

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY
THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION,
VETERANS AFFAIRS, and RELATED AGENCIES,
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE
SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY
CONSTRUCTION,
VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
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Introduction

Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Ossoff, and distinguished Members of this Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify about the status and priorities of the Marine Corps military construction (MILCON) program and quality-of-life initiatives. On behalf of the Commandant and all Marines, I thank the Committee for its continued support in providing the resources required to ensure your Marine Corps ready to be first-to-fight. As the Subcommittee is well aware, the infrastructure and MILCON challenges confronting the Marine Corps, as identified by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), Government Accountability Office, and in service testimony, are significant and well beyond our ability to self-fund. As a consequence of the year-long continuing resolution and reduced funding levels, the Marine Corps has been forced to make some tough decisions. In Fiscal Year (FY) 25, the Marine Corps is deferring \$174M in facilities sustainment, restoration, and modernization (FSRM) and cancelling \$4M in order to account for these funding impacts. \$155M of this deferral is tied to the Barracks 2030 investments. This has also prevented us from spending the mandatory minimums on FSRM, as established in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Remedying these systemic challenges across our installation enterprise will only be possible with your continued support.

Current Threats

The resiliency of our installations is critical to the Marine Corps' ability to sustain combat readiness and mission effectiveness in the face of a rapidly evolving global threat landscape. Our bases and stations are not simply fixed support structures but integrated nodes in our national defense architecture, which our adversaries will attack in all domains. Resilient infrastructure enables the Marine Corps to operate effectively under all conditions, in any threat environment, by maintaining a reliable power grid, ensuring the supply of potable water, and preserving communications that enable rapid mobilization, the deployment of forces, and the projection of credible combat power. This is why we are aggressively implementing the installation components of Force Design.

Our adversaries are working tirelessly to subvert the resiliency and daily operations of our bases and stations. China in particular is more comfortable using, combining, and coordinating all means—military and increasingly non-military—to achieve its operational and strategic ends than any other adversary we've encountered. Militarily, China's intent is to use air and sea attacks on our logistics networks to delay and deny sustainment of our forces. China's planned use of cyber attacks on our infrastructure will be designed to sow confusion and discord in our communities while denying us clean water, reliable power and electricity, effective sewage treatment, and other essential services. Such attacks will attempt to disrupt our command and control as well as our ability to project power from our installations.

Until recently, none of us currently in uniform have had to contend with a contested strategic or operational environment; we had unfettered access to and within the global commons for decades after the end of World War II. We could transport whatever we wanted wherever we wanted without fear of losing either that cargo or the platform transporting it. We could set up at a benign port or airfield and operate without any real threat to those operations. While we had the occasional rockets to contend with or even local attacks to repel, we never had to concern ourselves with existential threats to our global force posture.

Those days are effectively over, and our installations will undoubtedly be targets of adversarial intentions. In preparation for this contested environment, the Marine Corps is prioritizing investments and actions to improve the security of our facilities and harden them against modern threats.

Background

Though the Indo-Pacific remains the priority theater, our adversaries will not confine their activities to one region. They will contest us everywhere—including in our homeland. The weapons engagement zone can no longer be viewed as something confined to the First Island Chain, or any other limited geographic space. We should all expect the proverbial first shots in any conflict with China to be aimed at our infrastructure—not our infantry or aviation units.

Those fires will be in the form of cyber attacks on critical infrastructure, unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) incursions, traditional electronic attack, and subversion or disruption via host-nationals or foreign nationals. Marine Corps networks have been attacked globally by China and other malicious actors, and they are under siege every day. In the last week of May, the Marine Corps confirmed hundreds of malicious attempts to access our information networks. The utility systems, communications networks, and other critical infrastructure supporting our installations remain under constant threat of adversary infiltration and exploitation due to obsolete cybersecurity infrastructure.

To succeed in such an environment, we will have to fight for our bases and stations, and not just from them. Simply stated, our installations are no longer administrative garrison sanctuaries, but rather critical terrain to be defended and contested as such.

To ensure we prevail in the next fight, wherever it may be, we must modernize and harden our installations—their physical infrastructure and especially their networks—against attacks on our ability to mobilize, project combat power, and sustain operational readiness. To support this, we are developing Force Design Optimization Plans (FDOPs) for our bases and stations, in addition to the Installation Master Plans being developed in accordance with requirements in a previous NDAA and title 10 U.S. Code § 2864. Each FDOP will address new facility requirements, identify future FSRM and MILCON projects required to create the resilience necessary in conflict, and provide all project documentation (via

the DD1391 package). Once completed, these plans will be made available to the Committee and provided to each Member with a Marine Corps installation in their state, territory, district, or adjacent district.

Barracks 2030, Service Quality of Life, and Operational Readiness Imperatives

Improving the readiness and quality of life of our Marines and sailors via the full implementation of our Barracks 2030 Plan remains a top priority for the Commandant, and this will not change. Barracks 2030 is our service's most consequential infrastructure investment plan in 50 years, and its execution is essential to generating and sustaining readiness. It is also essential to fulfilling our obligation, our compact with the Marines and sailors we lead, to provide them the facilities to support quality sleep, behavioral and mental health, physical health and nutrition, and everything else to prepare them for the challenges they face the next day. Ensuring better sleep, dietary, and fitness outcomes should further contribute to fewer lost days due to fatigue, injury, or illness, and will contribute to our overall efforts to improve our culture of safety.

At present, we are unable to meet this obligation to our own uncompromising level of satisfaction, but we are dedicated to this mission and to remediating the devastating effects of decades of deferred maintenance within our installation portfolio.

The Commandant and I are committed to providing Marines the barracks they deserve and can be proud of, yet the obstacles to overcome are significant—and they are decades in the making, as noted in the CBO's Report on Deferred Maintenance in October 2024. It notes the Marine Corps has a deferred maintenance bill in the billions of dollars. The deferred costs at Camp Pendleton, Camp Lejeune, and Marine Corps Base Hawaii total at least \$4 billion.

But as the Commandant says: We became Marines to do hard things, and remediating nearly two decades of underinvestment and deferred maintenance in our barracks in a fraction of the time is one of those hard things. At present, our Facilities Sustainment (FS) account is funded to 54% of the active component requirement of \$1.3 billion, and 77% of the reserve component requirement. In total, our FSRM accounts are approximately 12% of our total operation and maintenance funding.

Despite these funding challenges, we are slowly eating into our total shortfalls, and over the past 24 months we have initiated the renovation and repair of 23 barracks at a total cost of approximately \$300 million, which markedly improves the quality of life for 7,300 Marines. While this is a good start, it is the proverbial drop in the bucket for a portfolio with 108 barracks in need of renovation estimated to cost more than \$4 billion. The total estimated cost to fully implement Barracks 2030 is nearly \$30 billion over the next several years for barracks modernization, material, and management requirements.

In addition to renovations, we must accelerate demolitions to right-size our inventory. While it may sound counterintuitive to identify increased demolition (physical destruction) as a requirement for improved quality of life, it is necessary to generate resources and improve the living conditions of our Marines. Our current inventory of 658 barracks includes 69 that need to be demolished. Our plans include demolishing 37 barracks between FY2026 and FY2030, including seven at Camp Lejeune, six at Camp Pendleton, six at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar, eight at MCAS Yuma, and the remaining 10 at various other installations. Doing so will free the service from the costs of heating, cooling, cleaning, and repairing old, largely empty facilities, resulting in cost savings and avoidances of approximately \$125 million per year.

During a previous hearing, my predecessor testified that many of our facilities lack air conditioning; this includes barracks at Camp Horno in Southern California. While no one thinks this is acceptable, few – if any – would think remediating this problem would require more resources than what the service has available in all FSRM accounts for the entire force – or in its warfighting readiness accounts for the operating forces.

Family Housing

The Marine Corps remains focused on improving the Military Housing Privatization Initiative experience for Marines, sailors, and families. We have seen improvement in oversight, operation, maintenance, and customer service by our public-private venture (PPV) partners. We remain grateful for Congress' support for this additional oversight, and we hold property-management companies financially accountable for poor performance through incentive fee structures in our PPV business agreements. Where there are issues with maintenance, work-order completions, and tenant satisfaction scores, the total incentive fee received by a property management company can be cut by tens of thousands of dollars, depending on the value of the property and the severity of performance shortfalls.

Aboard our two largest installations, Camp Lejeune and Camp Pendleton, we have reduced waiting times for housing. At present, the wait time for housing aboard Camp Lejeune is 1-9 months for junior Marines and 1-8 months for company-grade officers; for both groups, waiting times depend on the neighborhood and home size. At Camp Pendleton, the wait time for junior Marines is 1-4 months, with no wait in some neighborhoods. For company grade officers wait times range from a few weeks to 12 months depending on home size. While these wait times are improvements over previous years, we will strive to reduce them even further.

Child Development Centers

High-quality child care is a readiness priority for the Marine Corps, and we are matching that priority with investment in child care-related MILCON projects. A \$44.1 million Child Development Center (CDC) at Marine Corps Base (MCB) Camp Pendleton is currently under construction to add 250 childcare spaces, which will satisfy the existing demand for increased classroom capacity. In Guam, a \$105.2 million CDC was awarded in May 2024 to support 276 childcare spaces, which will support our growing posture on the island. These new CDCs will offer increased childcare capacity where it is needed the most, facilitating necessary changes in our force's footprint and providing long-term relief from extended wait times. However, while construction helps resolve long wait times related to overall capacity at an installation, it does not solve more pressing issues related to staffing at our CDCs.

Currently, 16 of our installations operate CDCs. However, five locations—MCB Quantico, MCB Camp Lejeune/MCAS New River, MCAS Beaufort/Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) Parris Island, MCB Camp Pendleton, and MCB Hawaii—account for 75 percent of the Marine Corps' childcare waitlist. Those same five installations are operating at 85 percent of their authorized staffing levels due to difficulties attracting and retaining childcare workers. To address these unacceptable wait times, the Marine Corps is taking active steps to ensure that staffing levels at our CDCs meet the needs of our Marines, sailors, and families. More than 40 percent of our direct-care employees are Marine spouses, and PCS contributes to the annual turnover rate at our CDC facilities. To better support both our CDCs and Marine spouse employment, we have established a program that allows for non-competitive transfer of childcare employees, so they can transfer seamlessly to a new duty station. Through this program, the Marine Corps has retained more than 180 spouse employees in our CDC workforce. Also, in line with requirements laid out in Section 633 of the FY25 NDAA and in alignment with Department of Defense guidance, the Marine Corps has implemented a "no fee" first-child discount for all direct-care employees at our CDCs to attract qualified candidates and increase employee retention.

The Marine Corps also provides Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood (MCCYN) fee assistance for families without access to on-base child care, whether due to wait lists or being stationed at a location without a nearby CDC. In FY24, more than 1,800 children were enrolled in the MCCYN program, with 733 community-based providers, ensuring greater childcare availability for Marine families while also supporting local businesses. These efforts directly support Marine families and enhance overall force readiness.

FY25 MILCON Update

The Marine Corps is executing its fiscal year (FY) 2025 MILCON program with appropriations provided by the FY25 continuing resolution. To posture ourselves in the best manner to serve the nation, we are investing in the following areas:

Pacific Posture:

- *Marine Corps Base Hawaii:* We are constructing a new aircraft hangar to support the home basing of KC-130J and MQ-9 aircraft. The KC-130J is the Marine Corps' largest organic aviation platform, offering increased in-theater lift capability for troops and equipment. The MQ-9 is now the Marine Corps' largest UAS, and offers persistent intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities over extended ranges. Both of these aviation platforms will provide crucial support to the joint force in the Indo-Pacific.
- *Guam:* Guam is the only location west of the international dateline that we have guaranteed access to in a conflict. With this in mind, we are fully committed to ensuring our footprint in Guam can support the forces necessary to deter, and if necessary, prevail in conflict. We are building a new youth center to support Marine families stationed on the island. We are also constructing earth-covered magazines to store modern ordnance. These projects contribute to key components of force readiness, supporting the personal and operational requirements of Marines as we adjust our forward posture.
- *Australia:* We are making improvements to our posture at Australian Air Force Base Darwin, including the construction of an aircraft maintenance hangar and maintenance support facilities. These investments will provide increased maintenance and storage capacity in support of Marine Rotational Force-Darwin and theater security cooperation missions in the Indo-Pacific.

Modernization of Aviation Support Facilities:

- *Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Cherry Point, North Carolina:* We are constructing new maintenance facilities and hangar space at MCAS Cherry Point, NC. This includes a sustainment center to accommodate F-35 aircraft, maintenance and storage space, and secure data network areas. Additionally, a composite repair facility will provide a depot-level support for advanced composite materials and rotor-blade repair.

Marine Forces Reserve:

- *Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington:* We are investing in a new parachute survival training facility, for the maintenance, repair, and storage of parachutes, as well as storage and maintenance of arms for Marine Corps Reserve units in Washington.

This MILCON program is a balanced approach and reaffirms our enduring commitment to the Indo-Pacific, with five projects in the region. Ultimately, this program enables us to provide and sustain Marine forces that support our national security interests as identified by our civilian leaders. We remain grateful for your continued support in this continual endeavor.

Advanced Manufacturing and the Organic Industrial Base

Across the Marine Corps, organizations face common operational readiness challenges such as equipment obsolescence, diminishing manufacturing sources, and materiel shortages. Meanwhile, persistent supply-chain issues cause long lead times for parts replacement.

To mitigate these challenges, the Marine Corps is improving and standardizing the implementation of advanced manufacturing practices at all levels of command across the enterprise. Advanced manufacturing creates opportunities to fully realize the value of distributed operations and shore up supply-chain gaps in real time and at the point of need. The technology for construction-scale additive manufacturing (AM) is rapidly maturing, and we seek to invest in capabilities such as concrete AM to address some immediate shortfalls in storage structures. With Congress' continued support of our AM innovations, we will rapidly deliver maintenance and storage facilities for newly developed weapons systems and munitions while reducing costs and timelines for design and construction. While such capability is particularly valuable in expeditionary environments, it offers similar value for more permanent installations as well.

The Marine Corps' Organic Industrial Base remains critical to both weapon system sustainment and Fleet Marine Force readiness. The Marine Corps' depot-level maintenance facilities repair 85 percent of the service's ground equipment and directly support overflow field-level maintenance for all three Marine Expeditionary Forces and Marine Forces Reserve. During conflict, the Marine Corps' depot level maintenance capability provides battle damage repair both forward and at the depots ensuring damaged weapons systems return to the fight as quickly as possible. Investments in AM technology will support this critical mission, and in any future conflict, positioning more capable machines as far forward as possible will reduce our reliance on overburdened supply chains in a contested environment.

Conclusion

The Marine Corps Installations and Logistics enterprise is aggressively pursuing modernization initiatives and improvements to our posture in the Indo-Pacific. As the Marine Corps continues its transformation to meet the challenges of a rapidly evolving threat environment, it is abundantly clear our

installations are no longer administrative garrison sanctuaries—they are warfighting enablers in their own right.

In the next fight, our installations will be as engaged and essential to success as any of our warfighting formations. Against a near-peer or peer adversary, we will certainly fight from our bases but may also be required to fight for our bases, to preserve access to the capabilities they provide our forces around the world. Our bases and stations, at home and abroad, will be on the front lines of logistics, command and control, cyber resilience, and force projection. Our installations will sustain Marines operating in contested, distributed, and degraded environments. They will serve as critical nodes in a network of stand-in forces and must be capable of enduring disruption, adapting to new threats, and sustaining lethality over time. We must plan, posture, and protect our installations accordingly.

Every dollar invested in MILCON and infrastructure readiness returns immense value to the nation, supporting quality of life, enabling forward presence, accelerating modernization, and ensuring we can respond decisively to crises before they become conflicts. We will show up every day and prove ourselves worthy of the trust of our Marines, our partners, and the American people by demonstrating our stewardship, accountability, and readiness.

Thanks to the steadfast support of Congress, we are making real progress. From Barracks 2030 to cutting-edge logistics hubs and resilient infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific, we are preparing our installations to be mission-critical assets prepared to support our warfighters in any future campaign. But this is only the beginning. The pace of change demands we continue this momentum and accelerate it. The Marine Corps remains the Nation's premier force in readiness, and we are grateful for your partnership. Together, we will ensure our installations are as resilient and ready as the Marines they support.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and for your enduring commitment to our mission, our infrastructure, and the Marines who stand ready to defend our nation. Semper Fidelis.