

STATEMENT  
OF  
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AS DELIVERED TO CONGRESSIONAL DEFENSE COMMITTEES  
ON  
THE POSTURE OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

## **Introduction**

Chair, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present this annual report and share my perspective on the opportunities and challenges confronting your Marine Corps, the naval services, and the larger joint force. As recent events in Ukraine so clearly illustrate, our strategic adversaries and competitors are ready and willing to employ violence – at scale – to support their revisionist aims. They are willing to sow chaos, destroy cities, inflict mass casualties, and suffer casualties themselves to rewrite the international order – an order that has broadly and deeply benefitted humanity. To ensure the joint force remains able to deter, and if necessary, defeat these adversaries, we need to move at even greater speed to modernize the force.

As Commandant, I offer the Service’s sincere thanks for the committee’s support to our modernization efforts – anchored on Force Design 2030 and Talent Management 2030. Today, I respectfully ask you to recommit to our modernization program. Embracing change before a catastrophic event occurs takes both courage and foresight; thank you for demonstrating both. As I have stated in the past, the Marine Corps does not seek any additional resources for modernization. Rather, we seek your oversight and assistance in ensuring that the resources the Service generates through divestments, reorganization, and redesign are reinvested in our Corps’ modernization priorities.

As I have previously testified, the suggestion that we have to choose between preparing to fight tonight, which we are ready to do, or preparing for some distant point in the future presents a false dichotomy. We must balance the very real and delicate resource tension between the force we employ today and the development of the force needed for the future. Our Nation can no longer afford to hold on to capabilities that do not create a relative advantage over our potential adversaries at the expense of capabilities that will keep us ahead of them – no matter how culturally significant or nostalgic to an individual service those capabilities may be.

### **We Will Remain “Most Ready When the Nation is Least Ready”**

When defense leaders submitted their posture statements last spring, few of us would have predicted that a major conventional war in Europe – the largest since 1945 – was only a year away. Russia’s brutal invasion of Ukraine is a stark reminder that despite our best efforts, we can never know with certainty when, where, or how an adversary might precipitate conflict. Reflecting on this challenge in a related context, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said: “When it comes to predicting the nature and location of our next military engagements, since Vietnam, our record has been perfect. We have never

once gotten it right, from the Mayaguez to Grenada, Panama, Somalia, the Balkans, Haiti, Kuwait, Iraq, and more—we had no idea a year before any of these missions that we would be so engaged.”

*Why does this matter?* From the perspective of a service chief, it matters because we don’t have the luxury of building a joint force for one threat, one region, or one form of warfare. We must be prepared for the full range of operations in places we might not expect, and on timelines we did not anticipate. While this is true to some degree for all the services, it is especially so for the United States Marine Corps. Our history is footnoted by examples of our readiness to respond to crisis at a moment’s notice in “any clime and place.” This is essential to our identity as Marines, and part of our enduring value to the Nation. In these times of increasing complexity and uncertainty, the Nation needs one force, maintained at the highest levels of readiness that can respond to the crises that few saw coming. We are that force. Maintaining the entire joint force at heightened readiness levels is both unnecessary and unaffordable. Ensuring that the Marine Corps *does* is both strategically vital and fiscally prudent. As Marines, we have been, and will continue to be, “America’s 911 Force” – the Nation’s force-in-readiness.

Our ongoing efforts to modernize through Force Design 2030 (FD 2030) and Talent Management 2030 (TM 2030) will ensure the Marine Corps’ ability to meet our statutory role and be ready to respond to crises – across the Range of Military Operations – from active campaigning to conflict. While China, as the pacing threat, is critical to informing our force development efforts, the capabilities we seek are theater agnostic. The fact is, our current modernization efforts will enable us to operate, fight, and win in a more diverse set of scenarios and geographic regions than we can today. We are, and will remain, “most ready when the Nation is least ready” – a force in readiness prepared to respond to any crisis, anywhere, at any time.

## **Posture**

Today, approximately 30,000 Marines are forward-deployed or forward-stationed, with hundreds more on watch at our embassies across the globe. However, in contrast to earlier periods, fewer of these forward deployed Marines are afloat in service to the Fleet. I remain committed to a robust forward posture to support campaigning and to expanding this forward presence through the employment of additional Marines aboard L-Class ships, Light Amphibious Warships, and other expeditionary vessels operated by the Fleet or our allies and partners.

## **L-Class Ships & Light Amphibious Warships (LAW)**

L-Class Ships. For decades, the Navy and Marine Corps have demonstrated the power and versatility of Marine expeditionary forces embarked on amphibious ships. Operating as a combined arms team, Marines have come “from the sea” to support all manner of operations, to include: projecting combat power ashore, providing humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR), reinforcing U.S. embassies, training allies and partners, and executing non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO). **No naval vessel in our inventory is capable of supporting a more diverse set of missions across the range of military operations than amphibious ships.**

Amphibious ships provide platforms from which to base and employ a host of multi-domain capabilities – air, ground, surface, undersea, and cyber. **Amphibious ships serve as mobile command posts, strike platforms, expeditionary maintenance facilities, search-and-rescue platforms, floating hospitals, sources of potable water and electricity for disaster response, transport and docking stations for smaller vessels, and locations where Marines can train with international partners without the requirement for host nation access. In the near future, amphibious ships with well decks will increasingly be used as mother ships for uncrewed vessels, carrying a wide variety of unmanned surface vessels (USVs) and unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs) for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare, mining, command and control, and military deception.** Amphibious ships are also visible signs of U.S. reach and resolve, and because of their unique characteristics, can deploy to a region with a less escalatory posture than many traditional warships. Those unique characteristics include an ability to self-sustain embarked forces for weeks at sea without replenishment. Such resilience and persistence are a unique and vital capability for our combatant commanders.

Viewed through the lens of both the 2018 and 2022 National Defense Strategies, big deck amphibious ships (LHA/LHD), which carry F-35Bs, MV-22s, CH-53s, unmanned aerial systems (UAS), and surface landing craft, are arguably the most versatile warships in our inventory. These ships, when paired with their embarked Marines, have the highest utility across the entire spectrum of conflict from building partner capacity to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, to embassy reinforcement, to recovery operations, to strikes and raids against a peer or near peer adversary. This is the very epitome of campaigning forward from mobile sovereign platforms.

During his March 2022 testimony before the House Armed Services Committee (HASC), the Commander of United States European Command (USEUCOM), General Tod Wolters, noted that his requirement for a 365-day Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) presence could not be met due to the limitations of the

current amphibious fleet inventory, and further characterized the MEU as “precious for effective deterrence.” A week later, Secretary Austin noted in his HASC testimony that, “Amphibs are important to us today. They will be important to us going forward.” I wholeheartedly agree with the conclusions of both leaders, as requested in the FY 2023 Budget. Our MEUs need them; our Fleets need them; and our combatant commanders need them. **The National Defense Strategy cannot succeed without them.**

Light Amphibious Warship (LAW). Distinct, yet complementary to traditional L-Class amphibious ships, the LAW is envisioned to be a small, amphibious warship purpose-built to provide tactical maneuver for Marine Littoral Regiments (MLRs), forward-deployed naval forces, and other expeditionary advanced base-enabling forces operating within contested environments. The LAW will be a maneuver asset, and as a shore-to-shore connector, is unique and critical to expeditionary littoral mobility. **It will facilitate campaigning and will be capable of supporting diverse missions such as security cooperation, HA/DR, logistics support, and the launch and recovery of uncrewed systems for maritime domain awareness. While not optimized for any one threat or region, we envision the LAW as being of particular utility in the sort of maritime gray zone contests we see in the Indo-Pacific.** This type of vessel would be well-suited as a platform for Marines countering threats posed by groups like the People’s Armed Forces Maritime Militia (PAFMM), and because of its size and characteristics, **could be employed with lower risk of escalation.** The LAW will be an important asset to advancing our strategic interests by allowing us to more effectively counter our adversaries’ strategies, support and reinforce alliances and partnerships, and do so at a relatively low cost.

**On 9 September 2021, the Secretary of the Navy commissioned the Amphibious Fleet Requirement Study (AFRS).** The study directed a determination of the “required size and composition of the future amphibious warship fleet . . . needed to support combat operations, global presence, and safe and effective training.” **The study found we should have a mix of traditional L-Class Amphibious Warfare Ships and Light Amphibious Warships.** The study will be one of many factors considered by the Secretary of the Navy, the Secretary of Defense and the Administration as shipbuilding plans and future budget requests are formulated. **In my military judgment we will need to employ a mixed fleet of no less than 31 traditional L-Class Amphibious Warfare Ships and 18-36 Light Amphibious Warships to enable us to carry out the NDS.**

### **Naval Expeditionary Crisis Response Forces and Campaigning**

While the traditional role of crisis response forces in disaster relief operations, such as those executed by the Expeditionary Strike Group centered on the *USS Bonhomme Richard* during *Operation Unified*

*Assistance* or via the *USS Essex* during *Operation Tomodachi*, is well-documented and well-understood, these operations are not always perceived as ones that create relative advantage in strategic competition and campaigning. They do. Our response to humanitarian crises and other natural disasters using expeditionary forces – quickly and decisively – demonstrates to our allies and partners that they are never alone when partnered with the U.S. Further, our ability to execute HA/DR operations from amphibious shipping – without a large logistical footprint ashore in support of U.S. forces – maximizes our flexibility and capability to respond while preserving resources best used for relief. In the strategic sense, the significance of this amphibious-based capability and its impact should not be underestimated. While our ability to “be there first” on the scene of a natural or man-made disaster is, of course, critical to the preservation of life, it is also a strategic imperative, affecting our bilateral relationships and matters like access and overflight, as well as our international standing. This is true in every region, but today is most pronounced in the Indo-Pacific, where China aims to expand its regional influence through its own amphibious crisis response capabilities.

At the same time, it is important to recognize the criticality of campaigning with our allies and partners – in their regions – on a daily basis. Naval expeditionary forces operating forward and persistently provide combatant commanders with a sort of “escalation rheostat,” prepared to respond to crises – or prevent them – by employing capabilities that are credible across the range of military operations. Both our presence and the credibility of our forces reassure allies and partners.

### **Marine Rotational Force - Darwin (MRF-D)**

In 2011, we established the Marine Rotational Force - Darwin (MRF-D) in the Northern Territory in partnership with the Australian government. Our rotational presence has grown from a company-sized element with limited capabilities to a MEU-sized Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF). Through our recurring presence, we have achieved a high level of mutual confidence and interoperability with the Australian Defence Force, to the point where Marines routinely operate from Australian amphibious ships. The training areas in the Northern Territory and other regions of Australia are some of the best in the world, and certainly the region, affording Marines an opportunity for high-end training alongside one of our closest allies. Additionally, our rotational presence in Australia has enabled Marine forces to engage and train with a range of international allies and partners in ways we did not predict when MRF-D was first established.

### **VMFA 211 Deployment Aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth**

From April to December 2021, ten F-35Bs from Marine Corps Fighter Attack Squadron 211 (VMFA 211) deployed aboard the United Kingdom's aircraft carrier *HMS Queen Elizabeth*. This historic deployment – the first in which a Marine squadron completed a deployment aboard an allied vessel – represents the culmination of ten years of focused bilateral cooperation and demonstrates how far we have progressed in building U.S.-UK interoperability. Together with the UK's embarked F-35B squadron, VMFA 211 completed nearly 1300 sorties, flew in excess of 2200 hours, and executed 44 combat missions in support of *Operation Inherent Resolve*. The deployment also marked the first time an F-35B cross-decked from a foreign vessel to a U.S. vessel (*USS America*) to refuel and arm before a strike. During its approximately seven month deployment, which spanned three U.S. geographic combatant commands' areas of responsibility, VMFA 211 conducted exercises with 10 partner nations and flew from the flight decks of three allied ships: Japan's *JS Izumo*, Italy's *ITS Cavour*, and the *HMS Queen Elizabeth*. Finally, VMFA 211 was our first F-35B squadron to deploy as a 10-jet squadron in accordance with our FD 2030 goals and as outlined in my 2019 planning guidance.

### **Force Design 2030 and Stand-In Forces**

As we further refined Force Design 2030 through wargaming, experimentation, and analysis, it became apparent that we required new thinking to address anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) strategies, that our Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEF) needed additional operational flexibility, and that Marines operating with our MEUs and MLRs could be a substantial part of the solution. This new approach is reflected in *A Concept for Stand-In Forces*, which describes how forward-postured forces, operating in contested areas, and capable of transitioning rapidly from campaigning, to crisis, to conflict, and back again, can create strategic advantage for the joint force.

Stand-in Forces (SIF) are small, lethal, low signature, mobile forces that are relatively simple to maintain and sustain, and designed to operate across the competition continuum within a contested area as the leading edge of a maritime defense-in-depth. The enduring function of SIF is to help the fleet and joint force win the reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance battle at every point on the competition continuum. That means SIF monitor a potential adversary's activity and track its forces and sensors at a level that facilitates targeting by the fleet or joint force. Below the threshold of conflict, SIF's tracking of adversary actions can help expose its malign behavior, which can contribute to deterrence. If armed conflict does erupt, SIF will have already gained and maintained contact with opposing forces in a posture that provides relative positional advantage, enabling the fleet and joint force to attack effectively first, seizing the initiative.

Winning the counter-reconnaissance fight means SIF make themselves difficult to find by maintaining a low signature, moving frequently and unpredictably, and using deception to impose costs on potential adversaries, forcing them to expend limited ISR resources. In the context of a naval campaign, it also means that SIF will help screen for the fleet and joint force, protecting it and increasing the fleet commander's freedom of action.

Beyond reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance, SIF possess lethal capabilities for warfare at, on, below, or from the sea. For example, SIF can contest a chokepoint, sanitize a strait, or deny a specific area, presenting a surface behind which the fleet can maneuver. Area denial could also serve to canalize or "herd" an adversary into a maritime zone where the joint force enjoys relative advantage. Integrated with other elements of organic and joint capability, the SIF becomes both an enabler and a lethal executor of the joint force mission. In competition / campaigning, SIF provide capabilities that support new deterrence approaches like deterrence by detection, integrating the results of its reconnaissance with other elements of national power. In conflict, SIF serve as battle managers and provide long-range precision fires at the forward edge of a maritime defense-in-depth, enabling naval and joint forces to persist within contested areas rather than attempting to force access into them by fighting through an adversary's A2/AD defenses. Our ongoing experiments with SIF have focused on building a globally-relevant capability of value to all geographic combatant commanders, rather than more narrowly on a single potential threat or theater. While some view the SIF concept as Indo-Pacific focused, the fact is that some of our most aggressive experimentation is occurring in other theaters. For example, in his March 2022 HASC testimony, the USEUCOM Commander noted of his II MEF SIF capabilities: "a brown water force that can shoot, move, and communicate, and that is very, very expeditionary, is priceless for 21<sup>st</sup> century security."

### **Force Design 2030 and the Russo-Ukraine Conflict**

It is too early to draw definitive conclusions about the changing character of war based on the current conflict in Ukraine. Marines aim to be careful and humble students of the ongoing struggle, and resist temptations to declare that it validates or invalidates the foundational assumptions of FD 2030. With that said, we can draw some preliminary conclusions. First, winning the reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance battle matters. If you are located on a modern battlefield saturated with sensors, you will be targeted. Signature management, maneuver, deception, and tempo are playing an increasingly important role on the modern battlefield. Second, loitering munitions, missiles and rockets are increasingly capable of rendering major weapons platforms vulnerable, whether MANPADS against helicopters, modern anti-armor systems against armor, or ground-based anti-ship missiles against surface



vessels. Finally, highly-trained and distributable small units able to create combined-arms effects continue to prove their worth on the modern battlefield. Assertions as to the waning utility of dismounted infantry are proving baseless.

### **Force Design 2030 and Close Combat Lethality**

Generations of Marines have been educated and trained to locate, close with, and destroy the enemy through fire and maneuver. While the tactical tasks associated with that mission set have not changed, *how* we satisfy those tasks on a modern battlefield is changing. In addition, the weighting of the discrete tasks within that simple statement is changing, and we must change with it. “Locating,” for example, has become far more important on the modern battlefield. Marines within our three experimental infantry battalions, as well as those participating in force-on-force field exercises, are learning and fine-tuning their skills, integrating existing and emerging capabilities in a combined arms system that accounts for the ongoing changes we see on modern battlefields – changes witnessed since at least the 2006 Second Lebanon War. We will build upon the major investments made by the 37<sup>th</sup> Commandant in close combat lethality (e.g., investments in the Multi-purpose Anti-armor Anti-personnel Weapons Systems [MAAWS]) by adding loitering munitions, organic UAS, and additional Javelins to our infantry units. Finally, it is important to note that throughout the Force Design process, the focus has been, and remains, maneuver warfare in every dimension and combined arms in all domains, including space and cyber.

In the midst of this organizational change, it is also important to highlight those things that are not changing. When we consider ways to maximize our close combat lethality, two things that will never change are: (1) our commitment to growing and sustaining smart and tough small unit leaders – those Marines actually tasked with locating, closing with, and destroying the enemy; and (2) our commitment to what the 29<sup>th</sup> Commandant called *operational excellence* – the ability of a Marine to apply their training, leadership, and discipline with lethal proficiency. No new piece of equipment or warfighting concept can ever be as important. We have always maintained that the individual Marine is the most formidable weapon on the battlefield. We still do.

### **Force Design 2030 Prioritized Investments**

MQ-9 & related sensors. We remain on-schedule to both modernize and increase the number of Marine Corps uncrewed aerial vehicle squadrons (VMU). In 2022, we will expand fielding of the MQ-9, immediately improving the Marine Corps’ capability to support both naval expeditionary forces and the joint force. Uncrewed aerial systems are ubiquitous on the modern battlefield, as recent global conflicts have powerfully demonstrated – whether in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Gaza, Yemen, Nagorno-Karabakh,

or Ukraine. Over the next two years, the Air Force will transfer ten MQ-9AER Block V aircraft to the Marine Corps, saving the Service approximately \$170 million in procurement costs, which can be invested into sophisticated sensors like *Skytower* or sonobuoy dispensing pods. These advanced sensors, employed from our MQ-9s, will radically improve our ability to conduct reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance, and further reinforce our competitive advantages in undersea warfare.

F-35B/C. The F-35 is the most advanced fighter, strike, and sensor platform in the world. As the Commander of United States Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) recently noted during testimony, “The importance of the F-35 cannot be overstated.” We remain convinced that low observable and very low observable, short take-off and vertical landing (STOVL) aircraft like the F-35B provide combatant commanders a competitive warfighting advantage. Mindful of both cost per flight hour (CPFH) and cost per tail per year (CPTPY), I remain committed to working with the Joint Program Office to reduce costs for both acquisition and sustainment. The Marine Corps remains focused on accelerated transition to an all F-35 tactical aviation (TACAIR) fleet in order to stay in front of our pacing challenge. We have procured 176 of 353 F-35Bs and 48 of 67 F-35Cs to-date.

Organic Precision Fires – Infantry/Mounted (OPF-I/M). OPF-I/M will provide multiple echelons of the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) with an organic, loitering, beyond line-of-sight, precision strike capability, profoundly enhancing the close-combat lethality of maneuver forces. We are currently investing \$2 billion in OPF across the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP), and expect the first systems to be fielded with our enhanced infantry battalions and new mobile reconnaissance units in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025. OPF-I will be employed at the low tactical level to allow Marines to rapidly engage the enemy beyond the range of direct fire weapons, while minimizing collateral damage and exposure to enemy direct and indirect fires. OPF-M will integrate a vehicle mounted, multi canister launch platform on our Joint Light Tactical Vehicles (JLTV), Light Armored Vehicles (LAV), and Ultra-Light Tactical Vehicles (ULTV). On its own, OPF-M can strike targets at ranges beyond 40km. However, its lethality is amplified when employed with Group-2 UAS as part of our emerging “hunter-killer team” employment concept. Operating as a hunter-killer combination, our mounted units can deliver precision effects, as well as surveillance before, during, and after striking targets, at ranges previously reserved for the air wing. These combat-tested and combat-proven capabilities will redefine how small units close with and destroy an adversary. Once fully fielded, each infantry and mobile reconnaissance battalion will possess no fewer than four “hunter” UAS (potentially the Stalker VXE Block 30) and seven dedicated “killer” mounted launchers.

Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV). In 1989, the 29<sup>th</sup> Commandant wrote in his posture statement that his number one priority was the procurement of an advanced amphibious vehicle to “replace our current amphibious assault vehicle (AAV), now approaching the end of its service life.” Thirty-three years later, we divested of the AAV and are now focused on accelerating the procurement of the ACV. It remains a “must-have” capability for our forces operating in the global littorals – especially in archipelagic environs across the Pacific. We remain committed to an approved acquisition objective (AAO) of 632 vehicles and have procured 267 to-date. We anticipate procuring another 74 in FY23.

Medium Range Missile (MMSL) Batteries. Due to the continued support of Congress, we remain on-schedule to reach initial operating capability (IOC) for one MMSL battery in the Pacific by 2023 (to be employed by 3d MLR). We remain focused on fielding 14 total MMSL batteries (142 total launchers) by FY30. These MMSL batteries – combining the Navy Marine Corps Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS) and ROGUE Fires – will be capable of firing the Naval Strike Missile (NSM) and Tactical Tomahawk, thereby holding adversary targets at-risk both afloat and ashore, further complicating their decision-making. This capability is just as relevant in the Western Pacific as it would be in eastern Ukraine, where shore-based fires have already been used to destroy enemy surface combatants.

Long Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM). In addition to the investments made in Ground-Based Anti-Ship Missiles (GBASM), we have also begun investing in AGM-158C (LRASM) to further expand the range and lethality of our aviation-delivered fires. Marine aircraft equipped with LRASM, operating from both ship and shore, will thicken the existing network of fires, further distribute lethality across a theater, and enhance the credibility of our existing deterrent in any region.

CH-53K. The CH-53K provides the FMF and combatant commanders with an unmatched vertical heavy-lift capability to project, maneuver, and sustain combat forces. It remains the only fully marinized heavy-lift helicopter in development or production. The CH-53K can lift more, farther, and faster than any other rotary wing platform in the world. We declared CH-53K IOC on 22 April after fielding a four-plane detachment worth of aircraft, support equipment, and trained aircrew and maintainers. While we remain concerned by the continued growth of procurement costs, we have actions in place to try to mitigate growth. We are further concerned by the projection of the sustainment costs and the total cost of ownership, which may exceed \$390 million per aircraft. We are actively working with industry to reduce those costs and will continue that fight throughout the life of the weapon system. Still, a marinized, heavy-lift capability is an absolute “must have” for the joint force as the costs of maintaining the increasingly outmoded CH-53E inventory is prohibitive. To date, we have procured 40 aircraft.

Ground Based Air Defense (GBAD). GBAD includes multiple FD 2030 priority programs such as the Marine Air Defense Integrated System (MADIS) and Medium Range Intercept Capability (MRIC). MADIS will enable our low altitude air defense (LAAD) battalions to provide short-range air defense (SHORAD) for our maneuver forces and fixed facilities, to include against hostile aerial threats from UAS. MRIC – currently in development – is an air defense system for fixed sites, designed to counter large UAS (Groups 3 and 4), cruise missiles, and fixed/rotary wing aircraft. Based on on-going operations in Ukraine, and lessons learned from recent conflicts in Syria and Nagorno-Karabakh, we believe these GBAD programs to be essential for our Marine expeditionary forces.

### **FD 2030 Emerging Capabilities**

Long-Range Unmanned Surface Vessel (LRUSV) and Unmanned Underwater Vehicles (UUV). Just as our MQ-9AER and successor platforms will provide persistent surveillance and reconnaissance of competitors and strategically critical geography from the air, the Long-Range Unmanned Surface Vessel (LRUSV) will do the same from a sea-based platform. It will also provide unique capabilities for undersea scouting and C2 enabling. The rapid evolution of long-range precision munitions allows for form factors that can be employed at sea or ashore, and will progressively increase deterrence options as they become available. Our plan is to home-station these capabilities in Guam, Japan, and Hawaii. In addition, UUVs deployed from our existing inventory of L-Class ships or from future Light Amphibious Warships can further reinforce our competitive advantages in undersea warfare, expand our battlespace awareness and that of our partners and allies, and when armed with torpedoes, further reinforce sea-denial operations in contested spaces.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Enabled Counter-Intrusion and Counter-UAS. For the past 18 months, we have conducted tests with AI-enabled counter-intrusion and counter-UAS systems aboard several of our bases and stations. The performance of these systems has exceeded all expectations. As a result, the Commander of Marine Corps Forces, Pacific submitted an urgent-needs statement requesting the capability be fielded at all bases and stations in the Pacific. Initially, this capability will be employed at fixed sites. However, in the near-to-mid-term we anticipate employing a mobile version of this small footprint, AI-enabled sensing platform. This will allow our stand-in forces – with allies, and partners – to better sense and make sense of the dynamic maritime and urban terrain where we operate.

Swarming UAS. Over the next 12 months, we will conduct a series of experiments at I MEF with AI-enabled swarming UAS and loitering munitions. While planning for this effort is in the early stages, we are confident this capability will create game-changing improvements to close-combat lethality for our

ground forces and will further realize the vision of the 31<sup>st</sup> Commandant's Hunter Warrior experiments from 1997-1998. Swarming UAS will extend the area of influence of every maneuver element, creating competitive warfighting advantages over our adversaries.

#### Unmanned Logistics System-Aerial (ULS-A) and Future Vertical Lift (FVL) Family of Systems (FOS).

The past five years of wargames have demonstrated that our logistics and sustainment capabilities will be targeted by near-peer competitors. As the ongoing conflict in Ukraine has poignantly illustrated, even traditional ground logistics resupply, executed over interior lines and relatively short distances, can be disrupted, with operational level effects. As we develop our new naval expeditionary units and expand our uncrewed aircraft capability, we will increasingly invest in uncrewed logistics aircraft such as the ULS-A Medium and ULS-A Large. This year we will invest \$32 million in ULS-A Medium (Group 3 UAS), which is capable of carrying 300-600 pounds of cargo a distance of 100NM, while developing plans to procure ULS-A Large. To date, the Air Force has the most mature understanding of this capability, and has experimented with an electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft that may satisfy our needs in the future. We are wrapping all these efforts together within our aviation enterprise's FVL (VTOL FOS) program, and have invested \$584 million over the FYDP.

#### **Force Design 2030 Installations and Logistics**

Our ability to sustain our tactical forces across time and space is a critical component of integrated deterrence. The pacing threat continues to erode our traditional warfighting advantages, particularly the ability to close and sustain our forces at times and places of our choosing. Unfortunately, most of our current logistics processes and procedures play right into their strengths. Because the operational environment is increasingly contested, our logistics efforts from the tactical edge all the way back to the homeland will have to fundamentally change. As we are witnessing in Ukraine, even a numerically superior force will struggle to sustain itself and protect supply routes against persistent attack and disruption. We cannot allow this occur.

As part of the broader logistics enterprise, we must improve the ability of our installations to provide the critical requirements that enable FMF readiness. We must have resilient infrastructure and services that provide the platforms necessary to enable delivery of capabilities from across the service enterprise. Because the environment is dynamic, we must have the means to protect our installations and organic industrial base from an increasingly complex range of operational, environmental, and climate-related threats. With the proliferation of the Mature Precision Strike Regime and expanding information-related

threats, we need to better leverage technology, specifically AI, to ensure we maintain the ability to defend ourselves from emerging and evolving threats such as those posed by small, unmanned aerial systems.

In the Pacific, we are experimenting with command and control and organizational proofs of concept so our installations and logistics units can make more effective, direct contributions to FMF warfighting capability. We will place our installations under an operational command structure to ensure they are more resilient to operational, environmental, and climate-related threats, and better postured to meet the needs of the FMF.

We are pursuing a range of material capabilities to diversify and modernize our logistics portfolio, aligned to a contested littoral environment. At the tactical level, we are currently testing and assessing several platforms that will enable us to transition from a battlefield maneuver and sustainment capability based on crewed aircraft and wheeled vehicles to a diverse collection of crewed and uncrewed air and ground platforms that are smaller, cheaper, and collectively result in a more resilient distribution network of platforms and connectors. In addition to our efforts to generate, store, and distribute renewable energy forward, these platforms will exploit rapidly moving technologies that the Department and our industry partners are pursuing to decrease our dependence on vulnerable fuel supply chains, while enabling us to deliver critical commodities via the naval and joint logistics enterprise across the vast distances of the Pacific, despite enemy sensing and targeting capabilities. The most visible platforms will be a family of uncrewed logistics air systems, the smallest of which are already in prototyping and live experimentation. Our experimentation is yielding exciting results that underscore the need to expand into large and medium uncrewed logistics systems. Additionally, we will begin exploring options to replace our ground logistics fleet with a smaller, lighter, fuel-efficient replacement for vehicles that have run long past sustainability. We are now exploring emerging technologies that we can leverage to deliver capable, yet affordable vehicles that reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. As a modest first step, we will lease 3,875 non-tactical electric vehicles this year, and likely expand our inventory of electric vehicles in the future.

As I have said numerous times over the last year, logistics is the pacing function, and the on-going conflict in Ukraine appears to validate that conclusion. As such, logistics provides the resources and sets the limits for what is operationally possible, even as logisticians attempt to extend those limits as far as possible.

## **Force Design and the Reserve Component**

We recently established the Marine Innovation Unit (MIU) within our Reserve Component. The MIU's work will complement that of our Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory (MCWL) by accelerating advanced technology development. Reserve Marines in the grades of sergeant through colonel will be assigned to this unit on the basis of their expertise in areas like artificial intelligence, data science, human systems, advanced manufacturing, quantum computing, autonomy/robotics, space, supply chain management, cyber, synthetic biology, energy and materials sciences, and other technology fields. This initiative will allow us to tap into the diverse talent pool in Marine Corps Forces Reserve, and through its collaboration with MCWL, integrate research in multiple advanced disciplines into Force Design and related efforts.

## **Readiness**

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

But as I have previously noted, readiness and availability are not the same things. Ready forces are those that create competitive warfighting advantages. As we are witnessing in Ukraine, available Russian forces are being met by Ukrainian forces possessing competitive warfighting advantages. Prior to the commencement of hostilities, if one had asked for a relative combat power assessment based on each side's bench of ready (available) forces, that assessment would have been disproportionately skewed towards the Russians. As we have seen in Ukraine and in other recent conflicts, true readiness is a hypothesis to be tested and proven via employment in combat, and is not something that can be determined via availability alone.

## **Readiness and COVID 19 Update**

As of 22 April 2022, 96% of the Active Component is fully vaccinated and 97% partially vaccinated. Within our Reserve Component, 91% are fully vaccinated and 92% partially vaccinated. 3,702 Marines asked for a religious accommodation and seven have been approved. 1,067 Marines have received approval for a medical or administrative exemption. As of 22 April, 1,978 Marines have been separated for a failure to comply with a lawful order.

## **Climate Readiness and Resilience**

The Secretary of the Navy has directed the Navy and Marine Corps to develop plans for increasing our capability and capacity to mitigate both the near-term and long-term operational impacts of climate change. He has also set a goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions at our bases and stations by 2040. For the Marine Corps, I view our climate-related mitigation efforts as crucial to increasing the Service's operational capability, capacity, and resilience in the face of serious environmental challenges, including extreme storms along the East Coast, rising oceans levels along the Carolina coast, and water scarcity at bases and stations in the Southwest. It also important to note that many of the communities surrounding our installations share our climate-related vulnerabilities. We believe that partnering with Federal agencies, states, localities, tribes, and territories on climate change related planning is critical to maximizing the impact of our collective mitigation efforts.

## **Talent Management 2030**

Late last year we published *Talent Management 2030* (TM 2030), and in doing so, took a major step toward realizing the goals of Force Design 2030 and our larger service modernization effort. TM 2030 aims to create a personnel system that better harnesses, develops, and aligns the talents of individual Marines with the needs of the service to maximize the performance of both, improving both individual and unit readiness, capability, and lethality. The report details the deficiencies in our current manpower model and directs a series of reforms, initiatives, and changes that will fundamentally improve our service's organization, processes, and approach to personnel and talent management. TM2030 was informed by years of studies, reports, and other research, as well as the work of our sister services in the joint force. The influence of Congress is also evident throughout the report, and many of the most important initiatives described in its pages are the direct consequence of expanded authorities that Congress gave the services in the *John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019*.



The totality of changes described in TM2030 are significant. They are also essential, especially within the broader context of our ongoing Force Design 2030 effort. In short, the capabilities we are building as part of Force Design 2030, along with the complementary concepts of Stand-In Forces, Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO), and Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO), cannot reach their full potential without a profound change to our personnel system. In that way, TM2030 should be viewed as a critical requirement to the success of our overall service modernization.

We plan to fully implement the changes described in TM2030 and transition from our current manpower system to a talent management system no later than 2025. Change of this magnitude requires the dedicated commitment and long-term support of both military and civilian leaders. While I believe we have most of the necessary authorities to fully implement TM2030, I will be sure to inform Congress if any challenges or obstacles arise for which we may need your assistance.

Among the more important changes, the implementation of TM2030 will adjust our decades-old recruiting-centric enlisted personnel model, placing more emphasis on retention. This change will raise the aggregate age of our Marines and create a more mature force, consistent with future warfighting requirements. We expect this will raise personnel costs, yet well within accepted norms. For example, today the average cost per Marine is \$73,800 per year (pay, housing, training, etc.). By comparison, the average cost of a Soldier is \$79,800, the average cost of an Airman is \$82,500, and the average cost of a Sailor is \$89,900. While we anticipate a cost increase in the short term, we also expect a cost savings over the long term as we reduce the number of recruiters, instructors, and other resources required to maintain a recruiting-centric enlisted personnel model. In the near term, the most visible sign of our shift towards a more mature retention-based force will be a drop in the annual recruiting mission by several thousand, and a congruent increase in retention.

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

I remain committed to maintaining a total workforce that benefits from the whole of our Nation's vast human capital by recruiting, developing, and retaining Marines and civilians from all personal, cultural, and professional backgrounds. In practice, that means eliminating all structural, administrative, cultural, or other obstacles that might limit a Marine's ability to have a successful career. Capitalizing on the talents, knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences, and perspectives of every Marine will make our Corps stronger, more lethal, and more effective on the battlefield, today and tomorrow.

As a Corps, we have made great strides over the last five years in eliminating obstacles to the upward mobility of talented Marines from traditionally underrepresented demographics. One way to measure our progress is to examine the rate at which Marines from these backgrounds are selected to command battalions and squadrons at the O5/lieutenant colonel level, a key career milestone that indicates a Marine has potential for a significant leadership position within the Service. Five years ago, 19% of African American Marines screened for O5 command were selected. Since then, the average is 34% with a high of 44%. Five years ago, 3% of our battalions and squadrons were commanded by female Marines. Today that number has increased to 9%. In FY21, for the first time, a higher percentage of female Marines who screened for O5 command were selected than their male counterparts. We do not select our commanders based on gender, race, or any other marker, so the fact that Marines from these diverse backgrounds are being selected for O5 command indicates to me that we are making progress in reducing obstacles to the upward mobility of talent.

While there is evidence of some progress, there is also evidence we still have obstacles to eliminate. For example, we continue to experience a concerning lack of diversity within our TACAIR community. Despite a significant increase in the number of African American officers over the last four decades, we have the same number of African American TACAIR pilots today as we did in 1981. Last year we asked former NASA Administrator and Marine, Major General Charles Bolden (USMC, Ret.), to conduct a third-party review to examine the structural and systemic issues that might be leading to this outcome. His observations and conclusions were valuable, and I am confident his recommendations will help us to create a more equitable playing field.

### **Sexual Assault Prevention and Military Justice Reform**

The eradication of sexual assault from our ranks has been a goal of every Marine Commandant for decades. Despite making progress in fostering a culture where reporting of sexual assault crimes has increased and where victims are more willing to communicate with their leadership, we have admittedly been unable to accomplish what we all seek – the elimination of sexual assault altogether. In 2021, there were 1,202 reported sexual assaults in the Marine Corps. We must consider any policies that could increase prevention and offender accountability, and reduce or eliminate retaliation or retribution against victims. I remain committed to timely implementation of the Independent Review Committee's (IRC) recommendations, as well as implementation of changes in the FY22 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that seek to improve the investigation, disposition, and litigation of victim-related crimes.

## **Parental Leave and Childcare**

As part of TM2030, we will begin making several key updates to our parental leave program beginning in 2022. First, we are grateful to the Congress for the additional authorities to increase the duration of parental leave for primary and secondary caregivers; we have expanded our secondary caregiver leave and are working with OSD on the timely implementation of increased leave in cases of adoption or long-term foster care. Second, we are developing mechanisms by which primary and secondary caregivers can take additional parental leave – beyond the congressionally-authorized 12-weeks – if they agree to extend their service contracts. Third, we will implement a phased return to work program for the primary caregiver, allowing the caregiver to return to work gradually. Finally, and most importantly, we won't stop learning. We will carefully study the best practices of top performing American companies and institutions, always with an eye to enhancing our service parental leave programs as new research becomes available.

Increasing the availability of childcare remains a top priority for the Service. Unfortunately, persistent supply and demand imbalances have resulted in unacceptable wait times for our Marine families. The average wait time for childcare across our major bases and stations is 65 days. However, based on a number of actions taken this year, we anticipate a decrease in the average wait time by 50% over the next 12 months. Additionally, we increased funding for our Marine Family Care Programs by \$91 million, beginning in FY23 across the next five years. To provide a variety of options that fit a families' needs and to mitigate lengthy Child Development Center (CDC) waitlists, we also offer fee assistance for eligible Marines who are geographically remote, reside more than 15 miles from an installation, or are assigned to an installation with a lengthy CDC waitlist.

## **Barracks and Family Housing**

In FY21, we renovated 13 barracks, and in FY22, we plan to renovate another 10 at a cost of \$93 million. We anticipate renovating a further 10 barracks in FY23 at a cost of \$112 million. This will leave 94 barracks for future renovation. The renovations completed in FY21 to FY23 will positively impact 3,780 Marines living in the barracks. In terms of family housing, our biggest challenge is related to ongoing efforts to renovate over 300 homes at MCAS Iwakuni, for which we recently issued a contract to renovate 44, to be completed by FY23. Additionally, we anticipate spending a further \$104 million in FY23 to further remediate housing deficiencies across our bases and stations.

## **Training Philosophy**

In 1990, then Commandant Gray stated, “Training will reflect the fact the modern battlefield demands high levels of initiative and an ability to operate at a fast tempo in an atmosphere of uncertainty, confusion, and rapid change. Unit training will largely be free-play training in order to develop this ability. Individual training, starting with boot camp, will seek to develop independent action and initiative.” This guidance remains as relevant today as it was 32 years ago.

## **Training Ranges**

The Marine Corps has no outdoor training spaces or ranges where ground units can operate in an electromagnetic spectrum operations (EMSO) denied, degraded, or disrupted environment, and limited opportunities to replicate such an environment in simulation. Today, we are able to conduct some of this training at joint facilities, most notably in Alaska’s Joint Pacific Alaskan Range Complex (JPARC). However, we need to be able to train in a similar manner at all of our major training facilities. This is a critical shortfall of our existing training infrastructure in Arizona, California, Hawaii, and North Carolina. Additionally, we lack littoral maritime training ranges akin to our legendary Range 400 at the MAGTF Training Center in Twentynine Palms, California. As we modernize the force for naval expeditionary operations in contested environments, we will require a maritime training site with suitable seaward and landward ranges where we can train with the full range of our multi-domain weapon systems, to include uncrewed systems. Finally, we must remain mindful of the impacts of urbanization and community growth on our training capacity, especially in Hawaii.

## **Enhanced Infantry and Leader Training**

In 1997, the 31<sup>st</sup> Commandant gave a speech at the National Press Club in which he articulated the need to transform our most valued Marine Corps asset – the Marine infantry non-commissioned officer (NCO). While most remember his characterization of the future “Three Block War” and the new importance of the “Strategic Corporal,” most forget the context of his argument. General Krulak described to his audience the Battle of Teutoburg Forest, during which the Roman pro-consul Quintilius Varus had his force of three legions ambushed and destroyed by an adversary he put down three years prior. As his force was collapsing around him, Varus was heard to say, “Ne cras, Ne cras” (Latin for “not like yesterday”). General Krulak’s prescient assumptions about the future of ground combat in urban areas has proven accurate time and again – whether in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, or Ukraine today.

Our continued force-on-force experimentation and training in support of FD 2030 further demonstrate that the future battlespace will not be like yesterday, and change is required – even among the elite

Marine infantry community. As a result, over the past year we have greatly expanded our infantry training by adding an additional six weeks to the program of instruction. This expansion provides our infantry Marines with the training necessary to employ networked communications, organic precision fires to include loitering munitions, and multi-domain ISR capabilities at the lowest tactical level. The result will be a more technically competent and tactically proficient infantry than has ever existed in the Marine Corps – prepared to operate, fight, and win on any modern battlefield. And, one with both the physical stamina and mental resilience required of all Marine infantry past and present. These changes are not limited only to our enlisted force. We have made significant improvements at our Infantry Officers Course (IOC) to expand practical applications via a new live-fire ambush, a new amphibious operations package, uncrewed aircraft systems integration instruction, and final live-fire exercise against a multi-domain threat. Through our continued wargaming and experimentation, it is perfectly clear that an elite infantry is a critical requirement to success on the future battlefield, and the changes that are occurring at IOC and at our Schools of Infantry are now producing that force.

### **Recruit Training**

In the 2020 NDAA, Congress directed the Marine Corps to gender integrate training at both Marine Corps Recruit Depots (MCRDs) Parris Island and San Diego no later than Fiscal Year 2025 and Fiscal Year 2028, respectively. We are on pace to achieve those deadlines. Since enactment, we have trained 26 integrated companies at MCRD Parris Island and 3 at MCRD San Diego – a total of 11,121 male and female Marines who started their service and journeys together. At present, each MCRD company consists of five male platoons and one female platoon (5+1 model), although there are times when a four male platoon plus two female platoon model (4+2 model) has been employed to accommodate increased female recruit throughput.

### **Afghanistan**

In August of last year, our collective mission in Afghanistan ended. During nearly 20 years of operations, 115,992 Marines served in Afghanistan; 5,101 Marines were wounded in action; an untold number sustained invisible and permanent emotional wounds; and 478 families became Gold Star Families after the loss of their Marine. We have a moral obligation to each of our Marines and their families to resist the temptation to push Afghanistan into our distant memory, and instead bring our experiences there into sharp focus in order to learn. Thousands of Marines, Sailors, Soldiers, and Airmen answered the call to serve in Afghanistan, and while the outcome there was not what any of them expected, their service was honorable and their courage real. We owe them a hard look at how the war was executed – what we got

right and what we got wrong. To that end, I fully endorse the nonpartisan Afghanistan War Commission and its aims to help us more completely understand the full scope of the conflict.

When reflecting on our experience in Afghanistan, we also cannot forget the significant contributions of our allies and partners. The U.S. military was fortunate to operate alongside patriots from dozens of allied and partner nations, and we will never forget the service and sacrifices of these brothers and sisters in arms.

### **Joint Chief Perspective**

Trust and Confidence in the Military. I remain concerned with continued reports of the public's declining trust and confidence in the uniformed leadership of the armed services. I am old enough to remember when military service was not perceived in the positive light that it is today. I entered service within a decade after the collapse of the U.S. position in Southeast Asia and a year after the failed rescue attempt known as Desert One. Within two years of my commissioning, faith in the uniformed and civilian leadership of the military was further rocked by the tragedy of the suicide-bombing of the Marine Barracks in Beirut.

We must address negative perceptions of the military without hesitation. We must also remain mindful that the deeper we dig into the decisions of the past, particularly related to our campaigns in Afghanistan that such negative perceptions may grow. The long-term health of the Marine Corps, naval services, and entire joint force is dependent upon the cultivation and sustainment of a special bond of trust and confidence between the military and the public. We must ensure that Americans who wish to serve, and the families who support them in their service, trust their military and pursue their service "without any mental reservation." To that end, we must all make a concerted effort to speak with precision, encourage transparency, and welcome any and all oversight that would restore the public's confidence in the military.

Finally, I am increasingly concerned that in our shared desire to eliminate discrimination, harassment, sexual assault, extremism, and every other destructive act within the joint force that is contrary to the core values of all the services, we are unintentionally creating a harmful mental model and stereotype of the services as places where these are the norm vice the exception. The vast majority of young men and women across the joint force serve honorably, and are incredible representatives of their individual families and communities across the entire country. We must never allow the public to think for a moment that military service is anything other than the most honorable service one can provide to their

fellow citizens. The success of our all-volunteer force requires the special trust and confidence of the public. As you hold me and the other senior leaders accountable for all we do or fail to do, and rightfully seek to eliminate persistent behaviors inconsistent with our values, please continue to help me spread the word that military service is honorable service, and that you remain incredibly proud of the young men and women in uniform.

Wargaming and Transparency. In September 1964, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff sponsored a wargame on Vietnam for uniformed and civilian leaders from the Department of Defense (DoD), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and Department of State (DoS). The wargame was intended to provide senior policy makers with an opportunity to re-examine our national strategic objectives and the strategy required to attain those objectives. For those passionate about wargaming, SIGMA II 64 is “Exhibit A” in the case for its importance. Once declassified, the wargame report provided clear evidence that senior uniformed and civilian leaders understood the situation in Vietnam much better than historians previously assumed.

The story of SIGMA II 64 illustrates the potential of wargames to increase the breadth and depth of our understanding, but more, it illustrates the damage that can result from a lack of transparency. The SIGMA II 64 wargame results were classified and tightly controlled, not shared widely or with those who maintain oversight responsibilities, like Congress. While it is impossible to know if our national leaders would have pursued a different course in Vietnam had the SIGMA II 64 results been more widely shared, it is certain that the debate would have been better informed.

As a joint force, we should make every effort to increase the frequency, sophistication, and scope of our wargames. In particular, we should look to expand the participation of our allies, partners, interagency teammates, and industry, whose collective insights are essential to a strategy which aims at integrated deterrence. At the same time, we must seek greater transparency. I encourage Congress and staff to participate in wargames, continue asking tough questions, and challenge us to be as transparent as possible.

## **Conclusion**

As HASC Chairman Smith recently noted, “The Pentagon tends to reward conformity. As long as you check all the boxes and go up through the 15 layers of decision making, we’re all good, instead of you saw a problem and solved it.” This *has* to change, *is* changing, and can continue to change with your oversight and assistance. For some, the daily feed of images and intelligence from Ukraine has persuaded

them that a change in our availability-based model of readiness and our warfighting investments are required. I agree with these individuals. For others, the case for change has long since been made on 21<sup>st</sup> century battlefields with little if anything in common. I agree with those individuals as well. However, this does not mean that everything requires change, and that our forces are not ready today, to create advantage today, and to succeed today in whatever challenge confronts them. While the need to train and equip our Marines and Sailors with modern capabilities and equipment that create advantage is beyond dispute, what is also beyond dispute is that those individuals – the individual Marine and Sailor – are a source of competitive advantage for the service and for the larger joint force, and will always be the most important resource. Your Marines are ready today, just as they have always been. What they need is your continued support for resourcing, your continued policy oversight, and your continued faith and confidence. With those things, they will never fail.