this hearing, both the National Guard and the Reserve forces are the backbone of our logistics sustainment. Can you comment on your vision for the SMR's in the context of a protracted conflict in the Pacific?

Answer 2a: Due to the content of Project Pele, OSD-Strategic Capabilities Office (SCO) is better suited to ensure an in-depth update for the program. Our team is willing and able to coordinate a briefing with the subject matter experts in the SCO.

Answer 2b: Due to the content of Project Pele, the SCO is better suited to ensure an in-depth update for the program. Our team is willing and able to coordinate a briefing with the subject matter experts in the SCO.

Answer 2c: While SCO is the lead for Project Pele, I understand that advanced SMRs help provide a reliable, sustainable, and resilient power source which does not require a long logistics tail. SMRs such as Project Pele could be advantageous on isolated islands, like Guam, by providing uninterrupted power and easing the logistics burden of delivering heavy fuel oils through the Malacca Strait in foreign-flagged vessels. U.S. Introducing a variety of power resources to isolated islands increases energy resilience and power availability for already-burdened systems. This is increasingly important as contested logistics undermine our ability to deploy, operate, and sustain the Joint Force, particularly in the Indo-Pacific.

U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense

May 20, 2025

Review of the President's Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request for the National Guard and Reserve

Representative David Valadao

Question 1: If the request for 20,000 National Guard members to support immigration enforcement is approved,

1a: How would that impact the Guard's ongoing missions, operational readiness, and budget?

1b: What tradeoffs would you be forced to consider?

Answer 1a: Deploying 20,000 National Guard members for immigration enforcement would present manageable challenges to the Guard's current mission, readiness, and budget. Disruption to ongoing missions would be minimized through targeted mobilizations and close collaboration with state authorities. Operational readiness would be maintained by integrating training opportunities within the deployment. Budget implications would be controlled through clear federal funding commitments, efficient resource management, and prioritized essential training. Consequently, the National Guard would remain well-positioned to continue supporting and engaging in its existing missions with its current force structure.

Answer 1b: The Department of Defense is pursuing a total force sourcing solution for the Department of Homeland Security's Request for Assistance-, and so far, the National Guard's contribution has not created the need to consider significant tradeoffs. States maintain core capabilities through strategic resource allocation and mutual aid agreements, ensuring no critical gaps emerge. Training retains essential competencies, resource management avoids compromising critical equipment, and Guardsmen support is prioritized. These factors enable the National Guard have required to effectively fulfill its immigration enforcement support mission while preserving its core capabilities and long-term operational effectiveness, without the need for difficult compromises at this time.

U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense

May 20, 2025

Review of the President's Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request for the National Guard and Reserve

Representative Ed Case

Question 1: General Nordhaus, the Defense of Hawai'i program is critical to USINDOPACOM and all the military units stationed in Hawai'i, as the state serves as the strategic linchpin and forward operating hub for projecting U.S. power, coordinating joint forces and deterring adversaries across the vast Indo-Pacific region. The Hawai'i National Guard is tasked with critical aspects of this mission. Given the increased focus on homeland missile defense and the Department of the Air Force's effort to upgrade the existing missile defense radar system.

1. What steps are currently being taken to ensure the capability, resiliency and survivability of the command and control infrastructure largely based at Wheeler Army Airfield and manned by the National Guard in support of the Defense of Hawai'i in the face of advanced missile threats, cyber attacks and potential electronic warfare disruptions?

Answer 1: The 298th Air Defense Group performs some direct cybersecurity functions to defend the Pacific Air Defense Sector from cyber attacks. Cybersecurity functions are performed within vulnerability analysis, mission assurance, and customer service technology services.

Internally, the Hawaii National Guard (HING) participates in multinational exercises like Locked Shields and Super Garuda Shield to enhance cyber resilience and interoperability. During Locked Shields 25, HING collaborating with cybersecurity personnel from different components and countries to fine-tune skills in defending large-scale cyber-attacks and further developed their incident reporting and forensics skills. Additionally, the HING's 154th Wing, more specifically the 109th Electronic Warfare Squadron, has the capability to defend the electronic warfare spectrum across specific satellite communications bands, protecting vital communication channels from malicious attacks or unintended interference. By identifying and geographically locating electronic magnetic interference, they detect unwanted signals that disrupt communications thus mitigating interference and potentially prevent future disruptions.

**Chief of Army Reserve Responses to HAC-D Questions for Record
05 June 2025**

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing – The National Guard and Reserve Forces

Witness Being Asked:

- Lieutenant General Robert D. Harter, Chief of Army Reserve and Commanding General,
U.S. Army Reserve Command

Question One:

How old is your oldest equipment item, how long it will be in use, when will it be decommissioned and what is the timing for its replacement?

Answer One: The 400-gallon Water Buffalo is the oldest piece of equipment in the Army Reserve; it was first produced in 1966 and has an Economic Useful Life (EUL) of 20 years. The Army Reserve has 1,044 of the 400-gallon Water Buffalos on-hand. Beyond its end-of-life (EUL), the equipment experiences frequent operational failures and suffers from parts obsolescence. The Army Reserve is expected to receive 24% of the required 1,740 replacement 500-gallon Bison Water Trailers by Fiscal Year (FY) 2030.

The M969A2 5k-gallon Bulk Fuel Trailer entered service in 1978 and the M1063 7.5k-gallon Bulk Fuel Trailer in the 1980s; both items reached their respective EUL in the early 2000s. The Army Reserve is authorized 437 of the 5k Bulk Fuel Trailers and has 470 on-hand. The Army Reserve is expected to receive 46% of the required 493 replacement 5k-gallon Tactical Fuel Distribution System (TFDS) by FY 2030. The Army Reserve is authorized 420 of the 7.5k-gallon Bulk Fuel Trailers and has 390 on-hand. The Army Reserve is expected to receive 76% of the required 1,680 replacement 7.5k-gallon Bulk Fuel Distribution System (BFDS) by FY 2030.

The M915 Line Haul Tractor and M916 Light Equipment Transporter entered service in 1979. The M916A2 is beyond EUL with an authorization of 70 and 190 on-hand. There are M915 variants in the Army Reserve with the M915A5 as the latest model entering service in 2010. The Army Reserve is authorized 1,534 with 1,526 on-hand. The Common Tactical Truck (CTT) is the Army's next-generation modular vehicle platform intended to replace legacy systems such as the M915 and M916. Currently, there is no projection for the Army Reserve to receive the CTT; it is in the capabilities development phase with a scheduled Army Requirements Oversight Council (AROC) review and assessment in September 2025.

The National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account (NGREA) appropriation is critical to fill equipment shortfalls and accelerate the procurement of the most modern vehicle variants to ensure that the Army Reserve maintains interoperability (e.g., speed of maneuver, load capacity, and command and control) with Total Army and Joint Force partners that rely on Army Reserve combat support and combat service support capabilities to sustain Large-Scale Combat Operations (LSCO).

**Chief of Army Reserve Responses to HAC-D Questions for Record
05 June 2025**

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
Questions for the Record

Oversight Hearing – The National Guard and Reserve Forces

Witness Being Asked:

- Lieutenant General Robert D. Harter, Chief of Army Reserve and Commanding General,
U.S. Army Reserve Command

Question One:

Black Hawk utilization

It will come as no surprise to you that I am a strong proponent of the Black Hawk program. The Army Reserve has utilized the Black Hawk for decades, and by all indications will continue to rely on the Black Hawk for the next several decades as well. There is currently no alternative helicopter or aircraft platform with the necessary capabilities to meet the Army Reserve's mission objectives.

Question One: Do you agree that the H-60 platform will continue to be essential to Army Reserve operations well into the future? What specific use cases does the Army Reserve anticipate for the H-60 over the next several years?

Answer One:

The Army Reserve has leveraged the UH60 to build Army readiness, establish a strategic reserve, and meet our nation's demands, both domestically and overseas, for decades.

The Army Reserve is engaged with Army senior leadership to actively inform the Army Transformation Initiative (ATI). As part of ATI, the Army Reserve has been tasked to deactivate its only two ECABs in which all USAR UH-60 aircraft reside. To date, decisions are still being made by the Department of the Army on the disposition of the USAR divested aircraft. My primary focus is ensuring that the ECAB flight crews and ground personnel are supported and retained during this transition; they are a critical Army capability that cannot easily be replaced.

As we gain more fidelity on the way-ahead we will ensure to follow-up with you and your office.

Question Two:

Black Hawk procurement

Additionally, how will this decision impact the previously planned F-15EX deliveries to Fresno ANG and New Orleans ANG, which are currently scheduled to begin in 2028? Does the Air Force anticipate any delays to those delivery timelines as a result of the Selfridge decision?

Question 2: As older aircraft are phased out, what is the Army Reserve's plan for future H-60 procurement? Do you agree that the delays in delivery that would result from a break in production of the H-60 would harm the Army Reserve's readiness?

Answer 2:

**Chief of Army Reserve Responses to HAC-D Questions for Record
05 June 2025**

As previously mentioned, the Army Reserve is complying with the Department of the Army directive to deactivate its two ECABs and divest all rotary wing aircraft in support of the Army Transformation Initiative. There are no current plans to modernize or restore the Army Reserve's aviation capability. We are closely integrated with Department of the Army to communicate Army Reserve aviation capability and to provide options to optimally preserve that capability.

As we gain more fidelity on the way-ahead we will ensure to follow-up with you and your office.

**Chief of Army Reserve Responses to HAC-D Questions for Record
05 June 2025**

The Honorable David Valadao
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing – The National Guard and Reserve Forces

Witness Being Asked:

- Lieutenant General Robert D. Harter, Chief of Army Reserve and Commanding General, U.S. Army Reserve Command

Maintenance and Military Construction

Question One: With Army facing \$2.3 billion in deferred restoration and maintenance costs and \$9.3 billion backlog in military construction, can you elaborate on the tangible effects these conditions have on the Army Reserves' ability to train and maintain readiness?

Answer One:

The multi-billion-dollar backlog in Facility Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization (FSRM), compounded by insufficient Military Construction (MILCON) funding, creates infrastructure risk that has far-reaching adverse consequences on training effectiveness and operational readiness. The shortfalls undermine the quality, availability, and safety of the essential facilities that support every facet of Army Reserve operations, including training, equipment storage, personnel support, and mobilization readiness.

Aging and inadequate infrastructure severely hampers the Army Reserve's ability to conduct realistic, high-quality training. Many Army Reserve Centers (ARC) lack modern simulators and classroom technologies vital for evolving mission requirements, particularly in cyber operations, intelligence, and medical readiness. As a result, units are forced to rely on distant installations, increasing travel time and costs while reducing valuable training hours.

Beyond training limitations, poor facility conditions (e.g., failing HVAC systems, leaking roofs that lead to mold infestation, and inadequate motor pools) create environments that are not only inefficient but often unsafe. These issues directly impact morale, retention, and recruitment, making it more difficult to attract and retain talent in critical Army Reserve roles.

Operationally, the backlog strains logistics. Insufficient or outdated storage space for vehicles and equipment compromises security, disrupts maintenance cycles, and affects readiness reporting. Some aging and inadequate Army Reserve maintenance and equipment storage facilities lack the ability to support modernized equipment in size and space as well as facility upgrades to support rapid Large-Scale Mobilizations Operations (LSMO) with ramps, lighting, and material handling equipment. When Army Reserve facilities lack the capacity to support pre-deployment preparation and staging activities, mobilization readiness suffers.

The long-term implications of these infrastructure challenges are substantial. Deferred maintenance accelerates facility degradation, driving up lifecycle costs and necessitating even greater investment to bring facilities back to standard. Without sustained and prioritized funding, the Army Reserve risks falling further behind in its ability to train, mobilize, and respond—weakening its role as a vital component of the Total Army and Joint Force.

**Chief of Army Reserve Responses to HAC-D Questions for Record
05 June 2025**

Investing in modern, resilient infrastructure is not simply a facilities issue—it is a strategic readiness imperative. Efforts continue at our level to prioritize investments in locations that yield the highest readiness benefits. However, flexible spending authorization from Congress to allow FSRM funds to be allocated where they are most needed is critical to mitigating the backlog and controlling escalating costs.

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing – The National Guard and Reserve Forces

Witness Being Asked:

- Vice Admiral Nancy S. Lacore, Chief of Navy Reserve, Department of the Navy

Question One:

How old is your oldest equipment item, how long it will be in use, when will it be decommissioned and what is the timing for its replacement?

Navy Reserve C/KC-130T Hercules aircraft serve as the Navy's only long-range aerial logistics platform capable of transporting bulk cargo including missiles, torpedoes, sonobuoys, naval special warfare boats, diver recompression chambers, submarine masts, F-35 Lightning II engines, and movement of CMV-22 detachments.

Our current fleet of 27 legacy C/KC-130T aircraft have an average age of 34 years and a mission capable rate of 40 percent. These aircraft have no integrated survival systems.

Recapitalizing the C/KC-130T to the KC-130J Super Hercules is critical for delivering intra-theater lift at scale. This capability is essential to succeeding in distributed maritime operations and winning the fight in INDOPACOM. This high demand/low density capability is a cornerstone to the Navy's robust and agile airborne logistics capability of re-arm, refuel, resupply, and revive missions. This recapitalization effort remains the Navy Reserve's number one equipment priority.

The goal is to recapitalize the legacy fleet of C-130s by 2030. This means we need at least six aircraft per year funded starting in FY26 just to replace the existing legacy C-130T fleet.

The Honorable David Valadao
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing – The National Guard and Reserve Forces

Witness Being Asked:

- Vice Admiral Nancy S. Lacore, Chief of Navy Reserve, Department of the Navy

Question One:

C-130 Recapitalization

Question: Could you elaborate on specific operational scenarios where the KC-130J's capabilities have directly enhanced mission effectiveness or readiness for the Navy and the Joint Force? Additionally, how do these capabilities contribute to the projected \$200 million in annual transportation cost savings?

Recapitalizing the C/KC-130T Hercules to the KC-130J Super Hercules is critical for delivering intra-theater lift at scale. This capability is essential to succeeding in distributed maritime operations and winning the fight in INDOPACOM. This high demand/low density capability is a cornerstone to the Navy's robust and agile airborne logistics capability of re-arm, refuel, and resupply missions. This recapitalization effort remains the Navy Reserve's number one equipment priority.

Navy Reserve C/KC-130T Hercules aircraft serves as the Navy's only long-range aerial logistics platform capable of transporting bulk cargo including missiles, torpedoes, sonobuoys, boats, diver recompression chambers, submarine masts, F-35 Lightning II engines, and CMV-22 detachments.

Our five squadrons are deployed worldwide 24/7/365 in INDOPACOM, EUCOM, and CENTCOM, delivering critical logistics support and tactical airlift when needed. Whether it's sustaining forward-deployed units, enabling long-range missions, or responding to emergent contingencies, our C/KC-130Ts are a linchpin of the Department of the Navy's global mobility and readiness.

Recapitalizing to the KC-130J provides annual cost savings in both sustainment and cost avoidance of obsolescence upgrades to keep the legacy C/KC-130T flying. The KC-130J delivers improved capability and performance, lower maintenance costs (30 percent less), higher readiness rates and parts commonality with the other DoD components. Overall, it is a more robust, capable and survivable platform.

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing – The National Guard and Reserve Forces

Witness Being Asked:

- Lieutenant General Leonard F. Anderson IV, Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, Department of the Navy

Question One:

How old is your oldest equipment item, how long it will be in use, when will it be decommissioned and what is the timing for its replacement?

Answer:

The oldest equipment system in the Marine Corps Reserve inventory is the Assault Amphibious Vehicle (AAV-7A1). This tracked amphibious vehicle was first fielded in 1972, having been in service for 50 years. We have managed to extend the AAV's service life through upgrades and diligent maintenance, but it is an aging platform that is now well beyond its originally intended lifespan.

The Marine Corps held a retirement ceremony for the AAV in May 2025, officially marking over five decades of service and the end of the AAV's operational role in active units. The Marine Corps Reserve will continue to employ the AAV in a limited capacity until its replacement is fully fielded. This continued limited use is expected to last until approximately 2027–2028.

The replacement for the AAV is the Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV), which entered service in 2020–2021. Reserve units are scheduled to receive the ACV in accordance with the active force's fielding plan. The final variant of the ACV, a recovery model, is on track to reach initial operational capability by late 2027.

The second oldest equipment item is the LAV-25 and LAV-AT, which have been in service since 1984 and been a cornerstone of our reconnaissance and light armored forces. The LAV-25, armed with a formidable 25mm chain gun, delivers decisive firepower for reconnaissance and security missions. The LAV-AT's TOW missiles provide a vital defense against enemy armor. After decades of invaluable service, however, the LAV family is approaching the conclusion of its operational life.

The Marine Corps plans to retire the LAV family of vehicles within the next decade, with a projected exit from service in January 2035. The replacement for the LAV is currently envisioned to be the Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicle (ARV), a next-generation platform designed to provide enhanced reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition capabilities.

The ARV is expected to incorporate advanced technologies, including improved sensors, communication systems, and potentially unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) integration, to meet the evolving demands of modern warfare. The ARV was recently funded for Research, Development, Training, and Employment for FY 2026. Fielding for the ARV to the Fleet Marine Corps is estimated between 2030 and 2035. The ARV is not planned to be fielded in the Marine Corps Reserve until mid to late 2030. The transition to the ARV will mark a significant upgrade in the Marine Corps Reserve's light armored capabilities, ensuring its continued relevance in future conflicts.

To address modernization shortfalls and mitigate the impacts of delayed fielding timelines, the Marine Corps Reserve leverages National Guard and Reserve Equipment Appropriation (NGREA) funding to enhance readiness and interoperability. These targeted investments improve training efficiency and ensure Reserve units remain aligned with Active Component capabilities. Continued support for NGREA is essential to preserving the Marine Corps Reserve as a force of consequence.

The Honorable David Valadao
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing – The National Guard and Reserve Forces

Witness Being Asked:

- Lieutenant General Leonard F. Anderson IV, Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, Department of the Navy

Question One:

Gaps in Modern Platforms

Question: The Marine Corps Reserve has far fewer combat units today than it did at the start of the Korean War, and there's a growing gap in access to modern platforms like the F-35s. Given that, what steps are the Marine Corps Reserve taking to ensure it can be rapidly integrated and deployed during crisis without delaying force flow?

While MARFORRES faces growing gaps in modernized platforms and equipment and has fewer formations than it did before the Korean War, it remains both committed and required to train to the same Mission Essential Tasks and associated standards as the Active Component prior to deployment. Additionally, MARFORRES plays a crucial role in Service modernization by maintaining a degree of legacy platforms and equipment to prevent capability degradation during Active Component transition periods.

However, several key limiting factors—including time available for training, equipment training allowances, and access to a full complement of modernized platforms—must be addressed to ensure readiness.

To mitigate these challenges, MARFORRES implements highly focused training plans aligned with baseline requirements set forth by supported Combatant Commanders. Upon mobilization, MARFORRES transitions authority to an Active Component gaining force commander, who oversees an intensive pre-deployment training period. This integration phase is designed to close readiness gaps and ensure seamless operational effectiveness prior to deployment.

The standard mobilization-to-deployment timeline currently extends up to 120 days prior to force flow. During pre-deployment training, MARFORRES prioritizes standards achievement for Mission Essential Task completion and certification. If specific modern platforms and equipment are identified as requirements by a Combatant Commander, MARFORRES dedicates a portion of training time to achieving proficiency with those systems—particularly those that may not be widely available within the Reserve Component. In cases of exquisite, niche equipment gaps, MARFORRES partners with the Active Component to ensure Reserve Marines

have access to the equipment to maintain qualifications, currency, and proficiency. For example, a small cadre of Reserve Marine pilots continue to fly the F-35 in Active Component training squadrons as part of a Squadron Augmentation Unit.

Additionally, MARFORRES maximizes National Guard and Reserve Equipment Appropriation (NGREA) funds to acquire small complements of modernized equipment to close this gap and reduce the amount of time required to complete standards associated with our Mission Essential Task. It is important to note that many current capability gaps are not enduring, as Reserve Component modernization will see significant acceleration of new formations, systems, and capability fielding in FY27 and beyond—including ACV, Infantry Lethality and Counter-UAS Enhancements, Marine Air Defense Integrated System (MADIS), F-35, and CH-53K. These advancements will substantially increase MARFORRES operational effectiveness and integration with Active Component forces.

Although modernization remains a priority, it is essential to recognize that not all missions require MARFORRES formations to operate with the latest platforms and equipment. A flexible force composition ensures MARFORRES can effectively support the gaining force commander through integration while maintaining operational readiness for crisis response.

The Honorable Betty McCollum
 Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
 Questions for the Record
 Oversight Hearing – The National Guard and Reserve Forces

Witness Being Asked:

- Lieutenant General John P. Healy, Chief of Air Force Reserve, Department of the Air Force

Question One:

How old is your oldest equipment item, how long it will be in use, when will it be decommissioned and what is the timing for its replacement?

Response:

The oldest aircraft in the Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC) is a B-52 with 65 years in service. Following planned modifications, the B-52 is expected to remain operational beyond 2050. There is no requirement for a replacement.

The oldest A-10 in the Air Force Reserve is 47 years old and the fleet is scheduled for retirement in Fiscal Year 2026. This change will affect the 442d Fighter Wing at Whiteman Air Force Base, which does not currently have a follow-on flying mission. AFRC is working closely with the Department to assess options for preserving a fighter presence at Whiteman, including potential alignment with platforms such as the F-15EX or F-15E; however, there is no program of record for a replacement mission.

The oldest F-16 in AFRC is 40 years old, and the fleet is expected to remain in service through 2035. The Air Combat Command and AFRC have proposed Homestead Air Reserve Base be considered as a candidate location for F-35A Operations 15 via the Department of the Air Force's (DAF) Strategic Basing Process (SBP); however, this proposal is pending approval by the Secretary of the Air Force. The SBP provides an enterprise-wide standardized, repeatable, transparent, and deliberate process for making DAF strategic basing decisions. The process ensures all strategic basing actions involving DAF units and associated missions follow environmental guidance, consider the overall fiscal ramifications of the proposed action and potential impacts to other missions, and optimize use of DAF land, facilities, infrastructure, and air space. If approved as a candidate location, a formal site survey will be conducted to assess the feasibility of recapitalizing Homestead's F-16 fleet with F-35 aircraft. The timing of a final basing decision will depend on the outcome of the site survey and completion of the SBP.

The oldest C-130H in AFRC is 35 years old and the fleet is operated out of the 94th Airlift Wing at Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Georgia; the 302d Airlift Wing at Peterson Space Force Base, Colorado; the 910th Airlift Wing at Youngstown Air Reserve Station, Ohio; and the 934th Airlift Wing at Minneapolis St. Paul Air Reserve Station, Minnesota. The 910th Airlift Wing is currently converting from the C-130H to the C-130J; however, there is no program of record to recapitalize the remaining three Air Force Reserve units.

We are grateful to Congress for the continued support of the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Appropriation (NGREA). NGREA accounts for 55 percent of the Air Force Reserve's total procurement funding and plays a critical role in modernizing aging equipment ahead of programmed fleet recapitalization.

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing – The National Guard and Reserve Forces

Witness Being Asked:

- Lieutenant General John P. Healy, Chief of Air Force Reserve, Department of the Air Force

Question One:

Lt Gen Healy: Is there a formalized plan for replacing the F-16Cs at Homestead Air Reserve Base? If not, what decisions or actions need to occur to make this happen and on what timeline is that expected?

Response:

No, there currently is no formalized plan for replacing the F-16Cs at Homestead Air Reserve Base.

The Air Combat Command and Air Force Reserve Command have proposed Homestead Air Reserve Base be considered as a candidate location for F-35A Operations 15 via the Department of the Air Force's (DAF) Strategic Basing Process (SBP); however, this proposal is pending approval by the Secretary of the Air Force.

The SBP provides an enterprise-wide standardized, repeatable, transparent, and deliberate process for making DAF strategic basing decisions. The process ensures all strategic basing actions involving DAF units and associated missions follow environmental guidance, consider the overall fiscal ramifications of the proposed action and potential impacts to other missions, and optimize use of DAF land, facilities, infrastructure, and air space.

If approved as a candidate location, a formal site survey will be conducted to assess the feasibility of recapitalizing Homestead's F-16 fleet with F-35 aircraft. The timing of a final basing decision will depend on the outcome of the site survey and completion of the SBP.

The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing – The National Guard and Reserve Forces

Witness Being Asked:

- Lieutenant General John P. Healy, Chief of Air Force Reserve, Department of the Air Force

Question One:

Deployable Combat Wings (DCWs)

- Lt Gen Healy, your written testimony briefly mentions the Air Force Reserve’s initiative to restructure into Units of Action and Deployable Combat Wings.

Question: Can you elaborate on exactly what these Units of Action are, why the Reserve is transitioning to this model, and what resources you will need from Congress to effectively implement this?

Response:

Units of Action and Deployable Combat Wings (DCWs) represent a fundamental shift in how the Air Force presents combat-ready forces to the Joint Staff and Combatant Commanders. These models are designed to streamline the generation of airpower, increase responsiveness, and maximize lethality within the Air Force Force Generation (AFFORGEN) framework.

The Air Force Reserve has fully embraced this model and is actively restructuring to meet Department of the Air Force objectives. The DCW concept replaces the legacy approach of deploying numerous geographically dispersed Unit Type Codes (UTCs) with cohesive, integrated units, similar in construct to Navy Carrier Strike Groups and Army Brigade Combat Teams. Under this model, the Air Force will transition from deploying over 150 UTCs to just 5-10, improving agility, simplifying command and control, and enhancing interoperability across the joint force.

The Air Force Reserve is committed to delivering one DCW per AFFORGEN cycle, beginning in October 2026. The 482nd Fighter Wing at Homestead Air Reserve Base has been identified as the first Reserve unit to transition to this construct. These DCWs will be trained, manned, and equipped to deploy as complete, self-sustaining combat teams.

Full implementation of our DCWs will require Congressional support, particularly in the areas of training infrastructure, Military Construction, equipment, and Reserve pay. Authorization and funding will be essential to ensure our Reserve Citizen Airmen are ready to deploy, fight, and win in contested environments.

The Honorable David Valadao
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee for Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing – The National Guard and Reserve Forces

Witness Being Asked:

- Lieutenant General John P. Healy, Chief of Air Force Reserve, Department of the Air Force

Question One:

Concurrent Fielding of Equipment

Question: The Reserves aren't getting new aircraft alongside the active force like they should. The F-35 rollout is way behind what the Independent Commission recommended. How are you working with Air Force leadership to close that gap? What's being done to get the Reserves caught up and ready?

Response:

The Air Force Reserve's ability to support the Total Force construct depends on concurrent and proportional fielding of modern aircraft like the F-35 to ensure full integration and interoperability with the Active Component.

The Air Force Reserve coordinates closely with Headquarters Air Force and participates throughout the Air Force corporate process to advocate for recapitalization of our aging fleet to sustain readiness and retain skilled personnel.

The 301st Fighter Wing at Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth is currently the Air Force Reserve's only unit-equipped F-35 location and is projected to achieve full operational capability with delivery of its final aircraft by 2027.

The Air Combat Command and Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC) have proposed Homestead Air Reserve Base be considered as a candidate location for F-35A Operations 15 via the Department of the Air Force's (DAF) Strategic Basing Process (SBP); however, this proposal is pending approval by the Secretary of the Air Force.

The SBP provides an enterprise-wide standardized, repeatable, transparent, and deliberate process for making DAF strategic basing decisions. The process ensures all strategic basing actions involving DAF units and associated missions follow environmental guidance, consider the overall fiscal ramifications of the proposed action and potential impacts to other missions, and optimize use of DAF land, facilities, infrastructure, and air space.

If approved as a candidate location, a formal site survey will be conducted to assess the feasibility of recapitalizing Homestead's F-16 fleet with F-35 aircraft. The timing of a final basing decision will depend on the outcome of the site survey and completion of the SBP.

A chief concern for the Air Force Reserve is the impact the A-10 fleet divestment in Fiscal Year 2026 will have on the 442d Fighter Wing at Whiteman Air Force Base, which does not currently have a follow-on flying mission. AFRC is working closely with the Department to assess options for preserving a fighter presence at Whiteman, including potential alignment with platforms such as the F-15EX or F-15E; however, there is no program of record for a replacement mission.

Congressional support of concurrent and proportional fielding remains essential to ensuring the Air Force Reserve can modernize in alignment with the Active and Air National Guard components. Delayed or uneven fielding limits training opportunities, affects retention of experienced personnel, and impacts overall readiness.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2026

TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 2025.

OVERSIGHT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

WITNESSES

THE HONORABLE PETE HEGSETH, SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

GENERAL DAN CAINE, CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

**BRYN WOOLLACOTT MACDONNELL, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, PERFORMING THE DUTIES OF THE UNDER
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE**

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN CALVERT

Mr. CALVERT. Good morning.

The Subcommittee on Defense will come to order.

Today, the subcommittee will convene for an open oversight hearing to receive testimony regarding the Department of Defense from the Honorable Pete Hegseth, Secretary of Defense; General Dan Caine, Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staffs.

Mr. Secretary, General Caine, congratulations to you both on your new roles, and welcome to your first hearing before the subcommittee. We look forward to working with you closely to provide for our common defense.

And a very special welcome to Ms. Bryn MacDonnell.

Bryn, it is great to have you back here in this room. You sat beside me on this side of the dais, so it might be a new feeling, sitting where you are now. So I am sure it is bittersweet that you are no longer serving as a member of my staff, but I commend your service to the Nation.

And, Mr. Secretary, you are lucky to have her. I have no doubt that she will provide you with the same level of faithful advice that she provided for me.

The work we do in this committee has never been more important. We are navigating an increasingly complex and uncertain global environment, with adversaries like China and Russia pursuing aggressive actions and challenges in regions like the Indo-Pacific, the Middle East, and beyond.

Our military must be prepared to meet those challenges, and that preparation requires substantial investments in both personnel and equipment. But we also must be responsible stewards of the taxpayer dollars. Balancing national security priorities with fiscal responsibility is a delicate but necessary task.

Mr. Secretary, I commend you for quickly hitting the ground running and focusing on your key priorities of reviving the warrior ethos, building our military, reestablishing deterrence, and ensuring the defense of our homeland.

The American people expect their borders to be secure. The challenges of our southern border, including the ongoing flow of illegal drugs, human trafficking, and other illicit activities, are growing threats to our security and must be addressed. The cartels exploiting our border are increasingly sophisticated and dangerous. The Department of Defense has a critical role in this fight.

Mr. Secretary, I applaud your efforts in focusing resources to ensure the border is secure. I look forward to more discussion about what resources are necessary to keep the momentum going without compromising our ability to meet threats abroad.

I also want to hear from you both about the readiness of our force. I have heard from senior military leaders and servicemembers alike about the ongoing concerns related to the health of our force, including the need for modernization, the ability to respond quickly to emerging threats.

While this committee has consistently provided funding for investments in next-generation systems, from hypersonics to autonomous platforms, we are still seeing troubling delays and cost overruns in a number of programs.

We simply cannot deter near-peer competitors like China by falling short in sustaining our defense and industrial base. That is why it is critical that we continue to focus on the pace of modernization, particularly in areas like air superiority and munitions production.

The committee has been steadfast in our support of entities within the Department that challenge the status quo, such as DIU, the Office of Strategic Capital, and APFIT. These innovation entities are alternative pathways to deliver capability quickly to the warfighter. And I would appreciate the opportunity to work with you to bolster these activities as a way to bring disruption and competition into the Department, which, in my experience, can yield better and faster results.

I also want to discuss the critical importance of our partnerships and alliances. The AUKUS agreement is one of the most significant defense initiatives in recent years, with the potential to reshape the strategic landscape in the Indo-Pacific.

As we pursue these initiatives, we must ensure that we are maintaining our own military capability. Our shipbuilding programs remain over-budget and behind schedule and under-delivered. This is simply not acceptable, and we need to have a credible, executable naval force structure plan to keep pace with threats that we face, particularly from China, while ensuring taxpayer accountability.

Finally, we must always remember the men and women who wear the uniform. For far too long, we heard from too many junior enlisted servicemembers who were struggling with basic needs. These men and women, the backbone of our Armed Forces, they perform the tough and often dangerous work that keeps our country safe.

I was proud to help secure a 10-percent raise for our junior enlisted servicemembers on top of the 4.5-percent raise that all servicemembers received last year. It is critical that we continue to provide support for all those who fight in defense of our great Nation.

We ask a lot of our military, and the strategic landscape is more complex than ever. I look forward to a frank discussion on how we are matching resources to priorities and honoring our commitments to both readiness and to our people.

I now recognize the distinguished ranking member, Ms. McCollum, for her opening remarks.

OPENING REMARKS OF MS. MCCOLLUM

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I would like to thank all of you for appearing here today. And I would like to thank all the men and women who serve in our military, both wearing the uniform and as civilians.

As I say often, national security is holistic and not just defense spending. Do Americans have the healthcare that they need? Are we providing good nutrition to our kids so that they can eventually grow up strong and serve in our Armed Forces?

Cuts to Medicaid and SNAP in the reconciliation bill put the whole of our society at risk, and I believe that this weakens our national security—all so billionaires can have their tax breaks.

It is also irresponsible for us to assume that you can fund the defense programs through an unstable reconciliation process. That is why it has never happened before in our Nation's history.

What else has never happened before was the Department of Defense operating under a full-year continuing resolution. The CR was endorsed by President Trump, OMB Director Vought, and you, Mr. Secretary. After enactment of the CR, the Department had 45 days to submit a spend plan to Congress. In many cases, it ignored congressional intent.

OMB has an obligation to get money to the services so that contracts can be executed in a timely fashion, but every defense company, from the smallest startup to the largest prime, has told me it is going too slow. Time and taxpayers' dollars are being wasted. Our national security is being put at risk because of the lag time. CRs are simply wasteful.

But the point of this hearing is the President's fiscal year 2026 budget request, and we don't have it. It was due in February. Today is June 10th. Four months from now is the end of the fiscal year, and all we have is a very rough draft. The DOD has failed to submit a complete request.

So, today, we are forced to mark up a rushed and, for me, an incomplete Defense Appropriations Act. I don't blame Chairman Cole or Chairman Calvert. The fault is squarely on the administration.

But just like the CR, this has national security ramifications. We do not have the critical information, the granular details, on the DOD programs that we need to make in order to be effective and efficient with our decisions.

The President proposes; Congress disposes. And that is how our government works. How can I work with this administration in

good faith when we don't have a full blueprint of the President's priorities?

For example, Golden Dome at this point is merely a concept; it is not a plan. None of us have been briefed yet on how you intend to spend \$175 billion or deliver this program in three short years.

We do not know if priorities like Golden Dome, if they do not survive the reconciliation process, what will the Department do? You can't come back to this committee and ask us to fill those gaps. Defense spending should never have been included in reconciliation.

Mr. Secretary, it is still incumbent upon you to provide us with the real budget request. That is the only way to finish a full-year bill that will address DOD's complex issues like delays to the Virginia- and Columbia-class submarine programs; the skyrocketing costs of the Sentinel program; ensuring our F-35 fighters are operational; and taking care of the quality-of-life issues for our servicemembers and their families that they deserve.

We also must understand the administration's approach to geopolitical concerns like Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine; or plans to address the military capabilities of the People's Republic of China; or adequately support our future military posture in the Arctic as the polar ice caps continue to melt.

We don't know the answers because the administration has not submitted a budget.

Mr. Secretary, let me close with this: It is no secret that we have some serious disagreements.

The President's decision to call the National Guard troops to Los Angeles was premature, and the decision to deploy Active Duty Marines, as well, is downright escalatory. Active Duty military has absolutely no role in domestic law enforcement, and they are not trained for those missions.

I ask you, Mr. Secretary, and I ask the President, follow the law.

I was also appalled by your decision to fire Chairman Brown, Admiral Franchetti, and other military leaders who served our Nation with distinction. You fired them without giving a single reason why.

Many Americans, myself included, have witnessed what is a deliberate effort to silence and diminish the achievements of minorities and women in the military. Their dedication, their heroism, their sacrifice on behalf of our Nation deserve recognition, not erasure.

As a former history teacher, I know and acknowledge uncomfortable truths about our own history. It is the only way, when we recognize them, that we move forward together.

Since World War II, the Department has made great strides in building a military that is more reflective of the population of this Nation. That should be celebrated. It should not be reversed. That is how we build a more perfect Union. We build it together.

But, Mr. Secretary, today, I have a job to do. We must provide the resources necessary to make sure our men and women in uniform can accomplish their missions and come home safely. And on that, Mr. Secretary, I am sure you and I both agree. To do that, we need a budget from you as soon as possible—a complete budget.

I look forward to your testimony.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for the courtesy, and I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.

And before we hear from witnesses, I would like to recognize the distinguished chairman of the full committee, my good friend, Chairman Tom Cole, for any statement.

OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN COLE

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum. And always good to be here with my good friend and negotiating partner, the ranking member of the full committee, Ms. DeLauro.

Welcome, Secretary Hegseth and General Caine, and we thank you for your service to our great Nation. As today marks your first appearance before this subcommittee, I want to reaffirm my commitment to work with you and work to ensure that we have a strong defense.

We convene at a time of significant global uncertainty. The threats facing America are diverse and evolving and demand a strong, agile, and effectively funded Department of Defense.

As chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, my primary responsibility is to ensure that taxpayer dollars are allocated wisely and effectively to safeguard our security.

First, I want to address the readiness of our Armed Forces. We must ensure that our troops are fully equipped, trained, and prepared to meet any challenge. I am particularly interested in the current state of our defense industrial base and the steps being taken to address any identified shortfalls in being able to meet production demands.

Next, I want to address the modernization of our military capabilities. It takes us too long to acquire new weapons systems. Meanwhile, our adversaries are rapidly developing advanced technologies. We must not surrender our technological edge or allow our forces to be under-equipped and outgunned.

I would like to hear about your plans for Golden Dome, hypersonics, and other programs that are evolving with the constantly changing nature of war. It is imperative that we invest in technologies that will define the future fight. At the same time, we must remain realistic about development timelines and avoid overcommitting to a single approach at the expense of adaptability.

It is important that this subcommittee understands how trade-offs and risks were approached in this budget. I have been concerned about capability gaps during transitions from one platform to the next. And while space is the next frontier, I am hearing more and more that space offers an answer to every problem.

While I am optimistic about space-based capabilities, I certainly think platforms like the E-7 offer tremendous capabilities until and, frankly, beyond when space is fully on line. We need diversified capability and support for programs across domains to ensure continued military dominance.

And I also want to hear more about the Department's efforts to produce a budget that balances maintaining a strong defense posture with exercising fiscal responsibility. I will be seeking assurances that the Department is maximizing efficiency and eliminating wasteful spending, and, Mr. Secretary, I look forward to

hearing more about what you have done with the efforts undertaken so far.

I must say, I do agree with my friend Ms. McCollum; we need more information than we have gotten from OMB. That is not your responsibility, but it is critical for us to be able to make the decisions we are going to have to make.

And, again, I understand all the complexities of being a new administration. Nobody ever meets the timeline when they first come into office. And we have gotten a lot of good information from OMB. But the reality is, we, frankly, need more than we have received so far to make the decisions that we are called upon to make.

I want to emphasize the importance of congressional oversight, and, again, I am committed to working with the Department of Defense to ensure that our national security objectives are met. However, we also have a duty to hold it accountable for its spending and performance.

And I think I can speak for almost everyone in this room: No one liked the way the fiscal year 2025 process ended. Again, that is not your fault, that is our fault, and there is plenty of blame to go around. But it is certainly an experience I don't want to repeat. I don't want you or your colleagues at Department of Defense to have to operate under a CR again for the coming year. I know the difficulties that places on you. Every member of this committee knows that. You have my commitment we are going to work hard to avoid that this year. But, again, we need some help from all concerned in the process to achieve that goal.

And almost no one, again, as I said, liked the way the process ended, but we owe it to the men and women in uniform to get this right. It will require collaboration with the Department to inform and produce a product that will meet that goal. I look forward to being your partner in that effort.

And, again, I want to thank you for being here today.

And, again, I want to thank you for your extraordinary service to this country before you assumed this position. I think that is one of the reasons why we have done as well recruiting, is people that are thinking about putting on the uniform of the United States have confidence in you because you have made that decision and you served this country with distinction before you ever came on this post. And leading by example is an important thing, and I want to thank you for the example you set for men and women that wear the uniform of the United States.

With that, again, welcome in your first appearance, and we look forward to hearing your testimony.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to now turn to the ranking member of the full committee, Ms. DeLauro, for any opening comments.

OPENING REMARKS OF MS. DELAURO

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you so much, Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum, and always to, again, my dear friend, the chairman of the committee. We have worked together for many

years in producing, I believe, bipartisan appropriations bills, and it is our attempt to be able to do that this go-round as well.

Thank you for holding this oversight hearing on President Trump's Department of Defense.

To our witnesses, Secretary Hegseth, Chairman Caine, Ms. MacDonnell: Welcome to the House of Representatives, and thank you for appearing before us today.

Defense is the largest portion of our discretionary budget, yet you have still not sent this committee a complete budget request. We are in mid-June, Mr. Secretary. We are marking up a defense funding bill in a few hours. And yet we have no idea what your Department actually needs. We have no details as to how you want to implement your plans.

We should be discussing how you plan to get our submarine programs in order, how the Black Hawk platform will be utilized into the future, and how you plan to improve our servicemembers' and their families' quality of life.

It is unacceptable for us to move forward with a defense funding bill without this information, and it is regrettable that the administration has put us in this position. If we cannot complete this process on time, we risk yet another continuing resolution, which is wasteful, inefficient, and detrimental to our military readiness.

Already, your methods for funding our Nation's defense programs are as unwise as they are unprecedented. You backed the first-ever full-year continuing resolution for the Department of Defense. Particularly Defense has always been opposed to moving in that direction because of the uncertainty that a continuing resolution portends for defense and for the defense industry. Now you are relying on a risky and a partisan budget reconciliation process instead of regular appropriations to fund vital programs. The appropriations process is wherein lies the power of the purse, according to the U.S. Constitution.

However, this is still an essential opportunity for oversight, and the Department of Defense, under your leadership, is in desperate need of it.

Your tenure as Secretary had been marked by endless chaos. Your first day in office, the Inspector General, whose job is to investigate waste, fraud, and abuse, was fired. Weeks later, you dismissed the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff and five other admirals and generals.

Your careless sharing of military secrets in a non-secure Signal chat, which could have placed American airmen in danger, led to the firing of Former National Security Advisor Waltz.

You have directly fired several of your top advisors, and the ranks of civilian staff have been decimated within key agency posts, including the Defense Health Agency and the Missile Defense Agency.

Mr. Secretary, of all the Cabinet departments, stability at the Department of Defense is the most critical for Americans' safety and security.

Going after waste in defense and an audit among contractors is long overdue, as is a fresh look at defense after what we learned in Ukraine. But that requires thoughtfulness and cooperation, not rash and reckless purges of leadership and rank-and-file staff. And

firings based on political loyalty are an affront to what our Constitution and our military stands for and depends on.

Meanwhile, this administration has done seemingly everything possible to alienate America on the world stage and turn our back on our allies, particularly Ukraine. Our belligerent trade wars and the dismantling of our humanitarian mission all have implications for our national security.

Why would anyone trust us or partner with us when we are busy undermining our allies' economies and encouraging China to fill the vacuum we are leaving by abandoning our humanitarian mission? The bags of flour that I have seen on foreign soil that say "USAID," "U.S.," "Product of the United States of America" will be gone and, instead, will be replaced by "China" or "Russia" or "Iran."

Conflicts around the world that President Trump promised he would resolve overnight are only escalating. While we need to focus and prepare for threats to freedom and democracy worldwide, the Department of Defense is mired in controversy and chaos.

The American people expect, deserve, and demand better from their military leadership, and the lawlessness across the government must end. This administration has unlawfully dismantled agencies and stolen funding across the government to give billionaires a tax break.

America's future soldiers are learning in our public schools. Our future sailors might rely on Medicaid to see a doctor. Our future airmen and -women might only have a meal to eat because of SNAP or food stamps, or they may live in subsidized housing. If tomorrow's servicemembers are worried today about having their most basic needs met, then they are being held back from their fullest potential, and that weakens our national security.

National security is not just machines and munitions. It requires a whole-of-government approach, which is why this administration must provide us an acceptable and complete budget as soon as possible so we can conduct proper oversight and why this administration must cease the lawless stealing of appropriated funds.

I thank the chair and ranking member.

And I look forward to your testimony.

I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentlelady.

We will now begin with witness testimony.

Gentlemen, without objection, your full written testimony will be placed in the record.

Secretary Hegseth, we can start with you for your summary of your remarks. Mr. Secretary, you are recognized.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SECRETARY HEGSETH

Secretary HEGSETH. Well, Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of President Trump's proposed fiscal year 2026 budget for the Department of Defense.

I am honored to testify today alongside General Dan Caine, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Bryn MacDonnell, who is performing the duties of DOD's Comptroller and Chief Financial Officer.

I am also proud to represent and serve our warriors and their families. Today, as they do every day, they are keeping America safe. They are defending the homeland, they are standing up and deterring Communist China, and we are working hand-in-glove with allies and partners to achieve peace through strength.

I would actually like to start by thanking this committee and Congress for your bipartisan leadership to give our troops a big pay raise in 2025. This included an additional 10.5-percent raise for our junior enlisted servicemembers, E1 to E4. Thank you also for supporting other initiatives that will improve quality of life for our warriors and their families.

With a focus on our troops and their loved ones, I have directed additional actions that will further improve their quality of life. These include making historic investments in improving the living conditions in barracks and base housing, reforming the PCS process to reduce the cost and stress of moving, and improving the quality of care provided by the defense healthcare system.

Now, the best part of my job is meeting and interacting with troops and their families. I hear their concerns. I know how it feels to face those challenges; I have been there recently. Each of these initiatives responds to feedback that I have received from the force, and I will keep listening and looking for ways to improve their quality of life.

Under President Trump's leadership, this budget puts America first and gives our warriors what they need. The \$961.6 billion budget request—over \$1 trillion for national security—will end four years of chronic underinvestment in our military.

In the last four months, we have moved quickly to reverse course after four years of weakness and mismanagement. We found nearly \$30 billion in savings across the Department, and we have reinvested those savings. We have killed wasteful programs, targeted bureaucratic excess, and redirected funding from Biden-era priorities to President Trump's priorities.

We are reoptimizing the civilian workforce and repositioning resources to better support our warfighters. We are working with the Department of Homeland Security to increase border security. We have reduced China's malign influence in our hemisphere. We have defended freedom of navigation in the Red Sea.

However, we still have a lot of work ahead of us to achieve peace through strength.

To carry out the President's mission, we have three core priorities, as was mentioned: restore the warrior ethos, rebuild our military, and reestablish deterrence.

First, we are restoring the warrior ethos. President Trump has charged me with focusing on warfighting lethality, meritocracy standards, and readiness. That is exactly what we are doing. We are focused on what is important: warfighting and warriors.

We are sweeping away distractions and bloated bureaucracy. We have set standards that are high, equal, and unwavering. DEI is dead. We replaced it with a colorblind, gender-neutral, merit-based approach.

Our force is responsibly—is responding—excuse me—responding positively, incredibly to these changes. And thanks to President

Trump, recruiting and retention is higher than it has been in decades, at historic numbers.

This budget provides a historic level of funding for military readiness, putting our warfighters and their needs first.

Second, we are rebuilding our military.

Twenty-five years ago, our military was unchallenged, yet we squandered that advantage as China carried out an unprecedented military buildup. President Trump is correcting those mistakes. We are reviving the defense industrial base, reforming our acquisitions process, rapidly fielding emerging technologies to put the best weapons in the hands of our warfighters.

This includes investment of \$25 billion in the Golden Dome for America, a downpayment on President Trump's priority to defend our homeland. It also commits more than \$62 billion to modernize and sustain our nuclear forces. The budget allocates \$3.5 billion for the F-47, the world's first sixth-generation air superiority fighter.

This budget will revitalize our shipbuilding industrial base, with \$6 billion in funding in fiscal year 2026, \$47 billion in shipbuilding total. The budget increases significantly funding for autonomous systems, long-range fires, drones, and hypersonics. We will put these capabilities in the hands of our warfighters.

Third, we are reestablishing deterrence. When our opponent sees our well-equipped, tough-as-nails warriors, they will decide that today is not the day to test American resolve.

Credible deterrence starts at home, and it starts with securing our borders. We will achieve 100-percent operational control of the southern border, with crossings already dropped 99.9 percent.

It also starts in our neighborhood, in the Western Hemisphere. As you know, as we have said, the Indo-Pacific is our priority theater and China our pacing threat. That is why I have traveled twice to the Indo-Pacific region to meet with our allies and partners, and they have responded.

As we shift in that direction, President Trump looks to those allies and partners to step up, to share in the burden of their own defense. He also sees them, as I do, as force multipliers alongside the United States, and we are making progress in that. As the President has rightly pointed out, it is only fair that our allies and partners do their part. We can't want their security more than they do.

So the Department of Defense is executing a commonsense agenda to achieve peace through strength. The threats we face are serious, and so must our investments be. So what this budget does, it matches capabilities to threats. We must overcome decades of neglect and decline. We must fortify our position as the world's most lethal fighting force. And we must act fast.

This committee is our critical partner in everything we do, and your leadership and oversight is essential. So we look forward to accomplishing these goals, to achieving peace through strength, to supporting our warriors, protecting our citizens and taxpayers, together with you.

May God grant us the wisdom to see what is right and the courage to do it. Thank you.

[The information follows:]

Introduction

Chairman Ken Calvert, Ranking Member Betty McCollum, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of President Trump's proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 budget for the Department of Defense.

I am honored to testify alongside General Dan Caine, the 22nd Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He embodies the warrior ethos that President Trump wants to reinvigorate in our joint warfighting force. General Caine exemplifies courage, honor, and selfless service.

I'm impressed by his focus on increasing readiness, capability, and fighting spirit across the force. Our shared values and commitment to defending our nation have fostered a strong and collaborative working relationship. General Caine's unique background, including his previous role as Associate Director for Military Affairs at the CIA, makes him an invaluable advisor to me and the President. I look forward to our continued partnership, which will leverage his expertise to inform our decision-making and ensure the strength and effectiveness of our military.

I am also honored to testify alongside Bryn MacDonnell, who is performing the duties of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)/Chief Financial Officer. Ms. MacDonnell's experience supporting the work of the Chairman of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee and serving as a Special Assistant at the White House Office of Management and Budget make her uniquely qualified to testify about the budgetary needs of the Department.

Under the leadership of our Commander in Chief, Donald J. Trump, this budget puts America First and enables the Department of Defense to achieve its clear mission of achieving Peace through Strength. To carry out this mission, I have set three priorities for the Department: restore the warrior ethos, rebuild our military, and re-establish deterrence.

The \$961.6 billion budget put forward by the President reverses four years of mismanagement and underinvestment. It realigns the military to the historic strength that began in President Trump's first term and makes generational investments in the President's priorities including developing the Golden Dome, sealing the Southwest Border, investing in the F-47, revitalizing our shipbuilding industry, and shaping end strength to match to the threats we face.

These investments are amplified by the savings and efficiencies that the Department has found in collaboration with the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). To date, we have found \$6 billion in savings through this collaboration. Additionally, we have pulled \$30 billion away

from the last administration's nonlethal priorities to reinvest into the President's priorities. We will ensure every single dollar of taxpayer money funds lethal Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen, and Guardians. Every cent will provide capabilities to deter our adversaries, and if necessary, prevail on the battlefield.

These savings and efficiencies are considerable, but are just the beginning of our focused effort to rein in waste, fraud, and abuse. The Department of Defense must pass a financial audit by 2028. We will ensure full accountability to Congress and the American taxpayer. We will improve our processes and controls to make better financial decisions. And we will understand where every taxpayer dollar goes and why. This is what it will take to rebuild our military and exactly what we will do. We will pass an audit by 2028.

Workforce Acceleration and Recapitalization

The Department is optimizing our civilian workforce. This ensures that we have the right employees in the right roles at the right times to support our warfighters. We're doing this by voluntary means, to the greatest extent possible, through incentives like voluntary early retirement and separation initiatives. The Department approved approximately 22,000 employees to participate in Round One of OPM's Deferred Resignation Program (DRP). The DoD also offered its own second round of the Deferred Resignation Program from April 7 through April 14, 2025.

With thanks for Deputy Secretary Feinberg's leadership, we are undertaking a workforce acceleration and recapitalization initiative. This means we are re-evaluating every position to make sure that each focuses on our core mission of supporting our warfighters. Reorganization plans will strip away bureaucracy, accelerate decision-making, and deliver maximum value to the warfighters. We will eliminate non-essential and redundant roles, consolidate functions, flatten hierarchies, and eliminate unnecessary vestiges of the past. This realignment will ensure our ability to respond to any threat with speed, precision, and overwhelming force.

The technologies used by our adversaries — and the threats they pose — are evolving at breakneck speed. We cannot deter — or if need be, defeat — opponents like Communist China if we're moving at yesterday's pace. We need to be lean and nimble. We need to be fast. And that is exactly what we are doing.

We have ended the culture of full-time, low-productivity telework. We expect employees, at all levels, to deliver results and respond to leadership needs. Incentives and performance plans will

reflect that. These changes will allow us to properly allocate the workforce, boost readiness, and increase efficiency across our team.

Threat Environment

For a generation, the United States ignored China's threat to U.S. interests. We became distracted by open-ended wars, regime change, and nation building. In the process, past leaders sent our service members on mission after mission with no exit strategy, no end in sight, and with little articulation for the American people or for the war fighters about how these conflicts would benefit Americans and our core national interests.

These costly diversions lacked clearly defined goals and were not tied to vital and core American interests. President Trump is changing that.

We are done with that approach. Under this Administration, we are focused on delivering for the American people, on safeguarding their security, on protecting their economic interests, and on using common sense to preserve peace in the Indo-Pacific

The Department of Defense has already made great strides to reverse the trend of deterioration and decay.

First, border security is national security. To secure our own border first, we deployed troops and declared two new National Defense Areas in Texas and New Mexico to allow our military to effectively assist the Department of Homeland Security. We will achieve 100% operational control of the border.

We will also defend our nation's interests throughout the Western Hemisphere. In Panama, as the President promised, we are taking back the Panama Canal from Chinese influence. We have also secured "First and Free" canal passage for our military and auxiliary vessels.

The President has also been clear – we will not tolerate attacks on American vessels. To that end, we have completed a highly successful and focused campaign against the Houthis. Our message — and our goal — was clear: Stop shooting at our ships and we will stop shooting at you. I am pleased to report that the attacks on American ships have now ended.

Despite this significant progress, real threats remain. Our pacing threat is Communist China. Beijing is preparing for war in the Indo-Pacific as part of its broader strategy to dominate that

region and then the world. Were it to succeed, it would be able to attempt to derail American reindustrialization and then strangle the U.S. economy. This cannot happen and my Department will not let it happen.

As I said at the Shangri-La Dialogue recently, the United States seeks a durable peace in the Indo-Pacific. Our goals are limited, and peaceful. To ensure this peace, the Department is laser-focused on strengthening deterrence in the Indo-Pacific to ensure that core U.S. interests are protected.

That means restoring and modernizing America's forces with a strong focus on the capabilities required to maintain peace through strength in the Western Pacific. It also means strengthening our forward posture in the region and working closely with our allies to enhance their own defense capabilities. In fact, we have already expanded the scope and scale of our cooperation with Australia, Japan and the Philippines to deter China, including with new understandings for enhanced posture in the future.

But Asia isn't the only place where we're strengthening our nation's alliances. In Europe, President Trump and his administration have told our NATO allies that they must step up and take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense – and we are already seeing progress. We are seeing recognition across NATO on the need for European nations to spend 5% of GDP on defense spending.

This is a break from the last Administration's policies, which failed to encourage NATO allies to invest in their own defenses and distracted them from their core mission in the Euro-Atlantic region by encouraging them to do more in the Indo-Pacific.

Our strategy is one of common sense: our NATO allies have the economic strength to deter Russia, and our own resources are increasingly strained. As we shift our focus to the Pacific, we are counting on our NATO allies to devote more resources to defense to forge a strong shield of deterrence in Europe. Our NATO allies taking primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense is vital and as it is overdue. Not just as a matter of fairness to American taxpayers who are tired of freeriding, but to ensure that NATO remains a strong and sustainable alliance, even as U.S. forces prioritize defending our nation's homeland and deterring China. This is how we can restore and sustain peace through strength in Europe for the coming generations.

Continuing Resolutions

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As the members of this committee know, despite supporting a flexible full-year Continuing Resolution (CR) in FY25 in order to keep the Department funded, the routine use of CRs degrades our ability to deter our adversaries, and reduces our readiness to fight if necessary. This state of affairs is insufficient to meet the moment, and I urge members of this committee and Congress to:

- Fully fund this budget request which makes generational investments to rebuild our military and restore deterrence;
- Support the savings and efficiencies that the Department has found in coordination with DOGE

Restoring the Warrior Ethos

My first priority is to restore the warrior ethos and restore trust in our military, both of which were casualties of the last four years, as demonstrated by historically low recruitment numbers across the Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. President Trump charged me to bring the warrior culture back to the Department of Defense. He, like me, demands a Pentagon laser-focused on warfighting, lethality, meritocracy, standards, and readiness.

Balanced Accountability

I have directed each of the military departments to conduct a review of their Military Equal Opportunity and Equal Employment Opportunity programs and processes. Our personnel deserve fair treatment and a positive work environment that is free from unlawful discrimination and harassment. They also deserve qualified leaders who are empowered to make tough decisions, enforce standards, and restore good order and discipline through balanced accountability.

We are going to streamline investigation processes, address problematic behaviors, and mitigate undue mission impacts. Complaints that are unsubstantiated by actionable, credible evidence will be dismissed in a timely manner. Flimsy allegations will not be used adversely against the accused. Personnel who knowingly submit false complaints will be disciplined.

This is critical to advancing meritocracy and balancing accountability. It is also the right thing to do for the DoD and our workforce. We will continue to hold leaders at all levels accountable for their actions, but the Department will no longer foster a culture of “walking on eggshells.”

Focus on Warfighting, Lethality, and Readiness

At the Department of Defense, we are sweeping away distractions to focus on our core mission of warfighting. One of our Department's early actions was commissioning a rapid, force-wide review of military standards. This review included fitness standards, training standards, physical standards, grooming standards, and gender-neutral standards for combat roles. To be the world's most lethal and effective fighting force, we must set and maintain high, equal, and unwavering standards for our men and women in uniform, particularly our leaders. We are assessing how the department has maintained standards in the past, particularly the last four years, and whether those standards have dropped, formally or informally.

The Department of Defense has an obligation to the American public to ensure their sons and daughters serve under the best leadership we can provide them. Doing so is a national security imperative. A foundational tenet of the Department must always be that the most qualified individuals are placed in positions of responsibility in accordance with policies that are merit-based and color-blind.

That is why President Trump established the "Restoring America's Fighting Force" Task Force. I have tasked it to abolish the DEI bureaucracy across all of our services. That begins with ending any DEI offices and all of their vestiges, including sub-offices and initiatives established to promote a race-based preferences system. These programs devastated morale under the last administration, subverted meritocracy, perpetuated unconstitutional discrimination, and promoted divisive concepts and radical gender ideology.

We will not consider sex, race, or ethnicity in promotions. We will eliminate racial and gender quotas. We will not teach CRT, DEI, or gender ideology in any contexts. Our contractors, boards, councils, and working groups will cease any operations relating to these divisive ideologies. We are removing any content from the DoD that does not support our core mission of warfighting.

We are undertaking an exhaustive internal review to discover all programs that fall under the remit of President Trump's order. We are ensuring that our military is protecting the Constitution and our nation's history, not subverting them. At the DoD, unity is our strength. Providing Service members an equal opportunity to excel will help us remain the world's strongest and most lethal fighting force.

General and Flag Officer Reductions

In addition to these reorganization efforts, I have directed a reduction in the number of general and flag officer positions. To accomplish our mission of lethality, deter threats, and achieve decisive victory, we must cultivate exceptional senior leaders who drive innovation and operational excellence. They must be unencumbered by unnecessary bureaucratic layers that hinder their growth and effectiveness.

Therefore, we will reduce 4-star positions across the Active Component by a minimum of 20%, general officers in the national guard by a minimum of 20%, and general and flag officers by a minimum of 10% with the realignment of the Unified Command Plan.

COVID Reinstatements

We are also welcoming back former service members who were wrongly forced to leave the military. More than 8,700 service members were involuntarily separated for not taking an experimental COVID-19 vaccine. Others were more informally pushed out or decided to get out. We are actively welcoming back those warriors of conscience.

We have begun identifying those individuals and sending them letters to apologize for the wrong that was done to them and invite them to return back to the military, with back pay. In April, I directed the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to provide additional guidance to remove adverse actions based solely on refusal to take the COVID-19 vaccine or a request for accommodation, provide discharge upgrades for those individuals, and facilitate additional remedies for Service members who suffered other career setbacks resulting from their principled stand. Through these efforts we will continue to restore confidence in our military and retain a Force that meets the highest standards.

Recruitment

The Trump administration recognizes that our most valuable resources is the young people who are brave enough to put on the uniform and risk your life for this country. One of our clearest metrics of success to date is coming from outside the military. Young Americans are responding positively to our articulation of our mission. Year-to-date, the Army has seen its best recruiting numbers since 2010. Earlier this month, the Army hit its annual recruitment goal four months early, bringing in over 61,000. And under Secretary Driscoll, they are still going strong. The Navy has seen its best recruiting numbers since 2010. Every service branch is on track to meet or exceed their targets for FY2025.

This recruiting renaissance is welcome news, but unsurprising. When our standards are high, when the mission is clear, when we prioritize warfighting over wokeness, that energizes the young men and women of our country, the very patriots our American experiment has always needed. President Trump’s clear vision for a Golden Age of national defense has been a catalyst for this upward trend in recruiting.

Rebuilding our Military

After the Cold War, a new consensus emerged: we had no peer or even near-peer competitor. The Soviet Union had dissolved, China’s GDP was less than one-tenth of ours, Iran was on its heels after a grueling eight-year war with Iraq, and North Korea was far from achieving nuclear technology. Scholars proclaimed “the end of history” was at hand. America enjoyed a mostly unchallenged command of the commons, airspace, sea, space and cyberspace. Consequently, the United States, along with allies, scaled down our military and defense spending. We cancelled strategic-defense initiatives, halved the size of our naval fleet, closed shipyards, and cut spending on troops and technology. We believed that we could reap a peace dividend in perpetuity, and that American leadership would remain unchallenged.

But that was always wishful thinking. The era of uncontested U.S. dominance, is over. President Trump’s 2018 National Defense Strategy made clear that great power competition was back – and that is exactly what we are seeing now. This Administration inherited a world with Europe and the Middle East at war. Meanwhile, China is undertaking a historic military buildup and actively rehearsing for an invasion of Taiwan.

As President Trump has stated, our policy is Peace Through Strength. That will require rescuing our stagnant defense industrial base. Only by having the most powerful and lethal military in the world — and focusing it where it is needed most to protect and advance America’s interests — can we deter our nation’s adversaries and, if necessary, prevail any potential conflict.

Reviving the Defense Industrial Base

Reviving the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) is a key component of rebuilding the military. We must be prepared to match capabilities to threats, and to ensure we are prepared to deliver the warfighter what is needed to win. While the DIB remains technologically advanced and essential to our warfighting capabilities, decades of under-investment have left it strained, overly consolidated, and at risk of not keeping pace with modern and near-peer threats, especially in a protracted conflict. As foreign competition has hollowed out American manufacturing, we have

lost capacity and resilience in our defense supply chain as well. Meanwhile, Communist China has enjoyed explosive growth in manufacturing capacity.

While much more is needed, we have already undertaken some actions to address this crisis through our Office of Industrial Base Policy. Congress should also reauthorize the Defense Production Act to continue providing President Trump the broad authority he needs to respond swiftly and agilely to national security needs.

Consistent demand signals to industry are key, and I look forward to working with Congress on this matter. Our industry partners need consistency to plan out additional capacity — on-time budgets help provide those demand signals. I am encouraged by Congress's emphasis on multi-year procurements, especially for key munitions. Multi-year procurements provide an additional measure of stable and sustained demand signals to promote DIB investment. New entrants encounter numerous barriers to entry, including heavy regulations and scrutiny — I look forward to working with Congress to roll back unnecessary red tape to reinvigorate our DIB.

Modernizing the Nuclear Triad

Defending the homeland, is the top mission for DoD and our nation — and few things if any are more important for that mission than maintaining a strong and reliable nuclear deterrent. This is vital not just to deter enemies from using nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction against our nation's homeland. It also empowers the United States to help deter aggression against allies in forward theaters, while providing U.S. forces — and the President himself — with maximum flexibility and options for restoring deterrence and managing escalation in the event of a crisis or conflict anywhere.

Yet the nuclear deterrence mission is growing more difficult — not just because America's nuclear forces are getting older, but because America's adversaries are increasingly expanding, modernizing, and diversifying their own capabilities. This not only complicates escalation dynamics with individual adversaries — it also poses new difficulties as we work to deter multiple adversaries simultaneously.

To address these challenges and maintain a strong deterrent, we must continue to not only sustain our legacy triad systems — which remain a crucial component of our military — but also to complete the decades-long modernization of our nuclear forces. Therefore, in FY26, the Department is requesting more than \$62 billion in support of the nuclear enterprise, including \$50 billion to modernize and sustain our nuclear forces and over \$12 billion for nuclear

command, control, and communications. A modernized nuclear triad supports President Trump's goal of Peace Through Strength and enables our ability to reestablish deterrence and rebuild our military.

Each leg of our triad offers complementary attributes that support deterrence. Our modernization efforts include transitioning the land leg — our most responsive capability — from the Minuteman III to the Sentinel; the sea leg — our survivable and assured second strike capability — from the OHIO-Class SSBN equipped with the Trident II (D5) Life Extension to the COLUMBIA-Class SSBN equipped with the Life Extension II and a new sea-launched cruise missile; and, finally, the air leg — our most visible and flexible capability — from the B-2 Spirit to the B-21 Raider equipped with the Long-Range Standoff Cruise Missile. The future of these programs will depend on sustained, consistent, and sufficient funding, as requested in the FY 2026 Budget.

Additionally, the Department continues to support modernizing our nuclear command, control, and communications; nuclear stockpile; and production and supporting infrastructure and the defense industrial base. We recognize this large-scale modernization effort was conceived in a more benign security environment. It may not be sufficient to address current and future challenges. The Department's current nuclear employment posture and planning guidance begins to address the risk presented by multiple nuclear challengers, and, if necessary, we will adjust U.S. nuclear forces to ensure they are responsive to the current and evolving security environment.

Shipbuilding

Improvements in ship construction are needed, and more efficient processes are required to ensure ships are built on time and on budget. Currently, we are losing the shipbuilding race with China, both in terms of capacity and available ships. China has over 230 times the shipbuilding capacity of the U.S. 70 percent of Chinese warships were launched after 2010, while only 23 percent of U.S. warships were. Our maritime advantage is shrinking rapidly due to decades of deindustrialization, consolidation, and reduction in U.S. ship construction and repair capacity, affecting both public and commercial sectors. Given this formidable challenge, we are revitalizing our shipbuilding industry with \$5.9 billion in funding in FY26.

The Navy's current goal is to achieve a fleet of 381 vessels. We have stagnated below 300. In peacetime, our force struggles to replace vessels as they are decommissioned. This bodes poorly for our force in wartime.

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Shipbuilding is the top priority for the Navy and for both President Trump and myself. Alongside Secretary Phelan, we are aggressively improving ship construction processes and methods, prioritizing modernization, and expanding the capacity of our commercial maritime industrial base. We can no longer spend billions of taxpayer dollars to receive years-long delays and capacity shortfalls.

President Trump signed his executive order, “Restoring America’s Maritime Dominance,” demonstrating his commitment to not only revive the Navy, but our nation’s defense industrial base and commercial maritime industrial base, for decades to come. Alongside President Trump, we will Make Shipbuilding Great Again.

Generational Investments in F-47 and Golden Dome

We have awarded the contract for the Next Generation Air Dominance (NGAD) fighter jet – the F-47. This will be the world’s first 6th generation fighter jet, ensuring our nation’s continued air superiority in the face of growing global threats. The F-47 will be the most advanced, lethal, and adaptable fighter ever developed, with state-of-the-art stealth technologies to stay one step ahead of America’s adversaries. The F-47 is built to dominate the most capable adversaries and operate in the most perilous threat environments imaginable. The F-47 will have significantly longer range, more advanced stealth, be more sustainable, supportable, and have higher availability than our fifth-generation fighters. The platform will also take significantly less manpower and infrastructure to deploy.

In FY26, the Department is allocating \$3.5 billion for this generational program. The F-47 will significantly strengthen America’s air power and improves our global position. It will keep our skies secure – even as it ensures we are able to reach out adversaries wherever they may hide. The decision to proceed with the F-47 is the first of several decisions required to maintain air dominance into the future, and I look forward to working with Secretary Meink to make those decisions.

Golden Dome

One of President Trump’s key campaign promises was a Golden Dome for America (GDA). Inspired by Israel’s Iron Dome, the GDA will be a next-generation missile defense system to protect Americans from the threat of nuclear, hypersonic, and conventional weapons in our homeland. The GDA architecture will employ a combination of sensors and effectors working across multiple layers: a space layer with space-based sensors, and interceptors; an upper layer

with Ground-based Midcourse Defense next-generation interceptors; an under layer with upgraded expeditionary effectors and other supporting terrestrial sensors; and a lower-tier layer for cruise and terminal missile defense and other advanced aerial threats.

The Department is investing \$25 billion in FY26 to accomplish that goal. DoD Acquisition and Sustainment is working with the Missile Defense Agency and the military services to address supply chain challenges and begin the work necessary to construct the Golden Dome. This project will include developing cutting-edge domain awareness systems, kinetic and non-kinetic missile defeat capabilities, and advanced command, control, and battle management systems to integrate and augment existing U.S. missile defense capabilities.

Drone Technology Investment

The rapidly transforming arena of small unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS) and counter-sUAS (C-sUAS) presents enormous challenges and opportunities that require us to bring the very best American innovation to bear. Massed, affordable, and attritable platforms with short lifespans are changing the character of war and transforming the way our forces must fight. Incidents in the homeland and conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine remind us of how this technology has changed modern warfare. The supply chain is a significant challenge. For every commercial drone made in the United States, China makes more than a hundred.

The current global UAS capability threat is broadly characterized by a wide variety of kinetic and non-kinetic uncrewed systems capabilities. Kinetic capabilities include short-range, remote-piloted, kamikaze drones commonly known as First Person View (FPV), reusable bomber drones, one-way attack (OWA), and long-range one-way attack (LROWA) platforms. Non-kinetic platform capabilities include, but are not limited to, short-range intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), long-range ISR, electronic warfare, signals intelligence, communications relay, and drones with other critical warfighting missions.

On offense, we must take advantage of the pace of commercial technology progress to enable our forces — on the ground, in the air, and at sea — to defeat our adversaries and to overcome our adversaries' rapidly evolving C-UAS capabilities as we do so. DoD's Replicator-1 initiative — with sustained senior leadership focus, cross-Departmental collaboration, the help of the Defense Innovation Unit, and support from Congress — has made enormous strides towards delivering and fielding multiple thousands of unmanned systems across multiple domains, with thousands more planned under this budget to further strengthen our deterrence in the Indo-Pacific. On defense, we must meet the exponentially growing challenge from ever more-capable

drone weaponization. We must also end the unsustainable pattern of shooting down increasingly sophisticated, lethal drones — that in many cases cost just a few hundred dollars and are therefore accessible to a much broader range of bad actors — with exquisite multi-million-dollar weapons that are difficult to produce and to replace once used.

This is why the DoD, with support from Congress, must reinforce the progress made over the last few years to quickly improve its UAS and C-UAS capabilities and integrate them into how we fight.

Cybersecurity

A robust cybersecurity posture is critical to safeguarding sensitive data, increasing operational lethality, and ensuring the resilience of critical infrastructure. Without a proactive and comprehensive approach to cybersecurity, we leave ourselves vulnerable to attack.

The current cybersecurity landscape is characterized by escalating sophistication and frequency of threats. Nation-state actors, criminal organizations, and individual hackers are constantly developing new and innovative methods to exploit vulnerabilities. We are seeing an increase in attacks targeting critical infrastructure, sophisticated phishing campaigns, and supply chain compromises.

The DoD recognizes the urgency and severity of this threat environment.

We are therefore strengthening our defensive capabilities through enhanced threat detection, incident response, and vulnerability management. Investing in advanced technologies like AI-powered security tools and zero-trust is crucial.

We also aim to deter malicious actors by imposing costs and consequences for cyberattacks. This includes working with international partners to uphold norms of responsible behavior in cyberspace and holding attackers accountable.

Finally, we are investing in developing a highly skilled cybersecurity workforce through education, training, and recruitment initiatives. We must foster a culture of cybersecurity awareness across the DoD and encourage collaboration between government, industry, and academia.

By prioritizing these objectives, the DoD is committed to maintaining a strong and resilient cybersecurity posture that protects our nation's interests against evolving threats.

Reestablishing Deterrence

Everything I describe above is designed to deter our adversaries from aggression toward the United States and protect our interests at home or abroad. Under the leadership of President Trump, the message to our adversaries has been undeniably clear. We will relentlessly pursue American interests, prioritize the Indo-Pacific region, and work with our allies and partners to establish deterrence worldwide.

Southwest Border

Defending our homeland is our first objective. We must secure our own border before we can help secure other nations' borders. From day one, we have surged forces to the Southwest border to achieve 100% operational control there.

Some of the greatest threats to the American people came over our border. Under the previous administration, cartels — now designated as foreign terrorist organizations — enjoyed easy access across the border. Encounters with foreign terrorists between ports of entry rose 3000% under President Biden. Under President Trump, the open-borders era is over and the Golden Age of border security is here.

On Day One of his administration, President Trump issued executive orders declaring a national emergency at the southern border, and clarifying the military's role in protecting the territorial integrity of the United States. These swift and decisive actions directed the military to seal the border and defend our sovereignty.

This has included deploying personnel and resources, constructing additional physical barriers, countering unmanned aerial systems, and more. Joint Task Force Southern Border is now conducting enhanced detection and monitoring, including vehicle and foot patrols, rotary wing and fixed surveillance site operations. We have sent a Stryker brigade combat team and a general support aviation battalion. And we have created the New Mexico and Texas National Defense Areas, allowing Service members to detain illegal aliens until Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) or other agencies can assume custody, further securing our border.

Approximately 11,900 troops are currently deployed protecting the southwest border. Working with our partners at DHS and CBP, these interagency efforts have achieved at least a 99.99% reduction in migrant crossings. There are now fewer illegal crossings than at any point in the 21st century.

Panama

At the same time, President Trump has made clear that we are pursuing not just an America First foreign policy, but an Americas First foreign policy. Prioritizing American interests begins with our neighbors. To that end, the administration is working with Panama to regain control of the Panama Canal from the malign influence of the Communist Chinese. We have achieved a framework for “First and Free” passage for U.S. warships and auxiliary ships, as well as increasing the presence of U.S. troops on both sides of the canal.

People’s Republic of China (PRC)

China is the Department’s pacing threat. Beijing has made clear its desire to achieve hegemony in the Indo-Pacific and then the world, and in the process could strangle America’s economy and even project military power into the Western Hemisphere on a larger and more sustained basis. That is evident not just in China’s belligerent activities throughout the region but also – and most glaringly – in its massive, historic military buildup, including expanding numbers of advanced submarines, ships, aircraft, and satellites, as well as increasingly dangerous missile threats and cyber capabilities. That is not to mention China’s ongoing efforts to rapidly expand its nuclear forces.

President Trump is committed to Peace Through Strength – and that is precisely what the Department will deliver in the face of China’s military buildup. To that end, in addition to homeland defense, DoD is prioritizing deterring China in the Indo-Pacific, including by focusing U.S. military modernization on the capabilities required to deny Chinese aggression in the First Island Chain, strengthening our forward posture in the Western Pacific, and working closely with our allies and partners to bolster our collective ability to deter or respond effectively to aggression.

In Australia we have increased rotations of air assets, expeditionary submarine visits, Army watercraft, and more. Through our U.S.-India Major Defense Partnership, we have targeted enhanced operational coordination, greater information sharing, expanded regional and global cooperation, and closer industrial cooperation. In Japan, we have started Phase One of

upgrading U.S. Forces Japan to a Joint Force Headquarters and deployed B-1 bombers at Misawa Air Base, the first ever bomber task force to operate from Japan. In the Philippines, we maintain a robust rotational force presence and we have extended the timelines of exercises with the Philippines. With these partners we are also investing in multilateral maritime cooperative activities in the South China Sea. These investments will prioritize combat-credible military forces to and re-establish deterrence.

Finally, even as we strengthen our relationships with each of these allies and partners, we are also urging them to increase investments in their own defenses. This is vitally important if they are to field the range of military capabilities and supporting infrastructure required to deter China in the coming years, and for decades to come.

Israel and the Middle East

In the Middle East, President Trump has made it clear that America is fully committed to the security of Israel, our close ally. Just days after his inauguration, the Administration released the shipment of 2,000-lb MK-48 bombs to Israel — critical munitions that the Biden administration had blocked. The Defense Department has also delivered three new F-35s to Israel with another three aircraft on the way.

Defending Freedom of Navigation in the Red Sea

At President Trump's direction, the Joint Force took decisive action to defend freedom of navigation in the Red Sea — and the results speak for themselves. After several weeks of U.S. strikes killing key members of the Houthi organization and degrading their capabilities, the Houthis agreed to stop striking American shipping. Not only is this a victory for Americans — it sends a clear signal to all others in the region, and the world. President Trump is a man of a peace — but he can and will take decisive action to defend our nation's interests where they are threatened.

Conclusion

We have the opportunity to create a new Golden Age of National Defense. The threats we face are significant, and rising. Communist China is on the rise and is preparing for conflict. But conflict is not inevitable, and let me stress once again that our goal is to prevent war through increasing U.S. strength. We long for peace, but we must prepare for war. By restoring the

warrior ethos, rebuilding our military, and reestablishing deterrence we can deter and deny our adversaries' objectives and ensure peace for our homeland and the world.

For decades, our military has been stagnant. Our leaders have spent more time focusing on diversity goals than in rebuilding our Navy. We have lost the moral confidence that animated prior generations. We have lost the focus and sense of responsibility that our positions demand.

We are reversing those trends. With a trillion-dollar national security budget, surging interest in military service, and an industrial base reinvigorated by President Trump's America-First industrial policy, we have the chance to overcome decades of decline and strengthen our position as the world's most lethal and focused fighting force. Our allies and partners increasingly stepped up to share the burden as we prioritize and confront the most pressing conflicts of the day, and our adversaries will take note of our revitalized military.

Of course, we cannot do this without the critical leadership and oversight of Congress. This committee is our critical partner in everything we do. I look forward to working with you to reinvigorate our national defense.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.
General Caine, you are now recognized for your remarks.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF GENERAL CAINE

General CAINE. Thank you.

Chair Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, other leaders, members of the committee, I am honored here today to join Secretary Hegseth and Ms. Bryn MacDonnell to appear before you today to testify on the President's fiscal year 2026 budget.

Today's hearing reflects our shared commitment to maximize efficiency, accountability, and lethality to our taxpayers' investments, ensuring that every expenditure increases the survivability of our joint force, providing our warfighters with the advanced capabilities and capacity and cutting-edge technologies required to dominate our adversaries.

I have deep gratitude for everyone in this room and your commitment and cooperation to help us deliver the capability and capacity for our 2.8 million members of our joint force, the civilians that serve alongside us, and, of course, their families—all required to work together to deliver, as the Secretary said, peace through strength.

It is my responsibility as Chairman to understand the global set of conditions, advise the Secretary, and integrate our joint forces to confront and manage risks worldwide. This demands a comprehensive understanding of all domains—space, cyber, air, sea, under-sea—and all military services, each region, and at times our allies, partners, of course, as we consider carefully what they bring to the table, and to inform the decisions that you will make to give us the finite taxpayer dollars required to ensure the greatest strategic impact with that investment.

The President's budget enables the joint force to defend our great Nation against adversaries seeking to do us harm. We are relentless in our pursuit of innovation and technology that allows us to deter our adversaries at every opportunity, while ensuring we are positioned to win on the battlefields of the future when called upon.

This budget empowers the joint force to get after Secretary Hegseth's three pillars, as he mentioned—restoring warrior ethos, rebuilding our military, and reestablishing deterrence—and ensures, from my perspective, the joint force is properly armed, globally integrated, and ready.

The President's budget invests in our warfighters. To win on the battlefields of the future, as I said, our forces must be properly armed, with the right capabilities—lethal, modern, reliable, survivable, and at scale. Victory requires people and platforms that will overmatch the enemy day after day, systems that will be required to operate under the harshest of conditions, and technologies that will give our warfighters the decisive edge that they deserve.

This budget gives us the necessary tools to reinvigorate our national and defense industrial base. Our Nation is full of incredible talent, and we need to get every bit of it moving in the same direction.

This budget also helps the joint force get globally integrated. I think we are relationship entrepreneurs within the joint force, which requires us to work together with the military, our allies and

partners, industry, and, of course, the interagency to be connected before crisis begins.

Finally, the President's budget reflects our mandate to stay ready, always on the account, anticipating the next fight, not fighting the last fight, and delivering for our force and their families.

Our force and our families are the last and most important part of this budget. This budget makes meaningful investments in our servicemembers and their families, improving quality of life, housing, medical care, and the moving process, along with our most precious asset, our people, who must be properly armed, integrated, and ready.

I also want to highlight the servicemember over my right shoulder quickly, the senior enlisted advisor to the Chairman, who will retire after 37 years, Sergeant Major Troy Black. He didn't know I was going to say this today.

So, in conclusion, it is an honor every day to serve alongside some of the most extraordinary warriors, civilian teammates, and families that our Nation has ever known. I assure this committee that the joint force remains committed and capable and ready to defend our Nation. With your continued support and prudent investment, we will maintain that competitive edge at scale.

I want to also remember today our deployed and their families, who are out there on the front edge of our Nation making sure that we are safe here in this committee room today.

And I would be remiss, as I always try to remember, to remember our fallen and their families who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

I thank the Congress for your support and collaboration. I thank this committee for your efforts and leadership. And I look forward to your questions.

[The information follows:]

STATEMENT OF
GENERAL JOHN DANIEL CAINE, USAF
22ND CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BUDGET HEARING
10 JUNE 2025

1 **OVERVIEW**

2 I am honored and filled with gratitude to represent our incredible Joint Force,
3 Department of Defense (DoD) civilians, and their families, who serve and sacrifice for
4 our national security every day. I am also honored to testify alongside the 29th
5 Secretary of Defense, Pete Hegseth, and I thank him and the President for the trust
6 they placed in me to serve as the 22nd Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

7

8 I would like to thank Congress for your continued support to our United States Military
9 and for your continued collaboration as we work to achieve peace through strength.
10 Particularly, I would like to thank the Senate Armed Services Committee for advocating
11 for an additional \$150 billion in national defense funding through reconciliation.

12

13 The President's \$961.6 billion Department of Defense budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026
14 invests in and enables the Joint Force to act urgently to strengthen U.S. homeland
15 defenses and to match our end strength to the threats we face. It includes funding to
16 defend the Homeland by sealing our borders, and repelling illegal immigration and
17 narcotics trafficking. It advances U.S. interests in the Western Hemisphere, and defends
18 the American people through the Golden Dome for America. Further, it invests in our
19 ability to deter China in the Indo-Pacific by prioritizing properly postured, combat
20 credible military forces.

21

22 The Joint Force is fully engaged in supporting the Secretary of Defense's three pillars of
23 restoring the warrior ethos, rebuilding our military, and reestablishing deterrence. We
24 are prioritizing warfighting and are laser focused on lethality and readiness. We support
25 the Secretary's charge to ensure that only those who meet the highest standards and
26 merit are made leaders in our ranks. Our Joint Force's strength stems from our unity.

27

28 We are also working to rebuild the military. This budget invests in reenergizing our
29 national and defense industrial base and modernizing the Nuclear Triad, enhances

30 shipbuilding efforts, funds the Golden Dome and the newest F-47 fighter jet, and makes
31 crucial investments in drone technology and cyber security. We are also working toward
32 cutting wasteful spending to re-invest in filling critical mission needs.

33

34 We will ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent efficiently and with purpose. We strive to
35 provide accountability to Congress and the American people while achieving our end
36 goal of providing every service member with the right capability, equipment, and training
37 to deter our adversaries, and if necessary, crush our enemies on the battlefield with
38 overwhelming technological superiority.

39

40 We are gaining 100% operational control of our Southern Border and working with our
41 partners in Panama toward enabling a mechanism to ensure U.S. warships and
42 auxiliary vessels transit the Canal on a cost-neutral basis. We are also working to deter
43 China in the Indo-Pacific by increasing regional force posture, investing in our military to
44 maintain our competitive edge, and working with our network of allies and partners.
45 Finally, we are postured to maintain stability and freedom of navigation in the Red Sea.

46

47 This budget invests in our ability to keep pace with both the rapidly evolving strategic
48 environment and developing technology. We owe the Nation's 2.8 million service
49 members, our Department of Defense civilians, and their families the very best. We
50 must be a force that is properly armed, globally integrated, and ready. We must deter
51 our Nation's adversaries and, if necessary, fight and win now and in the future. I have
52 full trust in our Joint Force to make hard decisions, persevere in adversity, and to do the
53 right thing. This budget helps support the essential work of our Joint Force.

54

55 The President's FY 2026 budget also makes critical investments in our most important
56 asset – our people. It has been an honor to serve alongside some of the most
57 extraordinary warriors, civilian teammates, and families that our Nation has ever known.
58 I'm grateful for the opportunity to continue serving with them. I remain mindful of all

59 those currently deployed, at home and around the world, standing watch in defense of
60 our Nation and its ideals. And I hold in special remembrance our fallen and their
61 families, whose sacrifice, courage, and unwavering commitment embody the highest
62 ideals of service.

63

64 **THE THREAT**

65 The world remains a dynamic and turbulent place. The return of great power
66 competition requires us to make large scale changes and take an entrepreneurial
67 mindset to adapt. The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) actions throughout the world,
68 and conflicts in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia make it clear: our adversaries are
69 advancing. Nuclear threats are on the rise and maintaining deterrence is more critical
70 than at any point in our history. The United States homeland is being threatened by
71 hostile gray zone activities, including cyber attacks, economic coercion, and
72 increasingly aggressive behavior in space and cyber space.

73

74 Additionally, China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea are pursuing unprecedented levels of
75 cooperation, driven by a desire to challenge U.S. interests and stability around the
76 world. Their collaboration extends across military, cyber, economic, and informational
77 domains. These developments come alongside growing threats to the U.S. homeland,
78 including cyber intrusions, transnational crime, and coercive influence operations. While
79 the CCP has not openly taken a leading role in directing these efforts, China continues
80 to support and enable this growing network of collaboration. This convergence marks a
81 strategic shift – one that reinforces the need for sustained American resolve and unity in
82 the face of more aligned challengers.

83

84 **U.S. Homeland:** Illegal migration, illicit narcotics trafficking, foreign terrorists, and
85 transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) continue to pose a direct threat to the U.S.
86 homeland. TCOs, violent gangs, and violent extremist organizations leverage revenue
87 from drug trafficking and human smuggling to degrade regional democratic institutions.

88 Criminal violence drives drugs and illegal migration to the U.S. southern border,
89 threatening the safety, security, stability, and sovereignty of the nations in our
90 hemisphere.

91

92 The CCP's influence and economic coercion in the Western Hemisphere is growing.
93 Using its Belt and Road Initiative, China has become South America's largest trading
94 partner, with the aim to monopolize access to the region's abundant natural resources
95 and use them for political control.

96

97 **China:** The CCP is advancing an unprecedented military modernization effort alongside
98 increasingly aggressive actions that pose a threat to the U.S. homeland, as well as to
99 our allies and partners. The CCP is employing a multifaceted strategy that blends
100 military pressure, cognitive and cyber operations, and economic coercion. The People's
101 Liberation Army (PLA) continues to display expanding capabilities through sustained
102 pressure activities across multiple domains, activities that are growing in scope, scale,
103 complexity, and frequency against Taiwan. These aggressive maneuvers are not
104 routine exercises, they are rehearsals for a forced unification.

105

106 The PLA is developing and integrating cutting edge technologies at an alarming pace.
107 They are adopting artificial intelligence (AI), hypersonic and advanced missiles, and
108 space-based capability. They have greatly advanced their development of space and
109 counter space capabilities, including direct-ascent anti-satellite weapons, co-orbital
110 threats, and advanced jamming systems. The PLA Defense Industrial Base is
111 manufacturing thousands of weapons and hundreds of fighters every year. Finally, the
112 CCP deploys extensive resources toward its cyber operations and has an enormous
113 workforce dedicated to launching cyber-attacks.

114

115 **Russia:** The war in Ukraine continues, and Russia continues its attempt to accomplish
116 its geopolitical objectives using military force. These objectives include expanding its

117 territorial control, broadening its influence regionally and globally, and weakening U.S.
118 leadership and influence. Russia has strengthened its relationships with the CCP, North
119 Korea, and Iran. Russia has used the war as an opportunity to refashion its military and
120 build a military that is now larger than its pre-war forces. Russia has modernized its
121 Pacific fleet, particularly submarines, becoming an increasing threat to U.S. interests in
122 the Indo-Pacific.

123

124 **North Korea:** North Korea's advancing and unlawful nuclear program threatens U.S.
125 interests and regional stability. Its ongoing and increasingly aggressive ballistic missile
126 research and testing represent a threat to our homeland and to our Allies and partners
127 in the Indo-Pacific. Additionally, North Korea's direct involvement in the Ukraine conflict
128 has allowed North Korean soldiers to gain combat experience, and enhanced their
129 proficiency with advanced weapons systems, including drones, further sharpening North
130 Korea's military's preparation for future conflict. A significant portion of Russia's
131 supplies, including ballistic missiles and artillery shells, come from North Korea. In
132 exchange, Russia has provided North Korea with advanced military technology.

133

134 North Korea has accelerated its navy's nuclear armament and the development of a
135 nuclear-powered submarine, signaling a significant modernization of its naval forces.
136 These developments underscore North Korea's growing capacity to project power
137 beyond its borders, posing an escalating threat to U.S. interests and regional stability in
138 the Indo-Pacific.

139

140 **Iran:** Iran continues to pose a multifaceted threat to U.S. interests through its regional
141 proxy networks, missile development programs, and support for Russia's military
142 operations in Ukraine. Since the October 2023 Hamas attacks, Iran-backed militias
143 have intensified assaults on U.S. forces in Syria, Iraq, and the Red Sea region. In the
144 Red Sea, Iran's support has enabled the Houthis to conduct hundreds of attacks on

145 commercial shipping, significantly disrupting global trade routes and prompting
146 international military responses.

147

148 Iran's nuclear ambitions have also escalated, and they have undertaken key activities
149 that better position it to produce a testable nuclear device. Additionally, Iran has
150 threatened to target U.S. bases, indicating advancements in its missile range
151 capabilities.

152

153 Furthermore, Iran's deepening military cooperation with Russia, including the provision
154 of drones and other military support, underscores its role in sustaining Russia's war
155 efforts in Ukraine. Collectively, these actions reflect Iran's strategic intent to challenge
156 U.S. influence and destabilize regional security architectures.

157

158 **JOINT FORCE FUNDAMENTALS**

159 Today's threats demand an entrepreneurial mindset that drives us to identify
160 opportunities, take calculated risks, fight through adversity, and foster innovation across
161 the Joint Force. Meeting these challenges requires a force that is properly armed,
162 globally integrated, and ready.

163

164 **Properly Armed:** The United States military is the most professional, capable, and
165 lethal force on the planet. Make no mistake – we are the world's best. But our
166 competitive edge is not a preordained right. If we want to stay ahead of our adversaries,
167 we must continually reinvest and renew our ability to produce capability. We owe
168 America's force of 2.8 million the right tools, weapons, and capabilities to enter any
169 battle with overwhelming strength. They must be armed so that they never have to enter
170 a fair fight.

171

172 We must reinvigorate our Defense Industrial Base – now. Today's threats require an
173 industrial base that can accelerate the right capability to match the threat to the
174 warfighter at capacity. We need to be able to harness America's innovation and
175 entrepreneurial spirit to increase the speed of developing technology and get it into the
176 hands of our warfighters at the tactical edge. The Department must be better buyers.

177

178 During World War II and the early Cold War, industry was able to produce game-
179 changing systems quickly. Technology like the B-29 Superfortress and the nuclear
180 submarine went from concept to combat in under 5 years. Today, it takes 16 years to
181 develop a basic ground vehicle and more than 20 years for a fighter jet.

182

183 Meanwhile, technology keeps accelerating. Simply put, we are not moving fast enough.
184 We must make the reforms necessary to restore trust in the Department of Defense as
185 a partner of choice for private industry. We must optimize alignment and agility between
186 requirements, acquisition, and budgeting, helping smaller firms and new entrants work
187 with DoD and allowing DoD to leverage innovation within the private sector. The
188 Department will benefit from increased competition among defense contractors, which
189 drives down prices and grants more opportunities for innovative solutions.

190

191 Additionally, we need to send consistent demand signals to industry, which allows
192 industry partners to plan out additional capacity. This budget makes crucial investments
193 in boosting munitions production and we are investing in expanding domestic production
194 of critical minerals.

195

196 Defending the homeland through strategic deterrence remains the DoD's top priority.
197 U.S. nuclear forces deter adversaries, reassure allies, and provide unmatched
198 capabilities that are essential if deterrence fails. Today's security environment features
199 multiple nuclear-armed challengers, some actively engaged in conflict, requiring the
200 U.S. to deter more than one nuclear challenger at a time.

201 To meet this challenge, the U.S. is both sustaining legacy triad systems and
202 modernizing all three legs of the nuclear triad, including transitioning from Minuteman III
203 to Sentinel ICBMs, moving from OHIO-Class SSBNs to COLUMBIA-Class with updated
204 Trident II missiles, and replacing the B-2 with the B-21 Raider and introducing the Long-
205 Range Standoff Cruise Missile.

206

207 Modernization also includes command and control, the stockpile, supporting
208 infrastructure, and the defense industrial base. While this modernization effort began
209 under less urgent conditions, it now underpins deterrence in a more dangerous and
210 complex world.

211

212 We must also keep pace with China's shipbuilding capacity, who now vastly outpaces
213 the United States. Decades of deindustrialization and underinvestment have eroded
214 U.S. maritime strength. The Navy's current goal is to build a 381-ship fleet, but it
215 remains stuck below 300.

216

217 Replacing decommissioned vessels is already a challenge in peacetime, raising serious
218 concerns for wartime readiness. The President's budget makes significant investments
219 to advance shipbuilding, to include commercial shipbuilding, a necessary aspect of
220 industrial capacity to aggressively improve military ship construction, modernization of
221 the fleet, and expanding the capacity of the maritime industrial base.

222

223 The President's FY 2026 budget also makes generational investments in our homeland
224 defense, including for a next-generation missile defense system, or Golden Dome, and
225 for fielding the F-47.

226

227 The F-47 is the world's first sixth-generation fighter, offering superior stealth, range, and
228 adaptability compared to fifth-generation platforms. It is designed for peer conflict, cost-

229 effective sustainment, and higher availability, all while requiring fewer support
230 resources. This aircraft will ensure continued U.S. air dominance for decades.

231

232 The Golden Dome for America is a layered, next-generation missile defense system to
233 protect against nuclear, hypersonic, and conventional threats. It includes space-based
234 sensors and interceptors, next-generation ground-based systems, and lower-tier
235 defenses. Work is underway to integrate these systems into a seamless homeland
236 defense architecture.

237

238 The President's budget also makes crucial investments in rapidly advancing drone
239 technology, including improving our acquisition and production of drone systems at
240 scale. This is an area where we must take advantage of fast-moving private sector
241 innovation to field low cost, attritable, kinetic and non-kinetic, small, unmanned aircraft
242 systems (sUAS) and counter sUAS systems to keep pace with our adversaries.

243

244 The budget makes additional investments in F-35 development.

245

246 **Globally Integrated:** In addition to being armed, we must also be globally integrated.
247 Threats today are borderless and fast-moving. Today's battlefields cross domains and
248 regions. Wars take place on land, at sea, in the air, and in space and cyber space, often
249 all at once. They cross geographic boundaries and regional lines. The Joint Force
250 needs to fight as one, aligning Joint and Service concepts.

251

252 We must field interoperable capability and rehearse at every echelon, across our
253 Services. We must test our readiness concepts in dynamic, contested environments.
254 We must never miss an opportunity to create consistent and trusting joint relationships
255 at all levels.

256

257 Additionally, we need to integrate the Department of Defense, Department of State,
258 Intelligence Community, and the rest of our government across aligned legal authorities
259 and operating frameworks. And we must work more closely with the private sector,
260 leveraging advancing technology and the American entrepreneurial spirit.

261

262 Finally, in today's capability and capacity constrained world, we must be integrated with
263 our allies and partners. We need a common, all-domain operating framework. That is
264 why this budget makes vital investments in Combined Joint All-Domain Command and
265 Control; space-based Command, Control, Communication, Computers, Cyber,
266 Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance and Targeting equipment; Precision,
267 Navigation, and Timing capability; and air and refueling capability and capacity like the
268 KC-46.

269

270 **Ready:** Lastly, we must be a Joint Force that is ready. Having the right tools is just part
271 of the equation. We need our military to be organized, trained, and mentally prepared to
272 fight at a moment's notice. Our Nation's adversaries can never doubt the readiness,
273 capability, and lethality of the Joint Force. Our leaders at every level must be trained,
274 educated, and prepared to fight a large scale war.

275

276 We need to get families ready too. We ask much of our service members, and by
277 extension, their families. Readiness at home is readiness in the field. Our Nation's
278 warriors have spouses, children, and parents. If we want them fully focused on the
279 mission, they need to know their loved ones are taken care of. Lifting that weight from
280 their shoulders increases combat readiness.

281

282 In addition, we must think in terms of national readiness. While our military stands at the
283 forefront, history shows that major conflicts must be met by the full strength and
284 resilience of a nation. In the event of a large-scale crisis, we will need all parts of
285 American society to respond with urgency, especially within our industrial and

286 commercial sectors. Meeting the moment will require shared effort, shared
287 responsibility, and a united sense of purpose.

288

289 **Take Care of our People:** Wrapped around all of this, is our most critical asset – our
290 people. Humans are always more valuable than hardware. The most important thing is
291 to take care of our people and make sure they are ready to go. No amount of advanced
292 hardware or cutting-edge technology can replace the value of human commitment,
293 judgment, and resilience. There are 2.8 million service members and civilians who make
294 up our Armed Services. They have volunteered, along with their families, to serve our
295 great Nation. We must acknowledge the sacrifices military families make and take
296 seriously our responsibility to care for them, including making sure they are armed,
297 trained, equipped, and supported. We are committed to having leaders that are
298 empowered to make tough decisions, enforce standards, and uphold accountability.

299

300 This budget makes necessary investments in quality of service and quality of life for our
301 service members and their families, including for enlisted housing. In addition, we are
302 committed to improving the lives of our service members by ensuring healthcare for
303 service members and their families, the timely moving of their household goods,
304 improved housing conditions, childcare access, and career support for military spouses.
305 We must ensure families have the resources, support, and stability they need to sustain
306 our all-volunteer force.

307

308 **CONCLUSION**

309 I have the utmost trust and faith in the men and women of our Joint Force. The threats
310 we face are advancing and they are multi-faceted. Emerging technology and the
311 American entrepreneurial spirit to innovate and overcome provide us ample opportunity
312 to meet the challenges before us. We have fought and won as a Nation before, and we
313 can and will do it again, if necessary. We, as a Joint Force, Congress, and society, must

314 move faster. We need to take unconventional approaches, think outside the box, be
315 disruptive, and create a sense of urgency within our Joint Force.

316

317 I ask Congress to fully fund the President's Fiscal Year 2026 budget and to pass it on
318 time. While the flexibility granted to the Department in the FY25 Continuing Resolution
319 was greatly appreciated, routinely operating under Continuing Resolutions limits audit
320 efforts, lowers real buying power, results in less deployable capital, and makes it harder
321 for industry to make long term investments.

322

323 I am honored to have served alongside some of most incredible warriors and civilian
324 teammates our Nation has ever seen, and their families. I am thankful to continue
325 serving with them. I am mindful of all service members who are currently deployed at
326 home and abroad, defending this Nation and its values. I always specially remember
327 our fallen and their families, who demonstrate true sacrifice, courage, and commitment
328 to our Nation.

329

330 Once again, I thank Congress for their support to our Joint Force. The President's Fiscal
331 Year 2026 budget is designed to ensure that the Joint Force can effectively address our
332 national security priorities. Together, we will achieve peace through strength.

REDUCTION OF FORCE AND DOT&E

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.

I want to make sure that each member has a chance to ask questions, so everybody will have 5 minutes for their remarks and answers. Remember, when the little light comes on and it is yellow, you have 1 minute left.

So I will begin by recognizing myself for 5 minutes.

Mr. Secretary, the Department recently issued a memo reducing the civilian personnel at the Office of Director of Operational Test and Evaluation by about 74 percent and reduced the budget by 80 percent.

Now, everyone on this subcommittee can attest that I have been beating the drum for reductions in DOD personnel—civilian personnel—since I became a member of the committee, and that is a long time. In fact, I have a bill that would require the Department to reduce civilian staff by 15 percent based on merit.

However, I think we need to be intentional and clear-eyed about the functions that we reduce. As you know, DOT&E was established by Congress in 1983 to centralize and strengthen operational testing, ensure that weapons systems are rigorously evaluated for combat effectiveness and suitability, and to address deficiencies in oversight and standardization within the Department of Defense.

And there are a lot of examples of DOT&E catching flaws that would have had catastrophic consequences for our military, including loss of life. Like, one example is the M2/M3 Bradley, which was designed to transport troops, provide fire support. The Army approved the system, touting the armor, firepower, and mobility. However, when the independent testing was done, it was found out the aluminum armor was not a good idea and was susceptible to failure, and early versions caught fire and burned. And so, obviously, we made changes and rectified that, and the Bradley has been a valuable part of our military ever since.

But we share the same goals—to create a more efficient, leaner DOD—but with things like Golden Dome coming along, we want to make sure that the technologies we pick are going to work and that we fund them accordingly.

So I understand the reduction is seeking to remove duplicative functions. We are not interested in delays, and I know that that is really high on your list. However, a layer of independent testing is, I think, important.

In light of that, with the reduction, how will you ensure that if the military services tasked with testing and evaluating their own programs will not revert to past behavior, which showed they would approve systems in order to meet operational needs or budget timelines?

So, with that, Mr. Secretary, let's see if we can have an answer to that.

Secretary HEGSETH. Well, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the question. And how we evaluated DOT&E was a reflection of the overall approach we take in the Department, which is: How efficiently do we operate? Where are the bottlenecks?

We talk about the things you talk about every single day. How do we get hands—how do we get systems, platforms, future capabilities in the hands of warfighters as quickly as possible?

And so a review led by myself, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, our friends at DOGE who have worked with us, have helped us look and identify places where we might find efficiencies. Now, I work and my hands are directly in the middle of that to ensure that, as we seek those efficiencies and reduce those redundancies, we are not doing so in a way that undermines our capabilities or safety for warfighters in the future.

After we got rid of a lot of the really low-hanging fruit of tens of billions of contracts and things that we have reduced that were duplicative, that were completely wasteful, that were creating PowerPoint presentations that no one was looking at, you start to look at things like DOT&E, Testing and Evaluation—which, in a headline, sounds quite significant, and it can be in many ways.

But when you ask the services, when you ask the Joint Staff, you talk to the Comptroller and CAPE and you go across the other Under Secretaries, there is a universal recognition that DOT&E's mission has bloated and expanded well beyond the scope of what it was supposed to be and, as a result, was expanding by months and sometimes even more than that the amount of time it was taking for systems to actually make it in the hands of warfighters.

So you still have services and other places doing that testing and evaluation. This remains in place at a right size. So we see it as a right-sizing of DOT&E. So it still provides that oversight and ensures across the joint force we are recognizing the challenges, but it doesn't add unnecessary time.

So we recognize why it was created. We want it to do its job, but not more than its job. And that is what we believe it is doing, by reforming it.

Mr. CALVERT. Well, thank you for that answer.

Obviously, as we expect new systems, new technologies to come on line quickly, we want to make sure, as this committee, that we are funding it properly and make sure that you can handle the volume which you are anticipating.

Especially with a new technology like Golden Dome, which, you know, we still—as the ranking member pointed out, we still haven't seen a clear definition of what it is—it is a strategic theater system, lower 48, Hawaii, Alaska, the rest of it—and how these layered systems are going to be put out there to defend the country and to make sure that we are not spending a lot of money unnecessarily. So testing and evaluation is going to be an important part of that.

With that, I recognize Ms. McCollum.

DEPLOYMENT OF THE NATIONAL GUARD

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Secretary, I plan to ask you some budget questions about the following: the cost of the Qatar plane; where the money for the Army's parade is coming from; or the National Guard deployments to the border, where that funding is coming from.

I honor and celebrate the United States Army, but I would like to know how much this parade is going to cost. I have sent the De-

partment letters on several occasions on this, and I am still waiting for a response.

But then something else happened this weekend, and it needs to be addressed, and that is the President's premature and escalatory decision to deploy not only the National Guard troops to Los Angeles but Active Duty Marines as well.

Mr. Secretary, we are both from Minnesota. I was in the Twin Cities during the riots that followed the murder of George Floyd. Tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets for days. Governor Walz made the decision to call up the Minnesota National Guard.

At no point did we need—the citizens of Minnesota request that the Marines be deployed. Our State and local law enforcement, along with our National Guard, who have worked on crowd control, they were more than enough. They were more than capable of handling this situation.

History has proven that law enforcement and the National Guard are more than capable of handling situations more volatile than what happened this weekend. We all see the continuous loops on TV, but this looks nothing like the George Floyd protests or the Rodney King riots in Los Angeles in 1992.

Mr. Secretary, this is a deeply unfair position to put our Marines in. Their service should be honored. It should not be exploited.

The President has issued an executive order and talked about deploying troops across the country.

Los Angeles County has 17,000 law enforcement personnel, and the State of California has 24,000 National Guard troops. So that is why the Los Angeles chief of police did say, and I quote, “The possible arrival of Federal military forces in Los Angeles, absent clear coordination, presents a significant logistical and operational challenge for those of us [who are charged] with safeguarding this city,” the end of his quote.

As I mentioned before, in Minnesota, we train for those things together. So there is no need for the Marines to be deployed.

So here are my budget questions, though: What is the current cost for what is taking place in California, and how is it going to affect this budget or the budget we are currently serving under? How much are these deployments going to cost for both the Marines and the National Guard?

And what training or duties are not taking place because of these deployments? Where in your limited budget, sir, are you going to find—in the remainder of this fiscal year, are you going to pull the money to cover these deployments? What holes are being created?

Secretary HEGSETH. Well, Congresswoman, thank you for the question.

You are right; we are both originally from Minnesota, which is why I recall 2020 quite well, when Governor Walz abandoned a police precinct and allowed it to be burned to the ground and also allowed—

Ms. MCCOLLUM. So, sir—

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. 5 days of chaos—

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Sir, your—

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. To occur inside the streets of Minneapolis.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. [Off-mike.]

Secretary HEGSETH. The police precinct, ma'am, was abandoned and burned to the ground. And because of that, the National Guard was eventually, far too late, mobilized.

And President Trump recognizes a situation like that, improperly handled by a Governor, like it was by Governor Walz, if it gets out of control, is a bad situation for the citizens of any location.

So, in Los Angeles, we believe that ICE, which is a Federal law enforcement agency, has the right to safely conduct operations in any State and any jurisdiction in the country, especially after 21 million illegals have crossed our border under the previous administration.

ICE ought be able to do its job, whether it is Minneapolis or Los Angeles—

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Chairman, I have limited time. I asked a budget—

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. And they are being—

Ms. MCCOLLUM [continuing]. Question. Could the Secretary please address the budget? Thank you.

Secretary HEGSETH. You asked about the situation in Los Angeles, and we believe—

Ms. MCCOLLUM. I asked about the budget.

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. ICE agents should be—

Ms. MCCOLLUM. I asked about the budget, sir.

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Allowed to be safe in doing their operations. And we have deployed National Guard and the Marines to protect them in the execution of their duties, because we ought be able to enforce immigration law in this country, unlike what Governor Walz did in 2020.

There are 17,000 LAPD. You mentioned that. There would be 18,000 if not for the defund movement that folks like Gavin Newsom and Karen Bass have—

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Chairman, if the—

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Implemented. The police chief—

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Chairman, if the Secretary—

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Said she was overwhelmed, so we helped.

Ms. MCCOLLUM [continuing]. Is not going to ask the budgetary questions—I will yield back my time if the Secretary refuses to answer the budgetary questions I put before him. They are important.

What training missions aren't happening? Where are you pulling the money from? And how are you planning this moving forward? These are budget questions that affect this committee and the decisions we are going to be making in a couple of hours.

If you are not going to answer them, please let the chairman know, and I will take back my time and I will yield it back to the chairman.

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Secretary, why don't you just let us know what accounts you are pulling the money to to fund—

Secretary HEGSETH. Well, thankfully, unlike the previous administration, we have a 13-percent increase in our defense budget, and we will have the capability to cover down on contingencies, which is something—

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Chairman, I yield back my time.

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. The National Guard and the Marines plan for. So we have the funding to cover down on contingencies, especially ones as important as maintaining law and order in a major American city.

Mr. CALVERT. All right.

Secretary HEGSETH. As far as training, all of the units on the ground have been fully trained in their capabilities of what they are—

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Chairman—

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Executing on the ground.

Ms. MCCOLLUM [continuing]. I asked for budgetary. If he needs to get back to the committee with the numbers, I would appreciate it, both current and present.

Mr. CALVERT. Okay. All right.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you.

Secretary HEGSETH. Happy to submit them for the record.

Mr. CALVERT. The gentlewoman will receive an answer to the question for the record.

[The information follows:]

Mr. CALVERT. The gentleman from Oklahoma, Mr. Cole.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

RETIRING LEGACY SYSTEMS AND E-7S

Mr. Secretary, again, welcome.

As I mentioned in my opening comments, I am very concerned about retiring legacy systems. They need to be retired—no problem there—but doing it too fast and not having replacements coming on line.

I have a particular concern where E-3s, as my colleagues know, AWACS, are—there are just 31 of them in the fleet, or there were. Fifteen have been retired since 2023. They fly out of Tinker Air Force Base for the most part, which is in my district, hence my parochial but I think legitimate interest here.

I am very interested in seeing—and this committee has done some important work in positioning us to acquire and field the E-7s. It is not a new technology. Our friends in Australia use it; our friends in the United Kingdom use it. Much superior to what we have.

And so, again, this is one of the areas where we are concerned where we don't have the budget information from OMB we would like.

So I am curious about what your thoughts are on the platform and replacing them. Do you have any idea about the speed and cost that you are planning to move in that particular area going forward?

Secretary HEGSETH. Well, I appreciate the question, Mr. Chairman.

And priorities and decisions are what we are in the business of, on the budget side, on the capabilities side. And I think President Trump has charged us with making the big, difficult decisions after a lot of deferred maintenance and deferred decisions, to ignore parochial priorities in large part and focus on what the Department needs and where it needs it and when it needs it.

And that means some tough calls. And there are platforms we have supported as a result, and there are some platforms and systems that we won't support going forward because the services have requested it or we have identified those are systems and platforms that don't orient toward a future threat.

And we have learned a lot of things—a lot from what has happened in Ukraine. We have learned a lot from what China is attempting to do and the systems they are building.

So, if we have systems and platforms that are not survivable in the modern battlefield or they don't give us an advantage in a future fight, we have to make the tough decisions right now. That is my job, that is the Chairman's job, and it is our job to fund those new systems and make tough calls.

So the E-7 is an example of that. We are going to fund existing platforms that are there more robustly and make sure they are modernized, but we believe most of the ISR or a great deal of the ISR in the future will be space-based. And not in a scientific, space-based "we hope we will get there," but in a "we are funding capabilities that will surpass some of those airborne capabilities."

So we are willing to continue to review things like the E-7, but, from our view, investments in existing systems that carry forward that capability, alongside even bigger investments in space-based ISR, gives us the kind of advantages we need on a future battlefield.

The CHAIRMAN. I think that is a fair point.

I will point out, I have been on this committee a long time and watched the U.S. Army waste \$29 billion on a future combat system because it was going to be so great. And it didn't, and we wasted a ton of money.

We have a platform here that works. Space is great. It is unknown; it is undeveloped. And I would just urge you to look at this pretty carefully as you make the decision. We certainly will as a committee.

I don't know how much time I have left, because the clock is not running.

Mr. CALVERT. You are the chairman, so—

HIRING FREEZES

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I will try and be respectful of the committee and certainly respectful to our witnesses.

I have one other quick question, if I may. And I think probably a lot of Members have had these concerns.

Look, I am largely very much in favor of the hiring freezes and some of the things you have done personnel-wise, so this is not a criticism. But I do hear that we have certain exempt positions, like aircraft mechanics, like firefighters—and we are having a problem with that again.

Fort Sill, I have the home of the Field Artillery and Air Defense Artillery as well. It is a pretty military district. Nobody is being critical, but we are having a hard time getting—these are exempt categories—those filled.

Can you sort of tell me where we are at on that? Because these are mission-critical people.

Secretary HEGSETH. That is a great question, sir. It is something we are paying very close attention to. In fact, we meet on it multiple times a week. It includes shipbuilding capabilities, childcare centers. There are a lot of positions that affect our industrial base, our capabilities, or our families that we are working diligently to ensure we are getting those exceptions as quickly as possible, those waivers.

But we are also trying to do right by right-sizing the civilian force, which has gotten too bloated too fast and has mostly been right-sized through voluntary separations through DRP. So I acknowledge that.

And we can get you a full list of the exemptions, as well, to make sure you understand where we are making tradeoffs.

The CHAIRMAN. I would appreciate that very much, Mr. Secretary. Thank you.

[The information follows:]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back. Thanks for your courtesy.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentleman.

Ms. DeLauro.

SUBMARINES AND SHIPBUILDING

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to focus, Mr. Secretary, my question on submarines and our national security, our military shipbuilding. And, as I said specifically, submarines—critical investment for national security and for the economy of my home State of Connecticut.

This is a yes-or-no question, Mr. Secretary: Do you agree that continued investment of the Department of Defense in submarine production is, in fact, critical to the United States's national security and military readiness?

Secretary HEGSETH. Very critical.

Ms. DELAURO. Okay. So "yes." Thank you.

And we agree. They will continue to be a critical asset to deter adversaries, sustain the advantage we have in undersea domain, and the Defense Department should continue to support these programs.

What is the status of the Department's investments in submarine programs?

Secretary HEGSETH. A 14-percent increase in fiscal year 2026 on the Columbia and a substantial increase in the Virginia as well.

So we are ensuring a defense-submarine industrial base that has been left behind, that has been—

Ms. DELAURO. Well—

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Neglected, is fully invested—

Ms. DELAURO [continuing]. We have funded the submarine base here.

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. To make sure we are speeding up on funding the submarines.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. More than half.

Ms. DELAURO. More than half. And you can go back to last December. But I want to move on.

Do you know where our submarine production currently stands and whether current production is sufficient to bridge the gap between current fleet size and projected need?

Secretary HEGSETH. There is a gap, but we believe we are closing it, ma'am. Yes.

Ms. DELAURO. And if you can get to us the information about how, in fact, that you can close that gap, because we do not have any information or data that can substantiate what you are saying.

Your department's initial budget proposal includes incremental funding for the Columbia-class submarine. Is that going to raise alarm bells across the defense industrial base by signaling a lack of commitment to the program?

Secretary Hegseth. No. We could not—ma'am, we could not be more committed to Columbia. The centrality in the triad, ensuring it delivers on time, it is central to the deterrent and the base of the United States.

Ms. DELAURO. Do you know how much—

Secretary HEGSETH. So we are very committed to that.

Ms. DELAURO [continuing]. Of a financial hole this will create for the defense industrial base? Will there be a financial hole for the defense industrial base in 2026?

Secretary HEGSETH. Certainly not. Based on our projections, there is not a hole. We are investing in Columbia robustly.

Ms. DELAURO. Okay. Without numbers—it is my understanding the Department is planning to move \$3.1 billion for the Columbia-class from 2026 and spread it over 2027 and 2028. This creates a serious problem for industry in the short term and hampers shipbuilders' ability to reach an adequate production rate.

Have you been in contact with Electric Boat or with Huntington Ingalls about your plans?

Secretary HEGSETH. Almost every day, our Deputy Secretary of Defense alongside our Secretary of the Navy are actively engaged with all of our shipbuilders and shipyards to make sure their needs not only are being met but their shortfalls are being addressed so that we can close that gap in real-time—

Ms. DELAURO. Uh-huh.

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Which has existed for quite some time.

Ms. DELAURO. So that you can—you can really lay out for us the information which we would like to get, you know, this committee needs to take a look at. Because I know you believe that submarines are important, as I do. But getting the specific information about where we stand, what the production rate is, what gaps there may be.

We are willing to listen to all of that, because, in fact, in contrast to what your earlier statement was, we have, in fact, supported mightily the submarine industrial base from this committee. That has not been neglected.

Do you have a plan for making the investments necessary to ramp up submarine production to the necessary elections?

I would just tell you, as part of the December continuing resolution, Congress included \$5.7 billion for the Department to put on contract for two additional Block IV and one Block V Virginia-class submarines. The Navy advised Members that these funds were re-

quired to be placed on contract by February of 2025, yet the Department did not put funding for the two additional Block IV boats on contract until April 30th.

So do we have a plan—do you have a plan for making the necessary investments to ramp up submarine production to the necessary levels? And what is that plan?

Secretary HEGSETH. Ma'am, first of all, I want to thank this committee for the flexibility alongside fiscal year 2025 and the continuing resolution, plus—

Ms. DELAURO. Well, I would hope you would thank this committee for the funding—

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. A lot of flexibility provided on the submarine—

Ms. DELAURO [continuing]. That it has made.

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Industrial base, and we—

Ms. DELAURO. We have made a serious investment. So your first statement is inaccurate. We have focused squarely on submarines.

And we now want to know where that is going and what your plan is for the continued investments to meet production levels and make sure that that is an area that is covered for our national security.

Secretary HEGSETH. Ma'am, I fully acknowledge the investment this committee has made in shipbuilding. And the challenge is, our department, under the previous administration, squandered a lot of that by—

Ms. DELAURO. Please—

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Not investing it properly—

Ms. DELAURO. I want your plan. I have had difficulty with the prior administration, and I don't mind calling them out. What is your plan for the future? Can we get that in writing and on paper so that we know where you are going? Because we don't have anything today. We have zip, nada, in knowing where you are going.

Secretary HEGSETH. We—

Ms. DELAURO. You can talk percentages, you can talk about whatever you want, but unless this committee sees dollars and cents and where you are going and what your plan is, then we may reconsider what you need to do to go forward.

Give us the details.

Secretary HEGSETH. Congresswoman, we have the details, and we will provide them for you.

Ms. DELAURO. Well, then let's have them before we—my hope is that we could get to it before we go to a markup within a few hours here today.

I yield back my time, Mr. Chair.

Mr. CALVERT. The gentlelady yields back her time.

The dean of the House, Chairman Rogers.

DEFENSE FROM ADVERSARIES WITH NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, gentlemen, lady.

Let me ask you about the stunning success of the Ukrainian drones of last week. Are we seeing the ushering in of a new era of warfare, the use of drones from afar?

After all, these drones were smuggled into Russia, hidden for a great span of time, and then activated from 2,500 miles away. Are we prepared both defensively and offensively, Mr. Secretary?

Secretary HEGSETH. I will answer that and then maybe hand it to the Chairman.

I would say, sir, it was a daring and very effective operation that we were not aware of in advance and reflects significant advancements in drone warfare, which we are tracking in real time inside Ukraine and taking that feedback to help us better understand how we can better produce more lethal attritable drones but also advance our counter-UAS systems so that we are not vulnerable to a threat and an attack like that.

The Chairman and I got together right after seeing that and saying, "What more can we do to ensure we are prepared and our country is defensible against something like that?"

I will hand it to the Chairman.

General CAINE. Mr. Secretary, Congressman, thank you for the question. I think it goes to your more strategic question about, is the way and nature that we are fighting our wars changing, sir?

The answer is likely yes. Mass numbers of rounds moving back and forth with precision and autonomy are all things that are advancing in the technology trend exponentially. One of the things that I have talked with some of the leaders of this community and the committee about are buying capabilities along the technology curve or ahead of it. And so I do think it was a bold move, and it represents a new and different way of fighting wars, as we have seen over the past few years in that particular fight, sir.

Mr. ROGERS. What do we need to do to protect ourselves from a similar type raid by an adversary?

Secretary HEGSETH. Well, sir, intelligence is critical, human intelligence, signals intelligence, every aspect of how we get ahead, get to the left of a problem like that. And certainly our Department, in conjunction interagency, are focused on that.

But then it is rapidly fielding the commercially available technologies, in some cases, but others proprietary, whether they are EW, whether they are microwave, whether they are kinetic, to defeat drones either individually or in swarms in multiple locations against, you know, protecting our people, protecting our installations, protecting our critical infrastructure, protecting our bombers.

And some of that speaks to Golden Dome and what we will do there, but you also have the particulars of the immediate. Our forward-deployed troops, are they properly covered by counter-UAS systems? Do we have the best systems forward deployed? And that is something we are looking at every single day.

We live in a dynamic operating environment, and we are—it is—the Chairman knows this, the deputy, our policy shop. We are focused on ensuring that this is front and center considering how central this threat will be going forward.

Mr. ROGERS. Well, these are low-cost, high-tech weapons, if you will, and has been dominated by China. 90 percent of drones are produced by China, I am told.

What does that tell us about what we need to do here at home?

Secretary HEGSETH. Well, sir, it is not—first of all, making sure we are less reliant on Chinese technology in any part of the supply

chain, which is something we can speak to, because that has been an aggressive part of our effort at DOD, but, also, recognizing it is not just China. Of course, Iran invests substantially in drone capabilities. And then learning a lot from partners on our side, like the Ukrainians, who have developed these systems, and fielding that quickly.

So commercially available, attritable that we can produce at home is important to us.

Mr. ROGERS. Congratulations to all three of you, and we wish you well.

I yield back.

Secretary HEGSETH. Thank you, sir.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank the gentleman.

Question really quickly. Is the press story accurate that 40 percent of the long-range bombers from Russia were destroyed in that attack? Is that an accurate number?

General CAINE. Sir, I am not exactly sure what the percentage is, but I also know that I may not say that in open session.

So I will take that and get back to you through appropriate channels.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank the gentleman.

Ms. Kaptur, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE

Ms. KAPTUR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I welcome our guests. I come from a family of combat veterans going back a long time, and my comment is the use of certain words and what they imply.

When I hear “warrior ethos”—and I hear it a lot from you, Mr. Secretary—I am concerned. All the soldiers in our family, all of whom fought and received medals for their combat service, call themselves soldiers. Marines are trained to kill.

In terms of domestic policing, our police and our National Guard at the State level, carefully used but also our State police are used in civil enforcement, and they are good.

I don’t need any reply. I just am concerned about what those words you often utter actually do in people’s minds and change the language we have used since the founding of this Republic. So I just—that is a concern of mine.

I wanted to go to the General, and Chairman, if I could. We have heard a lot this morning about defense industrial base, and this is something I ran for office on a long time ago.

We have not made significant progress as a country in this regard. And the places that made things, whether they were machine tools, whether it was composite materials, were left behind. It is one of the reasons for the division in our society.

So I am very interested in knowing what specifically and in which accounts—and I hope you can get this back to us within a week and a half—you are going to focus on in order to inject additional resources in the defense industrial base of this country. What will that look like? We are just successful now in helping steel to revive and some of our composite metals.

Forty years ago, I wrote a title to the defense bill dealing with strategic metals. Nobody at Department of Defense cared, okay? So

I am interested in which accounts, if you could kindly get back to me on that, and what—when you say “defense industrial base,” budgetwise in which accounts, what does that mean?

All right. I don’t expect you to answer it now. Can you tell me when you might get that information back to us?

General CAINE. Well, ma’am, you just said a week and a half. So I know the awesome humans behind me are scribbling madly to come back to that.

Can I just make a quick comment? I happened to be a lucky guy that served in the private sector for a while, and I ran a machine shop in Texas, along with a metal finishing business. So, when we talk about defense industrial base, I broaden that out to really the national industrial base. There are certain components that are made on the defense side, but, as you articulate, ma’am, many others are made in the small machine shops out around this entire Nation.

When I talk about mobilizing our Nation, I think of that national, not just defense industrial base. What do we have to do to create greater capacity all the way down the chain to include jobs at the local level for those people that build quality parts and deliver on time with shorter lead time and lower cost. And so I have great empathy for what you are talking about, and we will get back to you just as soon as we can.

RELATIONSHIP WITH UKRAINE

Ms. KAPTUR. Yes.

And, General and Secretary, going back to the drone attack in Ukraine, a country that was invaded by the Russian dictatorship starting in 2014—they have been at war for a decade, more than a decade—what they have done with drones is astounding. It is going to change warfare.

One of my questions is, what are you doing to establish relations with Ukraine and not turn your back on them as an administration and help them win, help liberty win? This has implications way beyond the boundaries of Ukraine.

Russia has got 11 time zones. I mean, this is the most important test of liberty for our NATO alliance in my lifetime, and we better help win. And that involves moving forward faster on drone technology.

I am very worried about our air bases where we have secure assets. Mr. Secretary, can we defend them today if they were to have a similar attack?

Secretary HEGSETH. We are certainly very focused on that, ma’am, and we are learning every day from Ukraine.

I think we would need to clarify what “win” means. This President is committed to peace. He is committed to stopping the killing, and he was not in office when it started in 2014. There were no additional incursions in his first term, and then, under the previous administration, Vladimir Putin sought to take Ukraine.

We are committed. This administration is committed to peace, to stopping the killing, and we think that serves the American interests.

Ms. KAPTUR. Did you just leave Ukraine, Mr. Secretary? Did you just leave Ukraine?

Mr. CALVERT. Gentelady's time has expired, but if you can get back to us on that, that would be great—

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Did not leave Ukraine.

Ms. KAPTUR. Have you visited Ukraine?

Secretary HEGSETH. No, ma'am.

Ms. KAPTUR. My first trip there, sir, was 1973.

Mr. CALVERT. The gentelady's time has expired.

Mr. Carter, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

ARMY TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE

Mr. CARTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank all of you for your service. We are very proud of you.

I am fully supportive of the Army's outgoing modernization efforts and the recent Army Transformation Initiative that combined the Army's Futures Command with TRADOC to become the Transformational and Training Command.

How are you both going to create a partnership between the Assistant Secretary of the Army for acquisition, logistics, and technology and this new command to ensure the acquisition authorities are modernized and synchronized to achieve the maximum lethality and deterrence?

Secretary HEGSETH. I will take that. Maybe I will hand it to you, Mr. Chairman, as well.

We are very encouraged and supportive of the Army's Transformation Initiative. General George has been critical to that, as has the Secretary of the Army, Dan Driscoll. And together it has been a heck of a partnership and a willingness to get at the core issues facing today's Army and ensuring it is reformed and modernized to meet the threats of the future.

One of those aspects is merging those commands, and I can tell you, whether it is the warrior ethos or lethality, that is central to why we make decisions, ensuring that we are not making decisions on behalf of bureaucrats or process—but to ensure we are getting the most lethal aspects of what we do front and forward as quickly as possible. And that involves things like Futures Command and TRADOC.

And, when you merge those things, you have to make sure you are getting rid of things that are redundant and pushing forward things that matter the most, but I will defer to the Chairman.

SUCCESS IN INDOPACOM

Mr. CARTER. Well, I share that commitment completely, and I share the transformation. What do you see as the fundamental capabilities this command must develop to ensure we have lethality and deterrence necessary to succeed at INDOPACOM? We have got—that is where the future is.

General CAINE. Sir, I will first echo the Secretary's respect and appreciation for Secretary Driscoll and General George. They are a team. And that is always great to see from a warfighter's perspective when you have such a nested combat pair, if you will, that are driving at the same set of objectives.

I think there is clarity, Congressman, in the minds of both the Secretary and the Chief on the need for things like long-range fires

in the Pacific. And, in order to pay for those, they are making those difficult decisions down the Army Transformation Initiative in order to pay for them.

Mr. CARTER. Well, when we started talking about the Futures Command, one of the things that I was hoping we would do is we would not get a project stacked up on somebody's desk in a stack that high, and when you got down to checking on that, "Oh, that goes to you," and it goes on top of another—on the bottom of another stack that high.

And so we get delayed and delayed and delayed and delayed in certain areas of bureaucracy. I think that is dangerous for our country as we look forward at INDOPACOM.

General CAINE. Yes, sir.

NEXT-GENERATION ENERGETICS MANUFACTURING

Mr. CARTER. That is why I asked the question.

Another issue that is very important, the Department has historically relied on outdated production techniques—energetics manufacturing, which may have remained unchanged since the Second World War.

How is the Department ensuring that investment in next-generation energetics manufacturing, such as AI, machine learning capabilities, and enabling an assurance of—quality assurance robotic-driven load, assembly and pack and automated formation processes—a priority and transition out research and development that is capable of producing these pathways?

In other words, a modern way to load and turn out ammunition, in the simplest terms.

Secretary HEGSETH. We are robustly funding things like DIU, like SCO, like the Office of Strategic Capital, to ensure that commercially available options, other companies are able to compete that traditionally are not involved in procurement at the Defense Department so that the valley of death is eliminated and you are able to bring in actual competition and dynamic solutions.

Otherwise—ammunition is a great example. It is very antiquated in many cases. We are still making rounds the way we made them after World War II. You have to project out what you want to make, send that signal to industry, and then allow innovators to enter that space so they can bring new technology and rapidly field those new technologies.

Otherwise, you are stuck doing it the same way you have always done it.

General CAINE. I was going to add something, but I will hold off if you are going to—

Mr. CALVERT. If we can get a written response to the gentleman from Texas on that.

General CAINE. Yes, sir.

Mr. CALVERT. That is a concern of all of ours, to modernize our manufacturing capability—

Secretary HEGSETH. Yes, sir.

Mr. CALVERT [continuing]. So we can get back manufacturing to the United States.

Mr. Cuellar, you are recognized.

WESTERN HEMISPHERE COMMAND IN SAN ANTONIO

Mr. CUELLAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary and all three of you all, welcome, and thank you for your service.

I represent an area from San Antonio all the way to Laredo, the border. In San Antonio, we have got Joint Base San Antonio, the largest joint base in the Department of Defense, that contributes over \$151 billion to the Texas economy. We support 266 mission partners.

San Antonio also has the second largest cyber footprint in the Nation, hosting the Sixteenth Air Force Cyber, and, of course, the military facilities that are the best in the country also.

Along with that, going down to Laredo, the largest port in the country, ninth largest in the world. After eight Chinese ports, number nine in the world is Laredo.

And my question, Mr. Secretary, has to do with one of your plans, and I ask you to—welcome you to San Antonio, let the San Antonio folks come in. It has to do with Army—U.S. Army North and U.S. Army South. I am not going to go with their missions or the critical mission.

But what concerns us in San Antonio, both the Democrats and Republican Members of Congress and Senators, we are concerned that, in setting up a Western Hemisphere Command, which I think it is a good idea, that you move it away from a place like San Antonio where, you know, we have the infrastructure, the personnel, the community partnerships to work with you on this.

And I say this because I think your testimony has about—about 11,900 troops that are down there working with Homeland, which I support. And, keeping in mind what's happening with the cartels in Mexico and other places, I would ask you to—when you look at this Western Hemisphere Command, that you don't move it 1,500 miles away from the border, especially to a place like San Antonio.

I think our Texas—I think we have a few Texans here that can talk about the rest of the State of Texas, and some wannabe Texans also that can talk about what—the facilities we have. But I would ask you to—as you consider this, to keep the command—Western Hemisphere Command in San Antonio.

Secretary HEGSETH. Well, sir, count me amongst some of the wannabe Texans. Tennessee is close enough.

Mr. CUELLAR. We got no State income tax.

Secretary HEGSETH. True. I appreciate that concern. It is something that has come up multiple times in conversations with Secretary Driscoll and General George in reviewing their Army modernization plan and consolidation with the recognition that some of those changes, when we go through a posture review and as we are looking at commands, are going to include some tough choices.

Some of that includes ranks and positioning, but you still are going to have at some level a south and north bifurcation. The question is where that is headquartered. We are in an ongoing review on that, of exactly where that will shake out.

But I would encourage continued deliberation with Secretary Driscoll. They have been thoughtful about it and will continue to be.

Mr. CUELLAR. And I understand that there is decisions that have to be made, efficiencies and all that. But just ask you, as you look at that, if we are doing so much investment on the border, if we already have the infrastructure down there in San Antonio and all the support from the other military bases across the State of Texas, and the partnership, I would ask you and the Secretary to please, before you make a decision, go—go drink the water, you know, go feel what we have in San Antonio and the surrounding areas in Texas to consider that instead of just making a decision by the paper on that.

And certainly I ask you to consider also the second largest footprint that we have at cyber there in San Antonio and working with the top cyber university, UTSA, there. And, of course, the military facilities that we have, which are the best, and certainly during the Afghanistan and Iraq war, that area was in luck.

So I just ask that, before any decisions are made, consider making a trip to San Antonio and have your folks understand. I know some of you have been in Texas before, and I would ask you to look at that.

So, with that, Mr. Secretary, and all of you all, thank you for your service.

Secretary HEGSETH. Noted, sir. And thank you for your contributions to securing the border, which has been a huge priority for President Trump. We are going to get 100 percent operational control, and it is because of support from folks like you. Thank you.

Mr. CUELLAR. Thank you for your service.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank the gentleman.

Chairman Womack.

FORCE STRUCTURE CHANGES

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My thanks to our witnesses here today. Secretary Hegseth, General Caine, thank you from the bottom of my heart and on behalf of this committee for your service to our Nation.

Obviously, we face a number of challenges and pacing threats across the globe in all domains, and we have to ensure that the Joint Force is ready to fight and win our Nation's wars. So let me begin with General Caine.

What risks do the recent force structure changes or proposals in the Army and Marine Corps present to the Joint Force given your Global Force Integration responsibility? Can you speak to that for a minute?

General CAINE. Yes, sir. And I will be mindful of the environment that we are in and speak broadly, and thank you for the question.

You know, we are having to make some difficult choices to pivot some of the combat capability that we have now to the combat capability that we need in the future. Both services alongside the Department of the Navy and the Department of the Army are making those changes in order to provide us with the combat capability and capacity that we need at scale to create the dilemmas that we have to deliver for the Joint Force and our adversaries.

So, at this point, we are doing the right pivots, Congressman, to make sure that we have the right depth that we need.

NATIONAL GUARD COMPONENTS

Mr. WOMACK. Secretary Hegseth, both of you understand the unique value proposition that the National Guard provides the Joint Force, having served. And, gosh, for a long time it was just me and Hal Rogers up here as the Guard guys. So it is good to have some company.

As we are looking to be efficient with Federal dollars, I always kind of believe that the Guard and the Reserve component structure in general brought what I called value to the force. I realize it is probably not at the same level of proficiency that the Active Duty counterparts might have, but they bring value to the force. And, when we need to surge responsibly and quickly, then the Guard and Reserve are certainly at the ready to do that.

My question is pretty simple. Can you both commit to ensuring that the National Guard component is resourced and equipped properly to meet not only today's operational demands but those in the future?

And I ask this question having had experience back in the day when the National Guard was more or less a Reserve force, and it was only after 9/11 that we began to use the National Guard in a truly operational form. And I thought it did a lot of great things for the Guard. I thought it brought value to the force, and I worry sometimes that we may, you know, pivot back to the time when the National Guard is relegated to more of a Reserve structure rather than able to surge with our forces in a moment's need and be able to deliver combat capability and combat service support capability when needed.

Can you speak to that, Secretary?

Secretary HEGSETH. Sir, I think it is an excellent point. The National Guard and Reserve bring great value, not to mention the civilian skills—the additive civilian skills that they bring. Completely recognize the shift that happened after 9/11. I was a part of that, as were many people in the Guard of our generation.

I think we are entering an even—another phase, especially under President Trump with his focus on the homeland where the National Guard and Reserves become a critical component of how we secure that homeland and apply those civilian sets across the spectrum.

So, when you are looking at, say, the Army, for example, what we need in the active Army vis—vis the National Guard will not be a reflection of what we need or don't need. It will be a rightsizing where that particular application would be best used, and the National Guard is a huge component of how we see the future, sir.

Mr. WOMACK. General Caine.

General CAINE. Sir, I will—you know, the policymakers tell us what size our force should be, but I will commit to you—and, by the way, thank you both for your service in the Guard. As a fellow guardsman, you are legendary in those hallways.

What I will commit to you is that I will make sure that the voice of the Guard is heard at the policy level pursuant to my job as the Chairman.

Mr. WOMACK. I yield, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentleman.
Mr. Case.

PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

Mr. CASE. Thank you, Chair. Mr. Secretary, at the Shangri-la Dialogue in your speech of May 31, you stated—and I quote—“Here in the Indo-Pacific, our futures are bound together. The prosperity and security of the Indo-Pacific are linked to those of your people.”

You went on to talk about the benefits from the, quote, “peace and stability that comes with a lasting and strong American presence here in the Indo-Pacific,” end quote.

Do you believe that the only way to achieve our contributions to peace and security and stability in the Indo-Pacific is through military strength alone?

Secretary HEGSETH. Sir, certainly not through military strength alone, although military strength is the business that we are in. So we are building partnerships across mil to mil, whether it is the Philippines, Japan, Australia, more actively than any other part of the world, because the application of American strength is not America alone. It is by, with, and through partners who share mutual objectives, and so we are——

Mr. CASE. So you——

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Very invested in military-to-military relationships.

Mr. CASE [continuing]. As the Secretary of Defense, believe that we need to take a broader approach in the projection of national power, national influence than simply our military. Is that correct?

Secretary HEGSETH. Well, sir, that is not my job. My job is the military applications.

Mr. CASE. Yes.

Secretary HEGSETH. So others will determine the broader spectrum of that, but it is always useful to have other applications of power as well.

Mr. CASE. Okay. But how others actually do that does impact your job in running our military, right? I mean, your military operations, your military presence, your mil-to-mil relationships—that I agree are important—are all going to be impacted by our non-military projection of power, influence, and assistance throughout the Indo-Pacific. Is that correct?

Secretary HEGSETH. I would just say that, from my two recent visits to that region, meeting with many of those ministers of defense multiple times, their focus is what capabilities can we share together, interoperability and capabilities that establish deterrence because the most important message America can still send and they can still send is hard power capabilities: What can we project? Where can we project it? As the Chairman said, what dilemmas can we create?

That is the business that we are in. And so we work with those partners that share common goals, and our militaries are working better together than they ever have, and I think that helps support——

Mr. CASE. And I appreciate your focus on the military side. That is, obviously, directly your job.

But I am asking you to think and comment more broadly on our big picture approach to the world. This administration, for example, has proposed to reduce the State Department by \$8.3 billion, the Economic Support Fund, the Development Assistance and Democracy Fund, and the Assistance for Eurasia.

This administration has illegally sought to destroy U.S. Agency for International Development and, in its budget request, reduce it significantly down to close to zero.

This administration has proposed to reducing the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement effort by \$1.2 billion. This administration has proposed to eliminate the Millennium Challenge Corporation—or not eliminate it but reduce it by \$1 billion, a significant reduction.

One of our principal agencies that assists us with meeting the needs of the Indo-Pacific in the infrastructure area and what I think you would agree are key strategic countries, such as Indonesia, such as Kiribati, such as the Philippines, such as the Solomon Islands. This administration has proposed to reduce international organization contributions by 83 percent.

This administration is not following through on commitments that we made to the Freely Associated States, all of which are strategically critical to this country to expand veterans services in those three countries: Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands.

This administration appears to be slow-walking the resurgence and expansion of the Peace Corps throughout the Indo-Pacific.

Do you think that that will affect your job in the military space with your relationships with those countries?

Secretary HEGSETH. No. Sir, I would add to that list the elimination of most USAID programs, which I don't hear anything about because a lot of them were wasteful and duplicitous—and I am glad we got rid of them.

Mr. CASE. Well, I have had those conversations with——

Secretary HEGSETH. And, as far as—you mentioned international organizations. The 83 percent reduction, again, I hear nothing about that because——

Mr. CASE. Have you talked to those countries——

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Those organizations are not serving U.S. interests and so——

Mr. CASE. Secretary, have you talked to those countries?

Secretary HEGSETH. We shouldn't be funding them if they are not serving U.S. interests. So I don't hear from our allies problems about that.

Mr. CASE. Well, I don't think you are talking to the right people.

Secretary HEGSETH. We are not part of their calculus of American power.

Mr. CASE. If you talk to any one of those countries, they will tell you that they are deeply concerned with the reduction of non-defense dollars, and it will, in fact, influence our presence and our contribution to your stated goal of peace and stability and security in the Indo-Pacific.

Secretary HEGSETH. I think they respect that we are reducing waste on programs that aren't actually affecting change on the ground.

Mr. CALVERT. The gentleman's time has expired.
Mr. Diaz-Balart.

RECRUITMENT AND SOUTHCOM LOCATION

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Thank you.

And, to the three of you, thank you. Thanks for being here and thanks for your service.

Mr. Secretary, I have two questions. First one is—and you mentioned recruitment at the beginning. During the last 4 years, we got used to just hearing how the recruitment was not doing well, and it was just the new reality. And then, all of a sudden, that reality has changed.

If you can comment on why that reality—I think a lot of us know, but if you could talk to us about this new reality, which you don't hear much about in the press, about how that has changed dramatically? Question number one.

Question number two is, a number of years ago, SOUTHCOM was moved from Panama to south Florida. There is a lot of reasons for that move. It was to—because it was in close proximity with others, like JIATF South, Special Operations Command South in Homestead, Joint Task Force Guantanamo, the Joint Task Force Bravo in Honduras, the U.S. Coast Guard Seventh District, which is the busiest district in the entire country, but also because, in south Florida, you have this multicultural, multilingual community.

And, as you know, SOUTHCOM deals with multiple countries, 40 different languages. So it was not just a cost savings potentially, but it also made a lot of sense. I believe that continues to be the case. Nothing has changed. If anything has changed, it is that the Western Hemisphere has gotten a lot more dangerous. Obviously, we have Iranian influence, Russian influence, Chinese influence.

I am very grateful, Mr. Secretary—I don't know how much you had to do with that—of the President's change in attitude on no longer appeasing enemies of the United States in the Southern Hemisphere, whether it is Venezuela or Cuba. But, again, there goes the importance of having SOUTHCOM where it is.

I just would like your thoughts, if you have had an opportunity to look at that because it was moved from Panama. It just wasn't in south Florida for the heck of it. It was a decision made. It was the right decision. It has proven to be the right decision.

So two questions. If you can answer them, I would love to hear it.

Secretary HEGSETH. Sir, thank you for the question about recruiting.

What changed is a Commander in Chief that America's young people believe in. President Trump was elected in November, inaugurated in January. At first, I called it the Trump bump, but then it became clear that is not enough. This is a tsunami of support amongst young Americans who want to serve under a President who they know has their back, who will fund them properly, who will not use them unnecessarily, and will make sure they are part of deterrence for the country with a focus, first and foremost, on the homeland, then deterring strengths and making sure our allies step up and carry more of the burden.

So you have got a historic surge in the Army, the Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, you name it. Americans are responding because they—there is—the President has a new spirit, and he is right. You can feel it in the ranks. You go out to formations; you talk to men and women on the border; they believe in what they are doing in securing that southern border.

You talk to them across the world, they are enthused about this new administration and its leadership. So it is President Trump, sir.

As far as SOUTHCOM, it is—President Trump's focus on our hemisphere has in many ways reinvigorated the mission of SOUTHCOM and the recognition of securing American interests but also pushing back Chinese malign influence. Panama is a great example of that but across Central and South America.

So SOUTHCOM is right where it is. We are grateful for the great work that they do. I have had an opportunity to spend a lot of time with them and their commander. We work by, with, and through a lot of allies—

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Secretary, I am a little confused. Are you telling me that the folks that are now voting with their commitment to the country are not upset that they are not able to use different pronouns? That is not—is that not a priority for the folks that are now signing up for our military?

Secretary HEGSETH. Well, sir, if they wanted to get a woke indoctrination, they could just go to college. Instead, they are joining the military, where we are focused on the basics. We know men are men; women are women.

Standards will be high, and we are getting rid of the distractions, the ideologies, the politicization that was in our ranks so that soldiers, men and women, can do their jobs on behalf of the Nation.

I think that is all that American people—that is all the people who want to serve want is that clarity and that support, and President Trump is giving it to them.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Now, Mr. Secretary, I would also add I think having you there has made it very clear what the attitude is. I will tell you, to me, it is really, really refreshing, and I thank you all.

Secretary HEGSETH. I appreciate that. Thank you, sir.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. The gentleman yields back.

Ms. Lee.

CRITICAL MINERAL POLICY

Ms. LEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for being here.

Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to submit to the record an article from The New York Times entitled "China's chokehold on this obscure mineral threatens the West's militaries."

Mr. CALVERT. Without objection.

[The information follows:]

China's Chokehold on This Obscure Mineral Threatens the West's Militaries

China produces the entire world's supply of samarium, a rare earth metal that the United States and its allies need to rebuild inventories of fighter jets, missiles and other hardware.



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By Keith Bradsher

Keith Bradsher, who has covered the rare earths industry since 2009, reported from the mining hub of Baotou, China.

June 9, 2025

China's strict controls on the export of heat-resistant magnets made with rare earth minerals have exposed a major vulnerability in the U.S. military supply chain.

Without these magnets, the United States and its allies in Europe will struggle to refill recently depleted inventories of military hardware.

For more than a decade, the United States has failed to develop an alternative to China's supply of a specific kind of rare earth crucial for the manufacture of magnets for missiles, fighter jets, smart bombs and a lot of other military gear.

Rare earth minerals are a central issue in the trade talks between the United States and China now underway in London.

China produces the entire world's supply of samarium, a particularly obscure rare earth metal used almost entirely in military applications. Samarium magnets can withstand temperatures hot enough to melt lead without losing their magnetic force. They are essential for withstanding the heat of fast-moving electric motors in cramped spaces like the nose cones of missiles.

On April 4, China halted exports of seven kinds of rare earth metals, as well as magnets made from them. China controls most of the world's supply of these metals and magnets. China's Ministry of Commerce declared that these materials had both civilian and military uses, and any further exports would be allowed only with specially issued licenses. The move, according to the ministry, would "safeguard national security" and "fulfill international obligations such as nonproliferation."

The ministry has begun issuing some licenses for magnets that include two of the restricted rare earths, dysprosium and terbium, to automakers in Europe and the United States. Magnets with these two rare earths, which are used in brake and steering systems, can withstand the heat of a nearby gasoline engine but cannot reliably tolerate the greater heat encountered in military applications. But there has been no sign that China has approved exports of samarium, which has few civilian applications.

Chinese and American officials began on Monday two days of trade talks in London. Restoring the flow of rare earths is a priority for U.S. officials, but few expect China to rescind its new export license system entirely.

“I don’t think that’s going away,” said Michael Hart, the president of the American Chamber of Commerce in China, who is coordinating the U.S. private sector’s efforts in Beijing to obtain more rare earth materials.



An F-35 fighter jet on the deck of the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier George Washington. Victor R. Caivano/Associated Press

The main American user of samarium is Lockheed Martin, an aerospace and military contractor that puts about 50 pounds of samarium magnets in each F-35 fighter jet. Lockheed Martin responded to questions with a short statement: “We continuously assess the global rare earth supply chain to ensure access to critical materials that support our customers’ missions. Specific questions about the rare earth supply chain will be best addressed by the U.S. government.”

Want to stay updated on what’s happening in China? [Sign up for Your Places: Global Update](#), and we’ll send our latest coverage to your inbox.

Officials in the Biden administration were so concerned about the U.S. military’s lack of a domestic samarium supply that they issued large contracts for the construction of two samarium production facilities. Neither was built because of commercial concerns, leaving the United States entirely dependent on China.

The interruption in samarium supplies over the past two months comes as the United States and its allies in Europe are rushing to rebuild inventories of advanced weaponry. These stocks have been severely depleted by shipments to Ukraine after the Russian invasion and, for the United States, to Israel during the Gaza conflict.

The Trump administration is also trying to supply more weapons to Taiwan, an island democracy over which Beijing claims sovereignty. In addition to halting exports of rare earths for military use, China recently imposed sanctions on some American military contractors because of their roles supplying Taiwan.

Those sanctions now bar Chinese companies and individuals from having any financial connection to the U.S. military contractors. That did not have much of an effect on the samarium industry until recently, because China exported samarium to chemical companies that mixed the metal with cobalt before selling it to magnet manufacturers, which then sell to the military contractors.

But Beijing's new export controls on rare earths specify that licenses can be issued based only on the final user of the mineral at the end of the supply chain. For samarium licenses, that sometimes means military contractors.

Of the seven kinds of rare earth metals restricted by China, the demand for six of them is largely civilian, said Stanley Trout, a metallurgist at the Metropolitan State University of Denver who has specialized in samarium magnets since the 1970s.

Samarium is different. It is “almost exclusively used for military purposes,” he said.

U.S. Defense Department regulations require that the casting or smelting of military magnets be done in the United States or a friendly nation. But the rules allow the ingredients of military magnets to be imported from anywhere, so low-cost samarium has come from China for many years, Mr. Trout said.



A rare earth refinery, in Baotou, China, on Monday. The New York Times

Concerns about dependence on China for samarium are not new. Starting in the 1970s, militaries in the West depended on a single chemical factory in La Rochelle, France, that refined samarium from ore mined in Australia. But that factory closed in 1994, partly because of pollution concerns. The factory also could not compete with inexpensive production in Baotou, a city in China's Inner Mongolia region with a history of weak environmental enforcement, even by China's standards.

In 2009, U.S. lawmakers became worried about American dependence on samarium supplies from refineries in Baotou, a flat, dry industrial city at the southern edge of the Gobi Desert. Congress ordered the Defense Department to come up with a plan by the next year to address the issue.

That was before China halted shipments to Japan of all 17 kinds of rare earths for two months in late 2010 as part of a territorial dispute. A \$1 billion American effort began soon after to repair, expand and reopen the sole U.S. rare earths mine, in Mountain Pass, Calif., which had suspended operations in 1998 after a pipeline leak.

Rare earth metals are found all over the world, but seldom in concentrations high enough for efficient mining. They are tightly bound together, and breaking those chemical bonds can require a sequence of 100 or more chemical processes using extremely powerful acids.

The Mountain Pass mine had not previously tried to pry samarium loose from its ore, and did not start doing so as part of its expansion. The mine reopened in 2014, producing other rare earths, but closed a year later and went bankrupt because it could not compete with Chinese production.

Jay Truesdale, a former American diplomat who played a senior role at the State Department on critical minerals policy in 2014 and 2015, said the Obama administration had focused on using World Trade Organization rules to compel China to sell its rare earths.

"There was less of an alarmist perspective at that time, because the W.T.O. was seen as the right and proper arbiter of these issues," said Mr. Truesdale, who is now chief executive of TD International, a Washington consulting firm.

During his first term, President Trump considerably reduced U.S. participation in the W.T.O., and relations with China worsened. When the Biden administration took office, senior officials became more concerned about samarium.

A new company, MP Materials, had acquired the Mountain Pass mine and resumed operations there in 2018. But it initially shipped ore to China for processing.

The Defense Department awarded \$35 million to MP in early 2022 to start production of samarium and several other rare earths that China has now restricted. MP then spent \$100 million, using a lot of its own money, to buy the necessary equipment to process them, said James Litinsky, the company's chief executive.

The Biden administration soon after awarded \$351 million to Australia's Lynas Rare Earths to build a facility in Texas that would also produce samarium.

Mr. Litinsky said the market for samarium was so small that it would be uneconomical to have two producers in the United States. So MP never installed its samarium processing equipment, which is still in storage.

But Lynas never built its Texas factory, after a permit it had for rare earth mining in Malaysia that was in limbo was eventually renewed. Lynas did not respond to emails and phone calls for comment.

MP is willing to install its samarium processing equipment now only if promised better financial terms by customers, Mr. Litinsky noted. “We felt very burnt by the whole thing,” he said.

Keith Bradsher is the Beijing bureau chief for The Times. He previously served as bureau chief in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Detroit and as a Washington correspondent. He has lived and reported in mainland China through the pandemic.

A version of this article appears in print on , Section B, Page 1 of the New York edition with the headline: Western Militaries Desperately Hunt Rare Mineral

Ms. LEE. Mr. Secretary, this article that I just referenced outlines how the Department of Defense paid an Australian firm 10 times more than it paid MP Materials, an American firm, to onshore the full ecosystem of rare earth production. MP, the largest U.S. rare earth producer, has invested \$1 billion of its own capital since 2020 and employs more than 800 Americans. Yet it was undercut by an Australian firm that never even broke ground in the U.S. MP Materials is ready to install their samarium processing equipment and help the U.S. combat China's export controls.

And I want to note that China produces the entire world supply of this obscure rare earth metal that is used almost entirely in military applications because of its heat-resistant—its use in heat-resistance magnets.

So my question is, in accordance with the administration's America First agenda, do you agree that subsidies should first support U.S. companies already investing, hiring, and paying taxes in the United States? And can I have your support in ensuring that the Department critical mineral policies will align with this goal?

Secretary HEGSETH. Ma'am, it is an excellent question. It is something we have been very focused on. In fact, my Deputy Secretary, it is his A number one, is ensuring that sourcing of critical minerals, whether they are heavy or light rare earths, are sourced reliably in America first, and, if not, then amongst allies.

I won't reveal or talk about more than that in a setting like this because we have reserves, and we have capabilities, but at the same time, we have to aggressively work—and MP Materials, Mountain Pass, is a great example of a place where we can partner with industry.

But what does China do? You know this. China undercuts the market intentionally to try to corner the market, and we have to account for that in the things that we support.

Ms. LEE. So the answer is yes; I can have your support?

Secretary HEGSETH. Yes, ma'am.

COLLABORATIVE COMBAT AIRCRAFT

Ms. LEE. Thank you. I also want to turn now to the Collaborative Combat Aircraft.

I represent Las Vegas, Nevada, so we are very excited that the Department will base the CCA unit at Creech Air Force Base, which is the center of excellence in uncrewed aircraft systems. And I want to make sure that the Department has the resources they need to make this program a success.

Last year, the Air Force had to shift \$383 million to the CCA program, plussing it up by 60 percent. Can you assure me that your budget request will fully fund the CCA program this year?

Secretary HEGSETH. Ma'am, it does fully fund the CCA, and we believe in the Collaborative Combat Aircraft, the loyal wingman concept, this idea that you project power more robustly through autonomous, semiautonomous systems that we can—that amplify our lethal effect. So, yes.

Ms. LEE. Thank you. Great. Can you give me an update on the first—what the first flight in the production decision for Increment 1, and are we on track for the flight? When will it be?

And, finally, when do you anticipate the production decision this fiscal year? What quantity of aircraft will we procure? How many vendors will you award, and what factors are you considering?

Secretary HEGSETH. Bryn, feel free to chime in. You are talking about the CCA still, correct?

Ms. LEE. Yes.

Secretary HEGSETH. My understanding is later this year on the flight.

Ms. LEE. Do you know the date?

Secretary HEGSETH. As far as the—I don't know the exact date, ma'am. But, Bryn, you might know.

Ms. MACDONNELL. Yes, ma'am. We can get back to you on the specific date. It should be this fiscal year.

And, for our budget request, it is \$804 million for the Collaborative Combat Aircraft.

Ms. LEE. Great. Thank you. How much time do I have left?

I will just—also, can you then outline what is planned for Increment 2? What type of capabilities can we expect, and what timeline in critical milestones?

Secretary HEGSETH. We will get back to you on that one, ma'am.

Ms. LEE. Okay. Thank you.

With that, I yield.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank the gentlelady.

And I would just like to point out that Mountain Pass is in San Bernardino County, California, one of the only—critical mineral mines only left in the United States. Hopefully, that will change soon.

Mr. Joyce, nope. Mr. Ellzey.

INVESTMENT IN F/A–XX

Mr. ELLZEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Sergeant Major Troy Black, thank you for all your years of service. You have been serving this country since Ronald Reagan was President in 1988.

You leave behind a distinguished career in uniform, wearing that uniform, service to your country. You have served as the senior enlisted adviser to the Commandant of the Marine Corps and now to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

And I think that what will be most missed, if you didn't know this about him, in 2010, he received the Bronze Star with a Combat V for running across several hundred yards of mine-in-place fields to pick up a fallen Marine.

You are a Marine's marine. You will be missed. You are the pride of Louisville, Kentucky, and I would like to say, on behalf of this committee and our Nation, we are grateful and fair winds and following seas.

[Applause.]

Mr. ELLZEY. Secretary Hegseth and General Caine and Ms. MacDonnell, glad you are here. I am personally grateful for your service to our country and for sharing your valuable time with us today.

You bring a nontraditional perspective to your tenure as Chairman, having been a guardsman and an entrepreneur. Thank you for saying "yes" once again when called to serve; also, a Distin-

guished Flying Cross and two Bronze Stars. You didn't get that by sitting behind a desk. You are a fighter pilot's fighter pilot. You helped the plan to bring down Scuds in 2003. So thank you for your service.

And, Mr. Secretary, I want to salute you for your leadership and action-oriented approach at the Pentagon. You have created a sense of urgency that General Caine refers to in his testimony. And, back to the issue of what we are not talking about today, and it is recruitment, because, in this family business, all-volunteer-force of ours, parents and their children who want to serve our country are now no longer afraid to sign up for fear of them being misused or not having their merit being rewarded appropriately. So thank you.

You have also highlighted our service academies in that effort. Mr. Womack and I both serve on the Boards of Visitors at West Point and the Naval Academy, so thank you.

Also appreciate your guidance on using commercial solutions and acquisition and on reducing the inflation that we have seen in the numbers of flag and general officers. And I think we can make the Pentagon a triangle pretty quick.

There are more Navy admirals in the various systems commands than there are in the fleet. That is too many flags in D.C. and not enough at the waterfront or the flight line. Speaking of acquisition, I want to turn to the plans of a sixth-generation fighter.

General Caine, in his prepared statement, states that the F-47 will continue to ensure U.S. air dominance for decades. I am a fervent supporter of not only F-47 but whatever the F/A-XX is going to turn out to be. And I want to make that clear to everyone listening.

Our Navy, our Joint Force, and our future combatant commanders need the Navy's sixth-generation fighter, the F/A-XX. Relying only on the Air Force's sixth-generation fighter does not solve our air superiority challenge because whether they are coming from Guam or Diego Garcia, the DMPIs are already set and the missiles are already guided. It is a nonmoving target. An aircraft carrier moves its DMPI every 30 seconds.

So we can't do either of those with only the Air Force's planned buy. So we either want to win or we don't, and I know we want to win. We have to do it with the F/A-XX.

A 3-year delay is a de facto cancellation and win for China, and they are watching. Don't take my word for it. They are conducting unrestricted warfare against us right now.

And, if you read the Thirty-Six guidelines from the Sixth Century and they talk about how do you defeat an enemy—or Sun Tzu—you defeat them at home with fentanyl, by taking out our military members before they can even join, 70,000 a year. They are being successful in how they are doing unrestricted warfare, and that is exactly what they are conducting.

They are also showing us their sixth-generation aircraft right now. And there is at least three that we know they are working on. We can't give the field to them and say, "Fifth-generation is okay for the Navy, but it is not the Air Force." We must have both.

So several well-informed, well-respected leaders shared with us the importance of having both the Air Force and the Navy sixth-

generation fighters, Admiral Paparo, General Allvin, and Admiral Kilby, acting CNO.

I am not going to put you all on the spot, but I just want to make it clear. If you would like to address it, you may. I am just putting it that it is that important to me.

So what troubles me about the Pentagon needing to be a triangle now is that—one of my favorite movies is “Office Space.” You remember Milton? Milton down there with the Swingline? We are not really sure what he did, but he sure made a lot of trouble for everybody.

I think we have a lot of Miltons in the systems commands and down there in the Pentagon, maybe at CAPE, who are telling you that we can’t do something when we absolutely can. They need to go. So let’s get rid of Milton. Let’s invest in this generational investment.

I would like to thank General Calvert—Chairman Calvert—Chairman Calvert for his investment into the F/A–XX and the bill and present to this subcommittee later today.

So thank you all. Appreciate it.

Mr. CALVERT. Go Navy. Mr. Morelle, you are recognized.

PRESIDENT’S BUDGET REQUEST

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you, General—Chairman. I am grateful for your service and grateful, Mr. Chairman, for the hearing today.

I don’t want to pile on, Mr. Secretary, and I am brandnew to this subcommittee, but I will say that, in the same way we wouldn’t go into battle without knowing the number of troops, weaponry, and the number of armaments, equipment, supplies, it is really almost impossible for this committee to do its job without details from the President, from the Department on a budget request.

So I wonder whether or not we can get a commitment from all of you to come back before the committee when the full—the budget—the President’s budget request has been delivered, so you can answer questions in detail about it?

Secretary HEGSETH. I certainly will make sure you get those details, Congressman.

Mr. MORELLE. Well, getting the details is important, but also being able to answer questions about those details and what they mean, I think, would be helpful. So, obviously, this is the chairman’s decision, but I would ask you to consider coming back before the committee when the President’s budget request is submitted to us so we can get your sense of the various items in it.

I want to go back to a topic I think Ms. Kaptur raised, which is Ukraine, and I really appreciate your comment when you referred to partners on our side like Ukraine—so I am glad we still consider them partners on our side.

UKRAINE

Last week, the Ukraine Defense Contact Group met in Brussels. I know we did not attend; you did not attend. And I don’t believe you appeared even remotely, but that was a meeting which allies coordinated billions in aid to help Ukraine.

We are talking about funding right now without a budget, without a plan, to setting U.S. support in what I consider the most seri-

ous conflict in Europe in a generation. So can you at least give us a sense, Mr. Secretary, of the Presidential drawdown aid authorized through January 20, do you know how much has actually been delivered?

Secretary HEGSETH. Which—

Mr. MORELLE. The Presidential authority that was given through January 20 when the new administration took over.

Secretary HEGSETH. The ongoing PDA 71 through 74 and 75, which has not been allocated. We are in the middle of drawdown 71 through 74—

Mr. MORELLE. Okay. Do you have a sense of how much has actually been delivered?

Secretary HEGSETH. I don't know the exact amount that has been delivered, but we are actively monitoring as well as the life span of certain munitions, munitions which remain critical for us and them and critical for Allied Israel. We are paying very close attention to the—

Mr. MORELLE. Okay. And you can give us the details?

Secretary HEGSETH. Yes, sir.

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you. Do you know whether the Department is prepared to ask for funding for the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative and at what level?

Secretary HEGSETH. It is a reduction in this budget. As you know, this administration takes a very different view of that conflict. We believe that a negotiated peaceful settlement is in the best interest of both parties and our Nation's interest, especially with all the competing interests around the globe.

I don't think the word victory has been well-defined or the path to it. And, as a result, a path to peace that stops the killing and the carnage is something that President Trump is very invested in.

Mr. MORELLE. Well, I would certainly—I think I would define victory as making sure incursions—illegal incursions by the Russian Federation into Ukraine, which is a sovereign nation, would be a victory, but I will leave that aside.

GOLDEN DOME

I want to just touch briefly with the limited time I have, the President's announced \$175 billion Golden Dome that has been talked about, I know that—what has been talked about, we understand that reconciliation includes a \$25 billion downpayment. We haven't really received much in clarity on the specifics.

Can you tell me what the \$25 billion will be used for?

Secretary HEGSETH. Well, sir, there are many specifics that are not fitting for this setting. We are happy to get you at the appropriate level the specifics you request.

But what we have done is we have built out the entire understanding of what the architecture would look like ensuring it includes existing capabilities that could be fielded rapidly, as President Trump has made the case. We need this now, not conceptually in the future.

We had SDI under Ronald Reagan, which was a conceptual, which was a concept. We fast forward to the ability to deliver these things, and the American people deserve that kind of protection.

So multiple layers from multiple different types of threats coordinated with sensors both on the ground and in space at other layers. And we have one of our best Space Force generals fully focused on that project in General Guetlein, who has a background in understanding those types of architectures.

So we have pulled the program up to the Office of Secretary of Defense to make sure it is monitored on a monthly—well, a——

Mr. MORELLE. Can you tell us what the appropriations request will be for Golden Dome in the 2026 fiscal year?

Mr. CALVERT. The gentleman—Ms. MacDonnell, you can get back to us on that——

Ms. MACDONNELL. Yes, sir.

Mr. CALVERT [continuing]. For the record. We appreciate that.

Mr. Fleischmann, you are recognized.

NUCLEAR RECAPITALIZATION

Mr. FLEISCHMANN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to welcome Secretary Hegseth, General Caine and Mrs. MacDonnell. Thank you. This has been an outstanding hearing.

Let me just say this: The world is a dangerous place. The Nation is a dangerous place. Heartfelt thank you to each and every one of you officers stepping up and for doing an exemplary job. Thank you so much.

As most of you know, I represent the Third District of Tennessee. That is the great Oak Ridge Reservation, birthplace of the Manhattan Project.

In addition to serving on this prestigious subcommittee, I am the chairman of the Energy and Water Subcommittee, which has the NNSA. I am deeply involved in the recapitalization and modernization of our Nation's nuclear deterrent.

It will come as no surprise I have concerns about both our progress and posture. Our progress is a concern as we are recapitalizing the entire nuclear deterrent all at once. Meanwhile, Russia has recapitalized its triad minus some bombers, and China is rapidly expanding its numbers and fielding a triad. Of course, there is also North Korea and the looming prospect of a nuclear Iran.

As we focus more on the Pacific or post Cold War posture, it is a concern due to the lack of in-theater nonstrategic nuclear weapons. This creates a deeply worrying capability gap in the most critical theater.

I will ask my questions in this, ask for your answers. First, Secretary Hegseth, given the struggling strategic threat picture, what is your outlook on the current pace and scope of nuclear recapitalization?

And then, General Caine, what are your ideas to fill this nonstrategic nuclear capability gap in the Pacific? Are there any ways Congress can better support the Department's efforts to meet these increasingly tight deadlines?

And I will listen to your responses. Thank you.

Secretary HEGSETH. Sir, thank you. First, if I would just take liberty, both the Chairman and I have taken up almost all the oxygen from Bryn MacDonnell here. I would just take issue with the characterization that we have not delivered a budget and we don't have details and we are not delivering on it. She and her team have

done a fantastic job of working as rapidly and as detailed as possible to deliver what we feel very confidently is a robust, detailed delivery of the President's agenda for fiscal year 2026.

So, Bryn, thank you for the work that you are doing and all the details and focus on that that have come through.

And the nuclear triad is certainly a part of it, NC3, every single aspect of that. Sentinel, with the Nunn-McCurdy breach has to—we are taking a very hard look at that while fully funding it. Columbia†class, critical, B-21, which, for the most part, has been a success story but needs to be continually monitored, as any major platform does, and then the SLCM-N as well, investing in that capability, considering the advantages we have on the submarine side.

So we are fully funding, in fact even more so in most cases, that capitalization and modernization, which we have to, considering what our adversaries are up to.

Mr. FLEISCHMANN. Thank you, sir.

General CAINE. Sir, I just echo the Secretary's comments about nonstrategic nuclear weapons, SLCM-N and the others. And I think it really for me centers around four Cs that we have to do across the enterprise: Change of culture, to get after it faster. That is the first one. We have got to create competition across the continuum and the defense and national industrial base. We need to buy better contracts and get greater capacity.

So no adds other than that, Congressman.

Mr. FLEISCHMANN. Thank you. So, if I may, you all feel reasonably comfortable with the way that we are modernizing our triad?

Secretary HEGSETH. Well, sir, I am not comfortable with the way the Sentinel upgrade had been happening.

Mr. FLEISCHMANN. Understood.

Secretary HEGSETH. With the recognition that it is behind and can't be. And so we are getting at dynamic ways to address that. Different alternatives, our Deputy Secretary and his team are very focused, along with Bryn: What do we fund? Why do we fund it? How do we look at new ways to do it? Because the way we have approached it so far has gotten us nowhere fast.

Mr. FLEISCHMANN. Thank you. By the way, I welcome you all to visit Oak Ridge at any time.

Thank you, and I will yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Aguilar.

NATIONAL GUARD DEPLOYMENTS

Mr. AGUILAR. Thank you, Chairman General Calvert.

Mr. CALVERT. That is right.

Mr. AGUILAR. Thanks to the witnesses for being here.

Mr. CALVERT. Okay, Private, go ahead.

Mr. AGUILAR. The clock is still moving.

Mr. Secretary, I want to express my severe concern with the deployment of the National Guard in Los Angeles without consultation with the State of California. There have been photographs that have shown these troops sleeping on the floor and have not been provided fuel, food, or water by DOD.

How long will this deployment last? And why were we unprepared to provide them basic necessities such as food and water?

Secretary HEGSETH. The commanders and troops on the field are very well-prepared, sir. They responded incredibly rapidly to a deteriorating situation, with equipment and capabilities.

We have made sure, from the top down—as a Secretary of Defense who has been in a unit holding riot shields outside the White House during the chaos of the summer of 2020, I know what it is like to be immediately deployed into a situation like that.

There are moments where you make do as best you can temporarily. But we are ensuring they are housed, fed, water, capabilities in real-time from my office, because I care that much about the California Guard and the Marines and the men and women who are supporting—

Mr. AGUILAR. That wasn't true as of yesterday—

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Our ICE agents on the ground.

Mr. AGUILAR [continuing]. So you should check with your office.

Secretary HEGSETH. It is true every day. And that is a disingenuous—

Mr. AGUILAR. How long will the deployment last?

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Attack that misrepresents how much we care about our troops—

Mr. AGUILAR. How long will the deployment last?

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. And what they are doing to defend ICE agents. I am not going to take the fact that we don't care about the troops. Nobody cares more about the troops at the top than this—

Mr. AGUILAR. Reclaiming my time, Mr. Secretary—

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Secretary and the Chairman and our department.

Mr. AGUILAR [continuing]. How long will the deployment last?

Secretary HEGSETH. We stated very publicly that it is 60 days, because we want to ensure that those rioters, looters, and thugs on the other side assaulting our police officers—

Mr. AGUILAR. What is the estimated cost—

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Know that we are not going anywhere—

Mr. AGUILAR. What is the estimated—

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. We are here to maintain the peace on behalf of law enforcement officers—

Mr. AGUILAR. Mr. Chair—

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. In Los Angeles—

Mr. AGUILAR. Appreciate you answering the question.

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Which Gavin Newsom won't do.

Mr. AGUILAR. What is the estimated cost of the deployment for the Guard and the Marines to L.A.? And where is this funding coming from? Will it be coming from quality-of-life programs—

Secretary HEGSETH. I think—

Mr. AGUILAR [continuing]. That affect our servicemembers or our families—if you want to wait until I finish the question—

Secretary HEGSETH. Before I hand it to—

Mr. AGUILAR [continuing]. Such as updates, housing, and barracks?

Secretary HEGSETH. Before I hand it to Bryn, the insinuation that we are pulling money from housing and barracks in order to fund this is——

Mr. AGUILAR. We are just asking.

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Disingenuous and incorrect.

Mr. AGUILAR. I am just asking.

Secretary HEGSETH. Bryn can give you the numbers, absolutely.

Ms. MACDONNELL. So the current estimated cost is \$134 million, which is largely just TDY cost—travel, housing, food, et cetera.

Mr. AGUILAR. Where is it coming from? That is the cost, but where is it coming from?

Ms. MACDONNELL. Out of their O&M accounts.

Mr. AGUILAR. With the most recent deployment of the Marines, Mr. Secretary, what is the justification for using the military for civilian law enforcement purposes in L.A.? Why are you sending warfighters to cities to interact with civilians?

Secretary HEGSETH. Every American citizen deserves to live in a community that is safe. And ICE agents need to be able to do their job. They are being attacked for doing their job, which is deporting illegal criminals.

That should happen in any city, Minneapolis or Los Angeles. And if they are attacked, that is lawless. And President Trump believes in law and order. So he has every authority, and he has done, mobilizing——

Mr. AGUILAR. He hasn't cited——

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. National Guard or Active Duty troops under U.S. Code——

Mr. AGUILAR. Yeah. Let's talk about——

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. To protect Federal agents——

Mr. AGUILAR. Let's talk about the U.S. Code.

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Agents in their job, which is——

Mr. AGUILAR. Let's talk about U.S. Code. 10——

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Exactly what we are doing, and we are proud to do it.

Mr. AGUILAR. 10 U.S.C.——

Secretary HEGSETH. We are proud to do it.

Mr. AGUILAR. Mr. Secretary, 10 U.S.C. of the U.S. Code, 12406, as a legal basis that the President used, cites three examples and circumstances for the Guard: invasion by a foreign nation, a rebellion or dangerous rebellion against the authority of the Government of the United States, or the President is unable with regular forces to execute the laws of the United States.

Which authority is triggered here to justify the use?

Secretary HEGSETH. I don't know. You just read it yourself, and people can listen themselves, but it sounds like all three to me.

If you have got millions of illegals——

Mr. AGUILAR. You think the President is unable to——

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. And you don't know where they are coming from——

Mr. AGUILAR [continuing]. Execute the laws of the United States?

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. They are waving flags from foreign countries——

Mr. AGUILAR. You just said——

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. And assaulting police officers and law—

Mr. AGUILAR. You just said that the President is unable—

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Enforcement officers, that is a problem.

Mr. AGUILAR [continuing]. To execute the laws of the United States?

Secretary HEGSETH. No. The Governor of California is unable to execute—

Mr. AGUILAR. Well, the Code says—

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. The laws of the United States.

Mr. AGUILAR. The Code says the President—

Secretary HEGSETH. The Governor—

Mr. AGUILAR [continuing]. And you said all three apply.

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Of California has failed to protect his people, along with the mayor of Los Angeles. And so President Trump has said he will protect our agents, and our Guard and Marines are proud to do it.

Mr. AGUILAR. The law also says, Mr. Secretary, that the “orders for these purposes shall be issued through the Governors of the States.”

Secretary HEGSETH. You and I both know that President Trump has all the authorities necessary, and thankfully he is willing to do it, on behalf of the citizens of Los Angeles—

Mr. AGUILAR. You also—

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. On behalf of our ICE agents, on behalf of our country.

Mr. AGUILAR. We have also pulled a billion dollars for the border as well. So this just goes into the same, you know, fund? 134—

Secretary HEGSETH. Congressman, what is the—

Mr. AGUILAR. What did you indicate? 134 million?

I was asking Ms. MacDonnell.

Secretary HEGSETH. Okay.

Mr. AGUILAR. 134 million goes on top of the billion that has been pulled for the border?

Ms. MACDONNELL. So the funding that was pulled for this year was largely in FSRM, and in this budget we are actually looking to plus that funding back up to backfill that for our troops and for their families.

Mr. AGUILAR. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Valadao.

GLOBAL HOUSEHOLD GOODS CONTRACT

Mr. VALADAO. Thank you, Chairman.

Thank you, Secretary, thank you, General, thank you, Ms. MacDonnell, for being here.

I know a lot of things have been asked already, and since I am the bottom of the totem pole in seniority here, all my questions get asked first, so I will hit one that is a little closer to home for me.

Secretary Hegseth, thank you for addressing the challenges military families have faced under the Global Household Goods Contract. I have heard directly from my constituents about these

issues, so I appreciate your direct—I have heard directly from my constituents, so I appreciate your directive to review the contract and raise rates during peak PCS season.

Can you commit to continuing to work with us to monitor the impact and make further improvements as needed?

Secretary HEGSETH. Sir, I appreciate the question.

We heard, as well, the worsening PCS change-of-station process that military members are facing, that the new attempt to reform it had failed. And we got that word quickly.

And when we did that, we didn't try to excuse it away or cover it up; we immediately confronted the process. We fired the person in charge. And we said, we are going to, in this peak season, plus up the amount we reimburse so that families are reimbursed properly. And we use both systems, the legacy system and the new system, to ensure their needs are actually met.

At the end of that process, we will then do a thorough reform of how it actually happens. It hasn't worked for far too long. Everybody knows it. It is about time we take a look at the process.

I mean, think about the things we can deliver in real-time to people in far-flung places across the country and across the world, and you can't reliably move an E4 from California to New York and ensure that the goods get there within a week? That is a failure of the United States military, and we are going to fix it.

DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE

Mr. VALADAO. I appreciate that.

Next question: Secretary Hegseth, with rising tensions involving Russia and China, what steps is the Department taking to ensure our defense industrial base can meet the surge in demands across multiple theaters?

Are we seeing adequate investments in munitions stockpiles, logistics, and supply-chain resilience, and particularly when it comes to critical inputs like rare-earths and other essential minerals?

Secretary HEGSETH. I would just echo exactly what you said. It is because of the urgency of the moment, the reality of the threats we face. The threats that are joining forces in sort of an anti-American, anti-Western bloc are developing capabilities that they are fielding and trying in other theaters to refine them.

The munitions that we have, where we use them, how we procure them, and what we use them for, the supply chain that goes into the materials on those munitions, unfortunately we inherited a Department that didn't pay enough attention to that, that seemed to think sourcing from adversaries was going to be okay in a time of contingency or crisis. We are changing that.

Or were content to make the same munitions we have had in the past because, well, they were made in somebody's district or they were made in somebody's State and that is the way we always do it. We are not doing that anymore. We are making the tough calls based on the threats we face, matching it to the capabilities.

And I am happy to sit in front of every and any committee and explain why we are doing it. Because it is about time; it is about time we challenge that. And that doesn't mean we don't want input. We do want input. We know why people are invested in cer-

tain programs and certain systems. But it is our job to make the tough calls.

And President Trump has asked us to do that. I am willing to make the tough calls, whether it is on personnel, systems, platforms, modernization, and partner with folks like General Caine and the Joint Staff, who have been with us on every step of the way.

HYPERSONICS AND MUNITIONS

Mr. VALADAO. I appreciate that.

I have a little more time, so, Secretary Hegseth, as the Department looks to stay ahead of near-peer threats, will the defense budget continue to invest in hypersonic weapons and defense systems, including unmanned, high-mach, and next-gen aviation technologies?

Secretary HEGSETH. The answer is, yes, in a way, unfortunately, the previous administration did not.

So, if you are looking at—long-range fires, autonomous systems, hypersonics are part of warfare—long-range drones—are part of the warfare of the future. That means we are investing in them to be better than our adversaries. Not accept the fact that we have matching capabilities, but what more can we do to enhance those so we are ahead of the curve?

Because when President Trump says we have the best platforms, the best systems, the best fighters, the best ships, the best vehicles, he means it, and we mean business on it, and we are going to deliver it.

Mr. VALADAO. All right. Thank you.

And I have 30 seconds. So, General Caine, if Congress had 1 extra dollar to invest today most effectively to strengthen our deterrence posture against China, Russia, and threats in the Middle East, where should it go? Twenty seconds.

General CAINE. Wow. I am going to take 19 of those, Congressman.

Probably—probably in munitions. I don't know how much we would buy for \$1, but I would want to make sure that the joint force is properly armed, at scale, at the tactical edge, and the youngsters that volunteer to serve have what they need.

Mr. VALADAO. I appreciate that.

Thank you, Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Joyce.

PREPOSITIONED STOCKS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

Mr. JOYCE. Thank you, Chairman.

Secretary, everybody, I appreciate it. We had to go out to other—you won't believe this, but there are other hearings taking place. So I went over to bug Secretary Turner and now came back, so it is your turn.

Secretary Hegseth, your April 30th memo on Army transformation and acquisition reform directs the Army to expand prepositioned stocks of equipment to the Indo-Pacific. I expect we would need to enhance our industrial-base capacity to support this effort.

Could you discuss the importance of increasing prepositioned stocks in the Indo-Pacific and how this affects the Army's resources for fiscal year 2026?

Secretary HEGSETH. It is a great question, because it marries up two things that need to be linked and synched and often aren't—right?—the capabilities that we have in the priority theater and where we preposition those capabilities.

So my job exists on multiple axes of that. One is working with allies and partners to make sure we have places to preposition them—

Mr. JOYCE. Uh-huh.

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. Many of which we can't talk about here today. But in the event of a contingency, we can't be relying on a supply chain that reaches all the way back to the States or even to Hawaii or even to Guam. You need to recognize the prepositioning of stocks.

But then you have to have those stocks, and they have to be the relevant ones for the systems that you are deploying, and you need a defense industrial base to deliver on that. Which is why we have made historic investments in munitions, focusing on priority munitions that would be applied in our priority theater, with a recognition that every munition we spend somewhere else—and I say that as someone who—very proudly. We conducted a very successful freedom-of-navigation campaign against the Houthis to ensure that our ships don't—and, by the way, two of our ships transited the BAM successfully and the cease-fire held, very recently.

So it doesn't mean you don't expend munitions. You judiciously expend them, with an understanding that you have to safeguard others for future fights and prepositioning, and then invest in your industrial base.

And I think that is why you see a budget with a 13-percent increase. A 13-percent increase in a defense budget is significant and allows us to both invest in the President's priorities and fast-track munitions that we are going to need.

CONTESTED LOGISTICS CAPABILITIES

Mr. JOYCE. For a guy chairing a committee that has to cut his by 57 percent, I can tell you that being plus-13 is a lucky day.

General Caine, our forces face growing challenges sustaining operations across contested environments, particularly in the Indo-Pacific. China is investing in capabilities designed to disrupt supply lines, access to forward operating bases, and target critical logistics nodes.

What steps are you taking to strengthen contested logistics capabilities? And what investments can Congress make to ensure that you have operational resilience?

General CAINE. Well, Congressman, thanks for the question.

You know, history tells us that the professionals talk about logistics. And that is what was the big differentiator between us and our adversaries in World War II, was really the logistics power.

You know, our teammates within the joint force are looking carefully at this right now. And as we look at the adversaries' threat arrays that they have and our ability to defeat them and move the

combat capacity that we need to through those difficult places is a key part of that.

I don't have a specific number for you, but what I will commit is, as we think through what contested logistics looks like, as we think through what forward supply points on the First and Second Island Chain might look like, we will stay close with the committee to make sure that we are communicating early, often, and always about what our needs are.

Mr. JOYCE. Well, I certainly appreciate that.

And I would throw out that, having a small Air Force Reserve airport in Youngstown, Ohio, area—

General CAINE. Some great C-130Js up there—

Mr. JOYCE. Thank you.

General CAINE [continuing]. Congressman. Yeah. Yeah.

Mr. JOYCE. Appreciate the help on their fire department for the new inventory we got.

But the old stuff we had there, you had maybe eight planes. They were cannibalizing three to feed the five, because we didn't have parts in storage—

General CAINE. Yes, sir.

Mr. JOYCE [continuing]. And those type of things.

And I think that has played out in other areas for us as well. And we need to not only make sure we have the manufacturing industrial base but we also have the ability to have the parts and inventory to keep all those things on line, or we have to remove them from service.

General CAINE. Yes, sir. I know General Allvin and the team at the Air Force is looking hard at that, too, to make sure that we have the right stuff on the shelf prior to that we need, not just in the C-130 community but the other airframes within the Air Force and, frankly, the joint force.

Parts are always going to be a driver. And I am really encouraged by the innovation that is happening to look at things like additive manufacturing, where we get a hold of the specs from companies like Lockheed and others and can just 3D-print right on the spot the requirement.

Mr. JOYCE. Those have to be in any procurement you do from now on that—

General CAINE. Yes, sir. I think so, sir. You know, the force of the future will fix on the spot, so they will need to be able to have the parts right there.

And as we look at mission command and delegating authorities and responsibilities to our younger commanders and, you know, complex command-and-control problems, part of that is going to be the ability to sustain our force out there at the edge.

Mr. JOYCE. Thank you very much, General.

General CAINE. Yes, sir. Thank you.

Mr. JOYCE. I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. And thinking of logistics, it made me think-of—what was it?—General Marshall, who went out in the 1930s and met with a young lieutenant colonel and said, “He is the best logistics officer I have ever met.” And that was General Eisenhower. Three years later, he was a four-star general. So logistics are important.

Mr. Aderholt, you are recognized.

GOLDEN DOME INITIATIVE

Mr. ADERHOLT. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thanks, everyone, for being here this morning.

And as we wrap up the hearing today, let me say that the Golden Dome initiative represents, in my opinion, a substantial investment in our national security. And I credit this administration in pursuing this bold project, and I share your ambition for it. So thank you for moving forward on that.

I want to follow up with my—from my colleague from New York. The President has said that he has chosen an option that will total \$175 billion. Can you confirm that number? And when do you hope to make this system of systems operational?

Secretary HEGSETH. I will have Bryn confirm it, but our belief is that 175 is the totality, that this is the initial investment, but that a lot of the investment will eventually be in systems, some of which are already in production, and we will need to ramp up the production of them.

Because the President has charged us with having this mission-capable by the end of his term. This is not something that is futuristic. This is not something that will happen in some distant future based on some technology we don't yet have or can't field.

Our approach to Golden Dome will be making sure we can procure existing layers that can talk to each other, with new layers on top, because this is a layered system, as was mentioned—

Mr. ADERHOLT. Uh-huh.

Secretary HEGSETH [continuing]. To include drones as well, in partnership with the services.

So can you confirm that, Bryn?

Ms. MACDONNELL. Yes, sir. Nothing to add. That is all accurate.

And we are still planning towards what the final number is, but the \$24.8 billion we are requesting this year is that downpayment on the near-term capabilities that we are looking at as part of the architecture.

AUKUS PARTNERSHIP

Mr. ADERHOLT. Okay. Thank you.

Let me switch over, and I would like to get your thoughts on the AUKUS partnership, not merely as a cornerstone for our Indo-Pacific defense strategy but also as an opportunity for our defense industrial base.

And, in fact, we have heard from a lot of Australian and U.K. businesses who are ready, willing, and able to move production to the U.S. given the new regulatory framework under Pillar 2. Britain and Australia set the standard for defense cooperation, bringing real capability and firepower to the fight.

Can you preview how this administration intends to fund Pillar 2 efforts to develop and field joint capabilities between all three partners?

Secretary HEGSETH. It is a great question, sir.

I have spent a great deal of time with both Minister of Defence Marles from Australia as well as Secretary of Defence Healey from

the U.K. to really get our arms around what would be mutually beneficial in this trilateral arrangement.

So there is the recognition with Australia in Pillar 1 that they are investing in our industrial defense base. We want to provide them capabilities. We want to make sure those capabilities are part of how they use them, with submarines, but also how they integrate with us as allies.

In Pillar 2, we don't want to rely just on the architecture of the previous administration. We are looking at sort of the opportunity for a signature program or programs we can work on together that benefit all three that create processes or procurement opportunities of systems we need for future fights. And we have had—in fact, as recently as last week, I spoke with Secretary Healey about that.

And we are looking for those one or two signature programs. We have a menu of options. We are at the point where we will get to right-sizing it and determining it.

Mr. ADERHOLT. And you feel, at this point, that things are on track and you are——

Secretary HEGSETH. That is what we are monitoring, especially in Pillar 1, sir, to make sure that expectations are properly set so that we are not, you know, missing deadlines or expectations are shifted in the wrong direction.

So we are having honest conversations with our allies like we should, with a recognition that by investing in each other and that defense industrial base we can have a multiplying effect.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Thank you.

I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentleman.

Ms. McCollum, any closing statement?

PROVIDE BUDGET INFORMATION

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Just—yes. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

So, to Mr. Aguilar's question—and, Ms. MacDonnell, you were helping to fill in the blanks—the money is coming from FSRM—and that is about a 25-percent cut to that budget—to fill on what is happening on the border and now what is happening in Los Angeles.

So if you could get us the details of what is not going to happen in that account because of that, that would be fabulous. We might want to look and see if we prioritize things in next year's budget to make sure that they are covered.

Mr. Secretary, the top line on the budget before us is \$830 billion. It is not \$901 billion. It is just not. That is the number we have to work with.

You can talk about an increase. You have a lot of things baked in. Hopefully, that goes in reconciliation. Six billion dollars for revitalizing shipyards; 3.5 for F-47s; 25 for Golden Dome. But that is all in reconciliation, and we can't include that in any of our planning. And that is why we are so concerned about getting the money breakouts in front of this committee.

And I will give you an example. The Navy, their J-Books where they break everything down—I know you are really familiar with them—we had 30 of them in front of us when we were getting

ready to do our appropriation last time. We have zero in front of us this time.

So, you know, Mr. Secretary, I know—I believe, honestly believe, you want to provide the information, but time is of the essence, because this committee wants to do its best work, together, both Democrats and Republicans, to make sure the women who serve in our Armed Forces have the equipment that they need to do the missions that they are assigned to and come home safely, because we honor their service and their commitment.

Get us the information.

Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentlelady.

And I would just make—so where we are going to agree, that we need some more detailed information.

We are going to go ahead and—we are going to go upstairs here and do the subcommittee mark, but then later this week we are going to do the full committee mark on this bill.

The Senate is pushing off doing their appropriation bills in general until after reconciliation passes, because they want to incorporate that. But we don't have the luxury of time. We will just have to work out the differences we have in conference.

But it is hard for us to do our job without the J-Books, without the detailed information. And I know you know that.

And so you might talk to your friends at OMB and—if OMB has any friends; I don't know if they do—and see if they can get this going for us, because that would be very helpful.

With that, Mr. Secretary, thank you; Chairman, thank you; and, Ms. MacDonnell, thank you. We appreciate all of you being here today.

We are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:49 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

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Responses to Questions from the Record (Redacted)
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense Oversight Hearing
Secretary of War Peter B. Hegseth
June 10, 2025

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing—The Department of Defense

1. Secretary Hegseth, General Leonard Wood Army Community Hospital serves a vital role of ensuring a robust quality of life for our servicemembers, families, retirees, and the community both at and surrounding Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. However, I am aware that the Defense Health Agency has proposed plans to rescope General Leonard Wood Army Community Hospital from a hospital to a clinic. **Does the Director, Defense Health Agency, in conjunction with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, intend to rescope the General Leonard Wood Army Community Hospital to a clinic?**

Response: The Department is reviewing where to optimally assign its military medical personnel to ensure the readiness of the force, while sustaining quality and patient safety. In addition, we are iteratively reviewing the structure and laydown of military medical capabilities to optimize for readiness. This review is anticipated to conclude in late 2025.

2. **As part of the Military Health System stabilization and optimization efforts, can you explain the Department's process for assessing potential modifications to the scope of medical services at military medical treatment facilities?**

Response: The Department's process for assessing potential modifications to the scope of medical services at military medical treatment facilities (MTFs) is conducted through the lens of readiness - both the readiness of the total force and the readiness of the medical force. The process includes coordination within the Defense Health Agency, within the MTF, with Defense Health Network, and with Headquarters, particularly with the TRICARE Health Plan and Strategic Communications, as well as with the military departments and the Joint Staff. It also takes into consideration the requirement for delivering care in areas where the private sector health care network may be insufficient to meet the needs of our Service members and families. The assessment also takes into consideration the requirements in section 1073d(t) of title 10, U.S. Code, particularly with respect to the consultation with the commander of the military installation where the MTF is located.

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The Honorable Betty McCollum
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing—The Department of Defense

3A. The Administration has proposed a parade for the Army's 250th celebration on June 14th (the same day as President Trump's birthday). It is estimated to cost anywhere between \$25 and \$45 million dollars; as of today, the Administration has not provided the source for payment for this parade. Notably, this year will also mark the 250th birthdays for the Marines and the Navy. Mr. Secretary, at the end of this week, the Army will be holding a parade to celebrate their 250th birthday. **Since the Army parade is an unbudgeted expense, can you please advise where the funds for the Army parade will be sourced from? What activities, programs, exercises are being cancelled for this event?**

Response: The Army internally realigned resources to support the commemoration of its 250th birthday. Those resources were derived from lower-priority requirements and under-execution caused by extended Continuing Resolution in FY 2025. These adjustments were carefully assessed to ensure no adverse impact on critical readiness, operational capabilities, or modernization priorities. No programs, activities, or exercises were canceled to facilitate this commemoration.

3B. The repair of barracks and other quality of life issues are a priority for the Administration and for Congress. I'm concerned that the Army will utilize the facilities sustainment, repair and modernization line to pay for this parade. **Can I have your assurances that will not happen?**

Response: The Army remains committed to ensuring the quality of life of our soldiers, and the FSRM program continues to be a critical component of that commitment. The 250th Army birthday celebrations will not impact or delay any scheduled or ongoing barracks FSRM projects.

3C. From what I understand, this estimate does not include repairs or restoration of roads or infrastructure damaged by Army vehicles. **Can you advise how those issues are being addressed and/or mitigated?**

Response: The Army has pledged to reimburse the District of Columbia for verified damages resulting from the June 14, 2025, parade. As of this response, no damage has been identified along the parade route; however, there was damage to approximately 25 sections of curb near the vehicle staging area. The Army will work with the National Park Service, who will provide an estimate to repair the damages. The estimate has not been received. Final reimbursements will be coordinated with the D.C. Department of Transportation, National Park Service, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

3D. Since the Navy and the Marine Corps are also celebrating their 250th birthdays, when will we have the Administration's announcement about their commemorations?

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Response: Thank you for your continued support for the Department of the Navy and our 250th birthday celebration. Planning for the event remains underway, and we are engaged in careful deliberations to ensure a fitting commemoration.

4A. From the last update provided to Congress, there are over 9,000 troops at the U.S./Mexico border from over a half a dozen units across the different services. The Defense Department announced on June 3rd that they would be detailing an unknown number of Department of Defense civilian personnel to the Department of Homeland Security to "support its operations at the United States southern border and with internal immigration enforcement." According to the Customs and Border Patrol website, the number of migrants crossing the border at the end of April was 12,035. I understand that \$1 billion was moved from the Army's FSRM account to cover some costs but that doesn't seem to address the full cost. **Mr. Secretary, how much are the total costs of the deployment to date and through September 30th?**

Response: As of July 29, 2025, the total cost of border security operations, including deployments, is \$831.2 million. The total cost estimate of border security operations through September 30, 2025, is \$1.2 billion.

4B. Mr. Secretary, can you please advise as to how the Department is covering the total costs of the deployment of over 9000 Service personnel to the border?

Response: The Military Departments have internally sourced the cost of deployment operations through the Operation and Maintenance and Military Personnel accounts.

4C. When will the Department send the reprogramming to cover all of these costs?

Response: The Department incorporated the necessary realignments for border security operations into the FY 2025 spend plan required by section 1422 of the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (P.L. 119-4), which was submitted to the Appropriations Committees on May 8, 2025.

4D. What are the activities that were originally planned for execution of these funds and when are they going to be funded?

Response: The Military Departments internally sourced the cost of deployment operations through the Operation and Maintenance (O&M) accounts. Funding was sourced from facilities sustainment, restoration, and modernization projects, which limited the wider impact on critical defense programs. Also, the deferred FY 25 FSRM projects would be delayed by a few months, but they can still be funded in FY 26.

5A. On May 20th, President Trump announced plans to construct the "Golden Dome," a multi-billion-dollar missile defense system. This has been defined as a comprehensive missile-defense system to protect the United States, and Canada, from threats launched

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across land, sea and space platforms. The President stated it would cost a total of \$175 billion and be finished in three years. However, CBO estimates that the cost could rise to as much as \$831 billion over two decades. Mr. Secretary, I understand that the Reconciliation bill has included about \$25 billion for "Golden Dome" projects/programs - **what will those funds be used for if the bill is enacted?**

5B. What will the FY 26 appropriations/discretionary fund request for Golden Dome projects and programs be and what will those funds be used for?

5A and 5B Responses: Answer is CUI and will be provided separately.

5C. Of the total program, how much research and development has already been finished for this program?

Response: Answer is CUI and will be provided separately.

5D. We received notice that the Golden Dome Industry Summit Day scheduled for June 11th has been cancelled. Can you share with us why it was cancelled?

Response: Answer is CUI and will be provided separately.

6A. From previous discussions with the Administration, and from a report the Committee received on April 1st, we are under the impression that presidential drawdown packages approved by the previous administration are still on track. However, we do not believe the Administration will be requesting funds for Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (-\$300M). **Mr. Secretary, is the Administration continuing to provide security assistance to Ukraine?**

Response: It remains a priority of the President and Secretary of Defense to bring an end to the war in Ukraine, on terms that support an enduring peace. The Department is continuing to encourage European allies and partners to provide additional capabilities and funding to fill Ukrainian requirements. While the Administration does continue to deliver security assistance to Ukraine, the Department of War framework to support POTUS and Secretary of Defense evaluation of provision of aid remains active and is essential to supporting America First defense priorities.

6B. Can you advise how much funding from the presidential drawdown packages approved through January 20, 2025, has been expended and provided to the Government of Ukraine?

Response: Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA) does not provide funding for Ukraine assistance; rather, it allows the Department of War to provide defense articles to Ukraine from DoW stocks. From February 2022 to January 2025, a total of 74 PDA packages were announced for Ukraine. Deliveries of certain munitions from those packages are ongoing, as well as of capabilities that required repair before transfer.

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6C. Given the fact that Putin seems to be stringing along both Ukraine and the United States in the "peace talks" does the Administration plan to continue to provide Security Assistance to Ukraine?

Response: The Department of War continues to provide the President with robust options regarding security assistance to Ukraine, consistent with his goal of bringing this tragic war to an end. Options developed by the Department fully support and align with the President's efforts to culminate the war and secure an enduring peace.

6D. Operation SpiderWeb is being dubbed the new Pearl Harbor - something that will be studied for years to come. How are you leading the Department to secure our assets and how much funding are you setting aside for security of assets in the FY 26 bill?

Response: The Department is working on several Counter-Small Unmanned Aerial Systems (C-sUAS) competitive efforts to outpace the threat as part of its layered homeland defense strategy. DoW regularly reviews and incorporates lessons learned from recent events, such as the recent Ukrainian operation, to better develop and procure capabilities now for ongoing operations and future conflicts. The Department is working to acquire not only hardware that addresses the threat posed by the sUAS we see today but also threat capabilities that will evolve over time. Future budget requests will take into consideration this evolving sUAS threat shaped by real-world events.

7A. Secretary Hegseth, you have just returned from travel to Singapore for the International Institute for Strategic Studies Shangri-La Dialogue (a global security conference) and pointedly called out "Communist China" for its military buildup. China posited that Secretary Hegseth is touting a "Cold War" mentality between the United States and China. The Reconciliation Act includes an additional \$11 billion dollars for activities and programs focused on the INDOPACOM area of operations. Mr. Secretary, you tout a 13% increase in defense spending for FY 26 due to the possible passage of the Reconciliation Act combined with the passage of the FY 26 defense appropriations request. But a Reconciliation bill is one-time funding, and you won't be able to rely on that influx of funding in perpetuity. **How are you going to ensure that the buildup of forces, equipment and programs is sustained on the discretionary budget?**

Response: The One Big Beautiful Bill Act, combined with the expected annual defense appropriation, provides the Department of Defense a historic increase in defense spending for a number of priority efforts that the American people voted for, including rebuilding our military, developing the Golden Dome, restoring our readiness, and making substantial investments in shipbuilding, to include combatants, logistical, and auxiliary vessels, as well as our industrial base. Whether the DoW is funded through discretionary or mandatory appropriations, the President's Budget will always request sufficient funding to ensure that our forces, equipment, and programs support our national security priorities.

7B. If Reconciliation isn't enacted, how will you alter your FY 26 budget to ensure that INDOPACOM receives what it needs - and what other theaters will have to decrease if they

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increase?

Response: The Department received \$156.2 billion in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (P.L. 119-21), which included over \$12.6 billion for INDOPACOM. The Department's FY 2026 Budget Request further integrated INDOPACOM and other theaters' operational needs to address the total requirement, ensuring sustained investment in regional deterrence through missile defense, precision strike capabilities, and joint force interoperability.

7C. The focus of your remarks was alerting the region of the threat China represents; do you believe you gained any supporters with your remarks?

Response: Our Asian allies have long understood the threat China poses to the region and the world. In my remarks, I encouraged them to rapidly increase their own defense spending and capabilities to shoulder more of the burden of deterring China. NATO allies have committed to five percent of GDP on defense spending, and our Asian allies and partners should do the same.

7D. Do you feel your rhetoric in any way escalated tensions between the United States and China, or accelerate President Xi's ambitions to take back Taiwan?

Response: My public statements, including in my speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue, continue to highlight the Department of Defense's balanced, commonsense approach to the region. Our message is clear: the United States, especially under President Trump, does not seek war. We will be ready to protect U.S. interests, but we will not be reckless. We also need our allies and partners to do more for the collective defense of the region.

8A. When is a gift not gift? So the Department may spend a billion dollars modifying this older plane with a fancy interior, fly it for a few years and then turn it over to the Presidential Library?

Response: Consistent with the Memorandum of Understanding signed on July 7, 2025, by the Secretary of Defense and a representative from the Qatari Ministry of Defense, the Qatari government offered the subject aircraft to the Department without any conditions. The Secretary lawfully accepted the gift pursuant to 10 U.S.C. § 2608.

8B. [Re. Qatari 747] You do understand that should anything go wrong with that plane, you'll be to blame. Setting aside the terrible optics and ethics - why are you comfortable doing this?

Response: The Department is grateful for this gift from the Qatari government, which will fill a critical resource gap for the Presidential support mission. The Department is taking prudent steps to ensure the platform meets essential security and operational capability requirements.

9A. [Re. Sentinel] What are you doing to bring down the average cost per unit on the air

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vehicles, the average cost for the launch facilities, and the average cost on the launch centers?

Response: The Air Force has proposed an outline of potential restructure actions, which include changes to the organization, manpower and personnel, requirements, systems engineering and business processes, contract strategy, acquisition approach, and an in-depth industrial base study. The Air Force will continue to refine these proposals and obtain approval for the restructured program at a new Milestone B, which is planned for Spring 2027. Further timeline details will be available after the updated acquisition strategy is approved later this year.

9B. [Re. Sentinel] And by taking money out of the program this year, does that mean you are going to be coming back for even more later in future years?

Response: The Department views the proposed budget identified in the Nunn-McCurdy process as a topline, and the program is working hard to reduce costs. As the Air Force develops its Acquisition Strategy for the restructured program, part of that process involves determining the costs for any changes to the Sentinel program's contracts and contracting strategy. Any trades will be cost informed.

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The Honorable John Carter
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing—The Department of Defense

10A. Secretary Hegseth and General Caine, accelerating innovation in energetic materials and in the DIB is a priority of the Department. How does the Department plan to meaningfully diversify the industrial base, attract non-traditional defense companies, and modernize legacy production lines.

Response: Industry partners are essential to the defense industrial base (DIB) and play a critical role in supporting national security and driving innovation. The Department's National Defense Industrial Strategy (NDIS) and implementation plan outline four interconnected priorities, resilient supply chains, workforce readiness, modernizing production, and demand predictability, each containing specific goals and actions that diversify the industrial base, attract non-traditional defense companies, and modernize legacy production lines. This includes lowering barriers to entry, promoting competition, investing in domestic capacity, leveraging commercial technologies, providing seed funding, fostering collaboration, protecting intellectual property, investing in workforce development, adopting advanced manufacturing technologies, providing predictable demand signals, and providing a single point of entry and unified management approach for our industry partners. The key is a coordinated effort across all four pillars of the NDIS to create a more resilient, innovative, and competitive defense industrial base.

10B. Secretary Hegseth and General Caine, what are the Service components doing to provide Multispectral Signature Management for their servicemembers and to protect combat capability against targeting by the expanded threat of multispectral sensors?

Response: Service components are implementing Multispectral Signature Management (MSM) for their service members and protecting combat capability against multispectral sensors through the following actions:

- **Training and Awareness:** MSM is being integrated into all levels of training, from basic combat training to advanced leadership courses. This includes teaching service members how to identify and mitigate their multispectral signatures in various environments and operational scenarios, using simulations and virtual reality for realistic training. Emphasis is placed on understanding enemy sensor capabilities and tactics.
- **Materiel Solutions:** The Services are employing advanced camouflage materials and concealment techniques to reduce the visibility of personnel and equipment across the electromagnetic spectrum. This includes the use of multispectral camouflage nets, specialized paints and coatings, and personal concealment systems. These materials are continuously evaluated and improved based on field testing and operational feedback.

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The Honorable Jake Ellzey
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing—The Department of Defense

11. As I alluded to in my intro, I very much respect and appreciate your focus on service academies and ensuring their practices across the recruitment, education and development spectrum keep the military ethos and lethality at the forefront. Having had the privilege to be appointed to the U.S. Naval Academy Board of Visitors, I've been able to learn even more about the admissions process. As it turns out, the U.S. Naval Academy is the only service academy where the Director of Admissions is a civilian. Title 10 directs that the admissions director at the Air Force Academy and Military Academy are unformed officers. Additionally, this difference does not seem to have yielded measurably better results for USNA. Having a commissioned officer with recent operational and strategic experience is exactly what we need when making decisions about the next generation of leaders. **What is the Department of Defense doing to standardize admissions across the service academies? Do you have longitudinal data *across 20 years* to show that a civilian admissions director makes a significant difference in recruiting future warfighters? What can Congress do to assist you?**

Response: The Department has mandated that Military Service Academies (MSA) base admissions exclusively on merit and remains steadfast in its pursuit of excellence and the highest standards. We are not aware of any longitudinal studies on the impact of a civilian admissions director but have found that the MSA consistently attract and select highly talented candidates from across the nation.

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The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing—The Department of Defense

12. When it comes to war in the Pacific, our fuel supply will perhaps be the most critical resource before even munitions to sustain operations. In terms of bulk fuel distribution, I am concerned about our preparedness to conduct sustained convoy operations to distribute fuel where it's needed. This mission has languished as the AOE ships are reduced and our MSC force is undermanned. For ground installation energy needs, I am encouraged by innovative solutions, such as Project Pele, that can provide sustained base operations or weapon energy in austere environments. The foundation of our success across the Pacific will be dependent on our ability to supply our forces. **Secretary Hegseth, what is your assessment of our ability to sustain the energy and fuel needs of our forces in a protracted conflict in the Pacific? What changes or investments can we expect from the Department to sustain operations in a protracted war?**

Response: The Department is working to meet energy and fuel requirements in the Indo-Pacific to sustain the energy needs of U.S. forces. Currently in the INDOPACOM area of responsibility, the Department maintains 55 Defense Fuel Support Points, utilizing into-plane and stock reserve contracts, and fuels exchange arrangements, to provide options across INDOPACOM. Based on INDOPACOM's validated requirements, DLA Energy awarded two new Contractor Owned, Contractor Operated contracts, with projected full operational capability in FY26. The Department will continue investing in the ability to sustain energy and fuel operations during a protracted conflict and to fulfill our mission to project power globally. Additionally, we are considering adding additional Navy tanker capabilities to support the Joint Force in future wartime scenarios.

13A. Our national lab system provides significant value to the range of innovative technologies and industrial processes. From new materials to supercomputing to additive manufacturing, the Defense Department must be engaged in the innovation ecosystem. I recognize and applaud the footprint our military has in RDT&E through installations such as the Arnold Engineering Development Complex. However, I am concerned that facilities like Arnold, built in 1950, have not received the focus or funding needed to remain at the forefront of innovation. We cannot be complacent in this field; we will soon be too far behind to catch up. **Secretary Hegseth, how is the Department ensuring it is properly leveraging the multitudes of innovations being developed in our national labs, universities, and research departments? What lessons from successful public-private partnerships can be applied to DoD modernization?**

13B. How will your Department support defense innovations through the legacy acquisitions processes?

13A and 13B Response: Rebuilding our military is one of my priorities and acquisition reform is a key part of that. Transforming the traditional way the Department does acquisition by emphasizing agility, innovation, and efficiency is helping shift away from the legacy acquisition process and toward a model that will move at the pace of commercial

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technological advancement. Some of those transformations include:

- The Department's implementation of the President's executive order on Modernizing Defense Acquisitions and Spurring Innovation, which includes expanding contracting mechanisms like commercial solutions openings and other transaction authorities to enable innovative contracting strategies.
- Implementation of my memo Directing Software Acquisition to Maximize Lethality to maximize use the Software Acquisition Pathway model to timely field software-driven capabilities under an iterative approach.
- Implementation of my memo for comprehensive Army reform to deliver critical warfighting capabilities, optimize force structure, and eliminate waste and obsolete programs.
- Implementation of my memo for Transforming the Defense Acquisition System into the Warfighting Acquisition System to Accelerate Fielding of Urgently Needed Capabilities to Our Warriors
- Implementation of my memo for Reforming the Joint Requirements Process to Accelerate Fielding of Warfighting Capabilities
- Implementation of my memo for "Unifying the Department's Arms Transfer and Security Cooperation Enterprise to Improve Efficiency and Enable Burden-Sharing
- Implementation of Acquisition Transformation Strategy to ensure we rapidly deliver relevant and effective solutions at scale to address warfighting needs

14A. The US base in Diego Garcia has long been a lynchpin for power projection across the Indian Ocean, Middle East, Africa, and South Asia. The island houses one of America's pre-positioned military equipment stockpiles, the runway is capable of hosting USAF heavy bombers, the port supports visiting American and allied ships and subs, and the islands' various pieces of intelligence infrastructure provides unparalleled coverage in this vast region. Just last month, the UK government agreed to cede the sovereignty of the archipelago to Mauritius, with a 99-year lease provided for Diego Garcia. I am deeply concerned about the CCP's ability to gain a foothold in the archipelago and jeopardize our strategic advantage. **Secretary Hegseth, from a strategic point of view, how does the change of status affect our use of Diego Garcia?**

Response: Navy Support Facility Diego Garcia is a vital military base for the United States. Following a comprehensive interagency review and extensive engagement with the United Kingdom, the Trump Administration determined that the U.K.-Mauritius agreement ensures the long-term, secure, and effective operation of the joint U.S.-UK military facility at Diego Garcia. The United States worked closely with U.K. officials to ensure the U.K. agreement with Mauritius secures the operational access capabilities of the base and key U.S. national security interests in the region.

14B. What can we anticipate INDOPACOM to do to protect from CCP signals intelligence operations near the base?

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Response: The Department takes the protection of U.S. forces located overseas, including at Diego Garcia, seriously, but specific defensive measures against foreign intelligence activities are not appropriate for discussion in an unclassified forum. The Department employs a comprehensive set of operational security, counterintelligence, and electromagnetic-protection practices to safeguard personnel, infrastructure, and mission systems, and these measures are continually updated to address evolving threats. We remain confident in the robustness of these protections and in our close coordination with our foreign partners. The Department would be happy to provide additional detail in a classified setting.

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The Honorable David Valadao
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing—The Department of Defense

15. With the F-15EX recapitalization now prioritized for Selfridge, what is the Department's current plan for recapitalizing the Fresno-based 144th Fighter Wing of the Air National Guard? Given Fresno's strategic location as a key component of our deterrence posture in the Indo-Pacific, how does the Department intend to ensure the 144th is equipped with modern and mission-capable aircraft?

Response: Fresno Air National Guard Base (ANGB) is in the queue to recapitalize their Aerospace Control Alert (ACA) mission with F-15EXs as aging F-15Cs are retired. The planned first arrival aircraft is in FY28. To mitigate risk in the interim, the Air Force has consolidated what they call "Platinum Eagles" at Fresno ANGB. These are the most mission-capable F-15Cs from the remaining fleet. The Platinum Eagles have remaining service life to operate into FY31, ensuring continued ACA mission execution until they can be replaced with new F-15EX deliveries, regardless of any decisions related to Selfridge's basing timeline.

16. With your recent directive to cancel the Global Household Goods Contract, what is the Department's long-term strategy to improve the Permanent Change of Station (PCS) system? Specifically, how will the Department ensure that service members and their families do not continue to experience delays, disruptions, or undue stress during future relocations?

Response: As Secretary, one of my greatest responsibilities is to support our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Guardians, civilians, and their families who serve our country. Relocating our personnel is critical to the military mission, putting human resources and expertise where they are needed to defend the Nation. In May and June 2025, I established the Permanent Change of Station Joint Task Force (PCS JTF) and provided it with unique authorities to develop short- and long-term recommendations to improve the overall PCS process. The PCS JTF successfully navigated through the 2025 peak moving season and minimized household goods related delays, disruptions, or undue stress. The PCS JTF briefed me on a recommended strategic path forward, and I directed the PCS JTF to continue until 31 August 2026, or until the establishment of a permanent organization. I also directed the PCS JTF to provide a resource-loaded assessment and implementation timeline by 15 December 2025 of options for a future organizational structure to implement the necessary enduring reforms to improve the PCS process. The Department owes our Service members, civilians, and their families nothing less than getting this right as part of restoring their trust in our country.

17A. Secretary, in light of the recent escalation between Israel and Iran, what is the Department's position on potential U.S. involvement? How is the Department assessing our strategic interests in the region, and what considerations are guiding current or future engagement decisions?

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Response: Under President Trump's leadership the Department of War (DoW) is putting American interests first in the Middle East. Our purpose is to protect and advance Americans' security, freedom, and prosperity. Consistent with this approach, DoW's top priorities in the Middle East are: (1) Defending the U.S. homeland against credible terrorist threats; (2) Preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon; and (3) continuing to enable Israel's defense.

President Trump has been clear that a nuclear armed Iran would represent an unacceptable threat, both to the region and to U.S. interests writ large. Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER, the most significant U.S. military action against Iran in history, embodied that resolve. After our strikes, the President made clear that now was the time for peace and that Iran should return to the negotiating table. The President is not interested in a protracted conflict with Iran, and we remain committed to a diplomatic resolution to this issue.

Iran's conventional military capabilities represent an enduring challenge. Following the completion of snapback sanctions in late September, the Department of War accelerated collaboration with interagency and international partners to enforcement the six UN Security Council resolutions reimposed against Iran. Resolution 1929, in particular, expands the international community's recourse against Iran's ballistic missile program. The Administration wants to make clear to the global community that it is a shared obligation to enforce snapback sanctions, and we want to make sure that everyone is doing their part.

17B. How is the Department assessing our strategic interests in the region, and what considerations are guiding current or future engagement decisions?

Response: As President Trump has said, the United States will no longer engage in open-ended conflicts, nation-building, or similar efforts. Instead, we will posture and employ America's military forces to deter or defeat threats to our nation in a decisive manner, as the Joint Force did against Iran in Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER. DoD's top priorities in the Middle East are: (1) Defending the U.S. homeland against credible terrorist threats; (2) Preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon; and (3) continuing to enable Israel's defense.

We will thoroughly review U.S. global force posture as we roll out the National Defense Strategy (NDS). This exercise will allow us to evaluate U.S. force presence in the Middle East to ensure it is consistent with the President's vision of a region primarily defined by "commerce, not chaos," where our partners take on more of the burden in providing for their security.

18. As our adversaries accelerate collaboration and shrink development timelines, how is the Joint Force adapting acquisition and innovation to stay ahead - and are we fully leveraging private industry to do so?

Response: My goal is a warfighting acquisition system that prioritizes speed, commercial solutions, and private sector partnerships as key cornerstones. Our warfighters deserve a transformative system that streamlines processes, empowers personnel, and incentivizes private sector investment in innovative capabilities. Prioritizing commercial-first approaches and solutions-base acquisitions is critical to leverage the agility and innovation

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of the private sector. In support of these objectives, in November 2025, I have released the Acquisition Transformation Strategy and directives to redefine how the Department develops requirements, manages programs, and engages industry to ensure America's warfighters receive critical capabilities at the speed of relevance: "Transforming the Defense Acquisition System into the Warfighting Acquisition System to Accelerate Fielding of Urgently Needed Capabilities to Our Warriors," "Reforming the Joint Requirements Process to Accelerate Fielding of Warfighting Capabilities," and "Unifying the Department's Arms Transfer and Security Cooperation Enterprise to Improve Efficiency and Enable Burden-Sharing."

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The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Defense
Questions for the Record
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19. Where in your FY26 budget are you increasing funding to address the challenges facing our defense industrial base? What accounts are you hoping to leverage? How are you prioritizing these accounts and others like them to increase our Defense Industrial Base capacity?

Response: The FY26 budget request increases investments significantly by 21% (+\$11.1B) across the Defense Industrial Base. Specifically, the FY26 request increases investment in increasing capacity in the missiles and munitions industrial base by 25% (+\$369M). Additionally, \$2.56B is included for direct investments through Defense Production Act Title III and Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment funds to mitigate cross-cutting supply chain risks throughout the Defense Industrial Base that supports missiles and munitions, shipbuilding, space, and nuclear warfighting capabilities.

20. [Re. RDT&E accounts] How has the ongoing execution of funding for FY25 under a full-year CR impacted the productivity of the funds in these accounts? Are there funding gaps in any of the related accounts you expect will need to be filled with future funding?

Response: The longer the Department is required to wait until it has an enacted budget - or a full-year CR - the more significant the impacts are on the productivity of RDT&E accounts. The uncertainty of the timing and the funding levels of the CRs (prior to a full-year enacted appropriation) focuses the Department on maintaining operations rather than executing with alacrity. In addition, CRs typically restrict the DoW from executing "new starts". This limitation on flexibility harms the ability of the Department to respond to critical emerging requirements. In combination, this further disrupts the Department's ability to execute programmatically, increasing the likelihood of needless schedule delays and cost increases.

20A. Of the \$300 million was allocated to the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, how much of the funding has been spent to date? What capabilities has the spent funding been used for? How many dollars remain in this account for USAI? If funds have yet to be spent, when will they be and what is delaying them now?

Response: The DoW has notified \$266 million of the \$300 million in USAI funds appropriated for FY2025. The DoW will continue to obligate these notified funds through the period of availability, which is through September 30, 2026.

20B. Of the remaining PDA funding that was appropriated through supplemental appropriations in 2024 for Ukraine, how much money remains unallocated across all related accounts?

Response: As of July 2, 2025, all \$45.78 billion enacted for PDA replacement supplemental

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funding appropriated has been allocated to the DoW components to replace items drawn down for Ukraine.

20C. Of any funds in those accounts that has been allocated, what were the funds used for? Have any funds been transferred from those accounts?

Response: As President Trump stated, all options are on the table to advance Russia/Ukraine negotiations, and DoW will execute guidance as we receive it.

20D. When will any remaining funds be drawn down?

Response: As President Trump stated, all options are on the table to advance Russia/Ukraine negotiations, and DoW will execute guidance as we receive it.

21A. Please specify how are you leading the Department to secure our own service members and individual military installations against possible strikes similar to Ukraine's Operation SpiderWeb against Russia?

Response: Department leaders have made it a clear priority to ensure the appropriate guidance and capabilities are in place to provide the best defense to our Service Members and critical installations from UAS threats. To that end, the Secretary has directed improvements to DoW installation coverage under Title 10 USC Section 130i. DoW has also recently stood up a dedicated Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF 401) to better align authorities and resources to rapidly deliver Joint C-sUAS capabilities to America's warfighters, defeat adversary threats, and promote sovereignty over national airspace. The Department shares your concern over a risk similar to Operation SpiderWeb and will continue to leverage this example to inform our efforts.

21B. How much funding and in which accounts are you allocating for such security efforts in your 2026 budget?

Response: The Department is actively engaged in multiple ongoing efforts to secure and protect our critical infrastructure and warfighters. Due to the sensitive nature of these activities, the specific details are classified to ensure operational security and mission effectiveness. The Department would be happy to provide additional detail in a classified setting.

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**The Honorable Ed Case
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing—The Department of Defense**

22. Soft power often lays the groundwork for access, basing, overflight rights and other avenues that are critical to hard power deterrence. Failure to maintain these rights could cause significant hard power military costs to ensure deterrence or to fight over key terrain. For example, if China is able assist various Pacific Islands to redevelop a World War II era runways and ports and eventually agrees to a military relationship such as the Solomon Islands, Hawaii would be in striking range of the PRC's DF-26s. The cost of building a stronger missile defense system for Hawaii would cost billions and any conflict would require our nation to strike military targets threatening the heart of our military operations in the Indo-Pacific. **What specific military soft power programs, and how much money, will the Department invest in to offset the loss of critical soft power tools that risk eroding the very conditions that allow hard power to be projected effectively in the Indo-Pacific?**

Response: The Department of War is re-establishing deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region by improving our force posture, ensuring allies and partners build and grow their own defense readiness, and rebuilding the U.S. defense industrial base. The Department's posture, presence, and engagement in communities across the Indo-Pacific region enhance our military readiness while benefitting local communities. The Department's regional security cooperation initiatives, military construction projects, and force posture improvements are common sense policy that will lead us together towards achieving peace through strength.

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**The Honorable Susie Lee
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Defense
Questions for the Record
Oversight Hearing—The Department of Defense**

23. Secretary, the article titled "China's Chokehold on This Obscure Mineral Threatens the West's Militaries" from the New York Times outlines how the DoD paid an Australian firm 10 times more than it paid MP Materials, an American firm, to onshore the full ecosystem of rare-earth production. MP-the largest U.S. rare-earth producer-has invested \$1 billion of its own capital since 2020 and employs more than 800 Americans, yet it was undercut by an Australian firm that never even broke ground in the US. MP Materials is ready to install their samarium processing equipment and help the U.S. combat China's export controls. **In the hearing you committed to sourcing rare earth minerals from U.S. companies first. Have you changed DoD's policies to ensure U.S. companies are prioritized with subsidies and investment decisions? Can you outline specific policies that have changed to facilitate this America First Agenda?**

Response: The Department of War (DoW) has reviewed existing regulations applicable to the support of domestic processing capabilities for critical minerals and determined that there are no existing regulations that inhibit DoW support of developing domestic mining and processing capabilities, to include rare earth elements (REEs). The DoW has put sourcing requirements in place to implement the statutory sourcing requirements for rare earth elements and rare earth magnets, including sections 4863 and 4872 of Title 10.

The DoW is committed to investing in domestic mining and processing capabilities and has just entered into a landmark agreement with MP Materials for the processing of select REEs required for magnets and the production of additional magnet materials. Since 2020, DoW has awarded more than \$800 million to establish domestic REE supply chains. This includes domestic separating and refining of REEs mined in the U.S., as well as developing downstream stateside processes needed to convert those refined materials into metals and then magnets.

The DoW is also executing the directives of Executive Orders to increase American mineral production. In support of Executive Order 14241, *Immediate Measures to Increase American Mineral Production*, the DoW identified sites on DoW -managed Federal lands that may be suitable for leasing or development for the construction and operation of private commercial mineral production enterprises, to include potential REE projects. DoW is also working collaboratively across the interagency to resource critical minerals projects with all government funding authorities.

24. The DoD requested \$1.3B for Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment Support. Can you outline what specifically this funding will go towards and when contract solicitations will be published?

Response: As part of DoW's integrated growth strategy, Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment (IBAS) Title IO investments leverage DoW -wide and industry partnerships to accelerate defense-critical manufacturing capability development. In FY26, the IBAS portfolio allocates approximately \$1.3 billion across key focus areas: critical minerals & materials and rare-earth processing (\$159.7 million); kinetic capabilities and hypersonics (\$234 million); microelectronics and secure packaging (\$472 million); castings and forgings (\$356 million);

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workforce development and shipbuilding (\$117 million); and batteries and energy storage (\$2 million). Notably, \$189 million, 15 percent of the portfolio, is designated for first-time awards, with solicitations slated for Q1 FY26. These targeted investments fortify the domestic industrial base's resilience, responsiveness, and increasing capacity.

25. What is IBAS' funding over the FYDP, and what activities will it support?

Response: As is typical during a Presidential Transition year, FYDP data is not available. However, the FY26 Budget provides \$2.313 B for IBAS to strengthen the domestic industrial base. \$2.055 B is for an increase in defense industrial base, hypersonics, castings and forgings, strategic and critical materials, and elevated sensor technology development, and \$258.2 Mis for microelectronics, batteries, submarine industrial base, and workforce.

26. When will the DoD and its suppliers be divested from China's rare-earth production?

Response: Since 2020, DoW has awarded more than \$800 million to establish domestic rare earth element (REE) supply chains. This includes initiating projects for separating and refining REEs, as well as developing downstream stateside processes needed to convert those refined materials into metals and then magnets. The DoW 's strategic investments are building capability at multiple stages of the REE supply chain to provide a clear signal to private capital that the time is right to commit to domestic and allied REE projects. These investments are having an impact, and DoW anticipates having an initial domestic mine-to-magnet supply chain by 2027.

27. Part of the difficulty in onshoring rare-earth production is generating adequate demand at appropriate margins for U.S. suppliers to produce. What are you doing to ensure your suppliers are buying from American companies instead of Chinese companies that are charging artificially lower rates?

Response: The Department fully supports the President's America First Trade Policy, while also recognizing the importance of building resilient supply chains by allowing our closest allies and partners to participate. We maintain domestic preference in our procurements from the defense industrial base and prioritize using trusted American companies in our supply chain, mandated through the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and Defense FAR Supplement (DFARS). The Department will also consider procurements from trusted allies and partners through reciprocal defense and trade agreements. Our policies prohibit acquisitions of items covered by the United States Munitions List (USML) and 600 Series Commerce Commercial List (CCL) from Communist Chinese military companies.

28. Last year, the Air Force had to shift \$383 million to the Collaborative Combat Aircraft program, to plus it up by 60 percent. Can you assure me your budget request will fully fund the CCA program this year?

Response: The FY26 PB discretionary request (\$11.365M) along with the funds provided by H.R.1 (\$678M) will fully fund CCA program in FY26 (\$789.365M).

29. Can you give an update on the first flight, and production decision for Increment 1? Are we on track for the flight, and when will it be?

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Response: YFQ-42 (General Atomics) successfully completed its first flight and YFQ-44 (Anduril) is on track for a late fall flight. Both will continue to execute flight testing activities, and the production decision is still on track before the end of FY26.

30. And finally, when do you anticipate the production decision this fiscal year, what quantity of aircraft will you procure, how many vendors will you award, and what factors are you considering?

Response: The Air Force is planning for the production decision to take place at the end of FY26. The CCA Increment 1 program anticipates that there could be contracts to multiple vendors for production to support continued competition and production capacity goals. Competition for production will not be limited to only two vendors.

31. Can you outline what is planned for CCA Increment 2? What type of capabilities can we expect in Increment 2, what timeline and critical milestones can we expect, and what is the targeted per unit cost?

Response: The Air Force plans to begin CCA Increment 2 concept refinement in early FY26 to determine the type of capabilities required, the expected timelines for development, and the program's affordability targets. All current and future industry partners in the CCA vendor pool will be able to compete for the CCA Increment 2 concept refinement activities.

32. [Re Sentinel cost increases and new silos]: What other changes are being considered by DoD, and what is the impact to cost, schedule, and performance? What are you doing to get this program on track and how are we ensuring we do not have a gap in our operational capabilities?

Response: The Air Force has proposed an outline of potential restructure actions, which include changes to the organization, manpower and personnel, requirements, systems engineering and business processes, contract strategy, acquisition approach, and an in-depth industrial base study. The Air Force will continue to refine these proposals and obtain approval for the restructured program at a new Milestone B, which is planned for Spring 2027. Further timeline details will be available after the updated acquisition strategy is approved later this year. To support the full suite of actions necessary to ensure sustainment of the Minuteman III (MMIII) fleet until the Sentinel weapon system is available, the Air Force has allocated targeted funding across the necessary appropriations. Currently, the Air Force invests over \$1.2B annually for sustainment of the MMIII weapon system. Additionally, the Air Force is executing multiple studies to help characterize and inform where targeted investments should be made to extend the life of MMIII and mitigate operational impacts caused by a delay to Sentinel fielding.

33. Congress appropriated \$3.2B for Sentinel in the FY25 CR. It is reported that the Pentagon is cutting Sentinel to \$2 billion after transferring \$964.7 million into classified programs, \$142.6 million to field two new Air Force Ones, and \$78.7 million into CCA. **Can you expound on why Sentinel was cut, and how you chose to plus up these other programs?**

Response: The funding for Sentinel in FY 2026 corresponds to the cost estimate of the restructured program from 2024 Nunn-McCurdy review, with some refinements made post-

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review. Some FY 2025 funding could be repurposed to address other priority activities due to the availability of carryover funding as the Sentinel program continued its restructure.

34. Why are we cutting so much from the Reserves fighter force, and how do you plan to meet surge requirements without them?

Response: The Air Force's plans ensure Air Force Reserve units transition to an enduring, modernized mission. The F-16 pilots at Nellis will transition to an associate unit of the 65th AGRS (F-35 unit) when their aircraft retire. Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth has already recapitalized with F-35s, and we are in the early stages of analysis to determine the feasibility of recapitalizing Homestead Air Reserve Base's F-16 Block 30 unit with F-35s. The Air Force is also looking into recapitalizing Whiteman Air Force Base A-10 squadron with a Global Strike Mission.

35. The Air Force reserve pre-block F-16s at Nellis serving in the 706th Aggressor Squadron are being divested. It is not clear what is filling the void that this will leave. Can you tell me what the Air Force's plan is to fill the Adversary Air requirement at Nellis Air Force Base?

Response: The Air Force will continue to support and sustain the 64th Aggressor Squadron F-16 operations. The Air Force is committed to expanding the fifth-generation F-35 Aggressor Fleet at Nellis Air Force Base. The first two F-35 aircraft were delivered in 2025, with the fleet projected to reach full operational capacity of eleven total aircraft by the conclusion of Fiscal Year 2028. Any gaps in operational coverage, such as during large force exercises like Red Flag, can be temporarily augmented by visiting units.

36. The Air Force is experiencing a pilot shortage. I'm concerned that gutting the Reserve's fighter units will mean there are fewer places for experienced pilots to go when they leave active duty. Won't these cuts further exacerbate that shortage?

Response: The Department remains committed to mitigating the pilot shortage and increasing the Air Force's warfighting capability through a mix of new platform acquisitions, current platform modernization, and legacy aircraft divestments. Due to resource constraints, the decision to divest is necessary to enable the modernization required to face a peer adversary. The Air Force looks at the problem holistically and actively works with the Air Reserve Component to implement a plan that improves Total Force fighter community absorption and retention, without placing undue burden on either component.

37. [Re. need for completed forms and UFR docs to address QOL at Creech AFB] Can you help me address this documentation issue and energize the Air Force to develop an actionable plan so that I can advocate to fund it?

Response: The Air Force is working to design two dormitories at Nellis and position them in future MILCON requests once designs mature to an appropriate stage. Currently, there are no additional requirements to put Quality of Life amenities at Creech AFB, NV, and the Airmen at Creech will continue to get their support from Nellis AFB. However, without getting into the specifics of the CCA mission, with any force structure decision or basing decision, the Air Force

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examines impacts to existing missions, on-base and off-base housing, infrastructure, and community support. In concert with Air Combat Command, Quality of Life is part of the criteria for any additional missions assigned to Creech and Nellis AFB, NV.

38. The conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East demonstrate the clear and immediate threat posed by Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS). However, counter-UAS (cUAS) has been consistently underfunded in the DoD. It is unclear to me if counter UAS is included in the scope of Golden Dome. **Can you outline what aerial threats Golden Dome will protect us from and which ones it will not?**

Response: Answer is CUI and will be provided separately.

39. Ukraine eliminated 1/3 of Russia's bomber fleet in one night with UAS. Do we believe our bases are ready to detect and eliminate the threats posed by UAS?

Response: Yes, the Department is modifying its planning scenarios and upgrading our base defense capabilities to counter all classes of threats, including the type of novel drone approaches we have witnessed in other theaters. Technologies including sensors, electromagnetic warfare, directed energy, and other capabilities at classified levels will help us address this threat. Additionally, we believe a "commercial-first" approach will help us procure and field these capabilities. Initiatives such as the Wartime Production Unit will focus on rapidly expanding manufacturing capabilities while also enabling us to quickly scale UAS and counter UAS solutions.

40. DoD says Golden Dome will cost \$175 billion, and CBO says it can cost up to \$542 billion. It seems odd that our new ICBM costs \$140 billion, but we think we can field a system that defends against ballistic missiles, hypersonics, UAS, and other aerial threats for just \$175 billion. **How did DoD come up with its cost estimate, and what are the underlying assessments? Is this for a fully operational system with sufficient reserves, or is this the budget for a prototype?**

Response: Answer is CUI and will be provided separately.

41. We have historically used very expensive defensive weapons to kill offensive threats such as UAS. What type of defensive weapons will be included in Golden Dome, and how are we lowering the cost-proposition?

Response: Answer is CUI and will be provided separately.

42. The reconciliation package includes \$25 billion for Golden Dome. Can you outline what, specifically, will be accomplished with that funding?

Response: Answer is CUI and will be provided separately.

43. You briefed the President on the implementation plan recently. Can you outline that plan and the associated milestones we can track to monitor program success?

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Response: Answer is CUI and will be provided separately.

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