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BY THE SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE**

**STATEMENT OF
LIEUTENANT GENERAL LEONARD F. ANDERSON IV
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS RESERVE
BEFORE
THE SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE
CONCERNING
THE GUARD AND RESERVE
ON
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Introduction

Chairman McConnell, Ranking Member Coons, 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 will highlight 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.