Force Design 2030

March 2020

"Transformation is a process, not an event."

— John P. Kotter
Harvard Business School

BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT

This report describes the progress of the Marine Corps on my watch in preparing for the sweeping changes needed to meet the principal challenges facing the institution: effectively playing our role as the nation's naval expeditionary force-in-readiness, while simultaneously modernizing the force in accordance with the National Defense Strategy (NDS) – and doing both within the fiscal resources we are provided. A certain degree of institutional change is inevitable when confronting modernization on this scale, and that type of change is hard. As such, I want to be clear up front: our force design effort is a work in progress. Thanks to the dedication and effort of a great many Marines, Sailors, and civilians over the last six months, we have come to a clearer understanding of some force design changes we can confidently make today, while identifying other areas that require additional analysis. This reports explains, at length and in some detail, my argument for change, our force design methodology and organization, my personal assessment of the work to date, and the steps we are taking to move the force design effort into the next phase.

STRATEGIC GUIDANCE – THE NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY

The 2018 National Defense Strategy redirected the Marine Corps' mission focus from countering violent extremists in the Middle East to great power/peer-level competition, with special emphasis on the Indo-Pacific. Such a profound shift in missions, from inland to littoral, and from non-state actor to peer competitor, necessarily requires substantial adjustments in how we organize, train, and equip our Corps. A return to our historic role in the maritime littoral will also demand greater integration with the Navy and a reaffirmation of that strategic partnership. **As a consequence, we must transform our traditional models for organizing, training, and equipping the force to meet new desired ends, and do so in full partnership with the Navy.**

THE ARGUMENT FOR CHANGE

Our current force design, optimized for large-scale amphibious forcible entry and sustained operations ashore, has persisted unchanged in its essential inspiration since the 1950s. It has changed in details of equipment and doctrine as technology has advanced toward greater range and lethality of weapon systems. In light of unrelenting increases in the range, accuracy, and lethality of modern weapons; the rise of revisionist powers with the technical acumen and economic heft to integrate those weapons and other technologies for direct or indirect confrontation with the U.S.; and the persistence of rogue regimes possessing enough of those attributes to threaten United States interests, I am convinced that the defining attributes of our current force design are no longer what the nation requires of the Marine Corps.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FORCE DESIGN

This imperative for change explains why I concur with the diagnosis of my predecessor that, "The Marine Corps is not organized, trained, equipped, or postured to meet the demands of the rapidly evolving future operating environment." I assess that the current force is unsuited to future requirements in size, capacity, and specific capability:

Size and Capacity

Operating under the assumption that we will not receive additional resources, we must divest certain existing capabilities and capacities to free resources for essential new capabilities. **The most logical way to approach divestment is to take a systems perspective and reduce infantry battalions while proportionally reducing the organizations dedicated to supporting these battalions** – direct support artillery, ground mobility assets, assault support aviation, light attack aviation, and combat service support capabilities whose capacity is similarly related to the size of the ground and air combat elements to be supported.

Specific Capability

With the shift in our primary focus to great power competition and a renewed focus on the Indo-Pacific region, the current force has shortfalls in capabilities needed to support emerging joint, naval, and Marine Corps operating concepts.

We have shortfalls in expeditionary long-range precision fires; medium- to long-range air defense systems; short-range (point defense) air defense systems; high-endurance, long-range unmanned systems with Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR), Electronic Warfare (EW), and lethal strike capabilities; and disruptive and less-lethal capabilities appropriate for countering malign activity by actors pursuing maritime "gray zone" strategies.

Similarly – and understandably, in a force that was designed with different assumptions regarding threat and environment – there are some capabilities that I assess we are over-invested in. A partial list includes heavily armored ground combat systems (tanks), towed cannon artillery, and short-range, low endurance unmanned aerial systems (UAS) incapable of employing lethal effects. Finally, as an element of the integrated naval force, we have capability and capacity excesses and shortfalls in areas not organic to the Marine Corps, but which are essential to our ability to contribute to sea control and sea denial in a contested littoral environment.

These include a requirement for smaller, lower signature, and more affordable amphibious ships and a shortfall in affordable, distributable platforms that will enable littoral maneuver and provide logistical support in a very challenging theater for the kind of operations envisioned in our current concepts.

STARTING POINT FOR FORCE DESIGN – VISION AND EXPECTATIONS

The Commandant's Planning Guidance (CPG) I issued in July 2019 identified force design as my number one priority. That prioritization was the result of my direct participation in five years of naval and global war games while the Commanding General of I MEF, Commander of Marine Corps Forces Pacific, and Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration. Those war games helped shape my conclusion that modest and incremental improvements to our existing force structure and legacy capabilities would be insufficient to overcome evolving threat capabilities, nor would they enable us to develop forces required to execute our approved naval concepts.

In my planning guidance I outlined expectations regarding future force design, to include describing a number of specific attributes I saw as essential. Informed by trends in military technology, specifically the emergence and proliferation of the Mature Precision Strike Regime (MPSR), the rise of gray zone activities, and the Service imperative for maritime campaigning, I provided the following direction:

(1) **"We must acknowledge the impacts of proliferated precision long-range fires, mines, and other smart weapons, and seek innovative ways to overcome these threat capabilities."**

(2) "Future force development requires a wider range of force options and capabilities. The Marine Corps must be able to fight at sea, from the sea, and from the land to the sea; operate and persist within range of adversary long-range fires; maneuver across the seaward and landward portions of complex littorals; and sense, shoot, and sustain while combining the physical and information domains to achieve desired outcomes. Achieving this end state requires a force that can create the virtues of mass without the vulnerabilities of concentration, thanks to mobile and low-signature sensors and weapons."

(3) In the context of force design, we need better answers to the question "what does the Navy need from the Marine Corps?"

(4) I highlighted the naval operating concepts that shape the current, evolving vision of how we will fight in the future. Central among these are the Navy's vision of *Distributed Maritime Operations* (DMO) and the related

"We must transform…to meet new desired ends, and do so in full partnership with the Navy."

Marine Corps and Navy concepts of *Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment* (LOCE) and *Expeditionary Advance Base Operations* (EABO). I also referenced the draft Marine Corps concept of "Stand-In Forces," an offshoot of EABO that emphasizes the generation of, "technically disruptive, tactical stand-in engagements that confront aggressor naval forces with an array of low signature, affordable, and risk-worthy platforms and payloads."

(5) "While we stand by to perform such other duties as the President may direct, foreign humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and noncombatant evacuations do not define us – they are not our identity. Rather, they are the day-to-day consequence of being the force-in-readiness. We are not designing an across-the-ROMO force; but rather, a force intended to prevent major conflict and deter the escalation of conflict within the ROMO."

(6) "I do not believe joint forcible entry operations (JFEO) are irrelevant or an operational anachronism; however, we must acknowledge that different approaches are required given the proliferation of anti-access/area denial (A2AD) threat capabilities in mutually contested spaces."

(7) "As the preeminent littoral warfare and expeditionary warfare service, we must engage in a more robust discussion regarding naval expeditionary forces and capabilities not resident with the Marine Corps such as coastal/riverine forces, naval construction forces, and mine countermeasure forces. We must ask ourselves whether it is prudent to absorb some of those functions, forces, and capabilities to create a single naval expeditionary force whereby the Commandant could better ensure their readiness and resourcing."

Broadly speaking, our future force must align to the NDS. Thus, we will purpose-build forces capable of assurance and deterrence – forces that are "combat credible" in accordance with the NDS. In short, our future forces:

- Will be capable of successfully competing and winning in the gray zone
- Will be a single, integrated total force, and not distinct and semi-independent active and reserve components
- Will be, while purpose-built to support joint maritime campaigning, inherently capable of facilitating other joint operations

Enabling these core characteristics, our future Marines will possess the physical and mental toughness, tenacity, initiative and aggressiveness necessary to win in close combat, along with the intellectual and technical skills required to innovate, adapt, and succeed in the rapidly changing 21st century operating environment. We will equip our Marines with mobile, low-signature sensors and weapons that can provide a landward complement to Navy capabilities for surface warfare, antisubmarine warfare, air and missile defense, and airborne early warning. And in partnership with the Navy, our units will possess littoral maneuver capabilities to include high-speed, long-range, low-signature craft capable of maneuvering Marines for a variety of missions.

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FORCE DESIGN EFFORT

METHODOLOGY

Our force design effort is framed in four phases. Phase I focused on problem framing, began in July 2019, and centered on a small operational planning team (OPT) that worked directly with me to establish an initial visualization of the future force as well as aim points for follow-on work.

Phase II began in September 2019, when the OPT's initial work transitioned to the Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration (DC CD&I). The DC CD&I subsequently established twelve functionally and organizationally-focused Integrated Planning Teams (IPTs) to assess our current design and develop future force design recommendations. These IPTs were organized to address: (1) MEU reconfiguration; (2) the Marine Littoral Regiment construct; (3) Maritime Prepositioning Force reconfiguration; (4) aviation in support of the FMF; (5) logistics in support of the FMF; (6) anti-ship capabilities; (7) medium-range air defense capabilities; (8) infantry battalion reorganization; (9) manned-unmanned capability balance; (10) objective network requirements; (11) training and education; and (12) the reserves.

Upon completion of these twelve IPTs, an overarching IPT was established in February 2020 tasked with synchronizing and integrating all previous outputs and producing a plan of action for Phase III. Phase III will concentrate on rapid and iterative wargaming, analysis, and experimentation, while Phase IV will focus on refinement, validation, and implementation via the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution System (PPBES). This interim report summarizes the results of our efforts in Phase I and II, while articulating our plan of action for subsequent phases of force design.

WARGAMING

Phase II of Force Design devised and executed a series of deliberate war games providing both an initial analysis of the Phase I effort as well as guidance to inform subsequent efforts. Additionally, the Phase II effort drew upon the results of a wider body of Marine Corps and Naval Service wargaming and analysis that had been conducted before its work began. It is important to note that, although much has been learned from this body of earlier work, to date we have explored initial implications of the EABO and LOCE concepts in a limited number of scenarios, permitting some inferences about elements of the force design the IPT ultimately proposed. A much more comprehensive follow-on effort must be made to wargame and analyze all aspects of our force design conclusions. Of particular importance in informing the Phase II effort were a series of war games conducted by the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory (MCWL), including the POM-20 wargame in March 2018 and a series of games in October 2019, the June 2019 Naval Services wargame, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's (INDOPACOM) August 2019 Global XI Wargame, and the Joint Staff J7's Globally Integrated Wargame in September and November 2019. While these war games, again, were not designed to test the specific force design recommendations advanced by the IPT, they did offer a number of key insights. These include:

- The individual / force element which shoots first has a decisive advantage.
- Forces that can continue to operate inside an adversary's long-range precision fire weapons engagement zone (WEZ) are more operationally relevant than forces which must rapidly maneuver to positions outside the WEZ in order to remain survivable. These "stand-in" forces attrite adversary forces, enable joint force access requirements, complicate targeting and consume adversary ISR resources, and prevent fait accompli scenarios.
- Range and operational reach matters in the Indo-Pacific Area of Responsibility (AOR).
- The hider-versus finder competition is real. Losing this competition has enormous and potentially catastrophic consequences. This makes success in the reconnaissance/counter-reconnaissance mission an imperative for success.
- Forward bases and stations and fixed infrastructure are easily targeted, and extremely vulnerable to disruption.
- **Mobility inside the WEZ is a competitive advantage and an operational imperative.**
- Logistics (sustainability) is both a critical requirement and critical vulnerability. Forces that cannot sustain themselves inside the

WEZ are liabilities; however, those that can sustain themselves while executing reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance missions create a competitive advantage.

- There is no avoiding attrition. In contingency operations against peer adversaries, we will lose aircraft, ships, ground tactical vehicles, and personnel. Force resilience – the ability of a force to absorb loss and continue to operate decisively – is critical.

MODELING AND SIMULATION

Phase II was informed by the large body of previous campaign modeling done in conjunction with the wargaming efforts described above (as well as other related projects), along with modeling associated with the concurrent Navy-led Integrated Naval Force Structure Assessment (INFSA). This modeling informed the IPT's analysis on a number of considerations including munitions and other logistical requirements; probabilities of success in various types of surface-to-surface, surface-to-air, air-to-air and air-to-surface engagements; and the range and probability of detection of sensors employed against various target arrays.

EXPERIMENTATION

Limited experimentation has been conducted upon discrete elements of the future force utilizing approved naval concepts, to include some carefully constrained tests of the ability of the F-35B to operate and be sustained from austere, undeveloped landing sites. Some of this work has been conducted in the Indo-Pacific region in conjunction with scheduled training exercises conducted by 31st MEU. A single, limited-objective experiment addressing aspects of the organization, training, and equipment of a Marine infantry battalion was conducted in support of the Force 2025 force structure review in 2016. **We will need to conduct full-scale, empirically-based experimentation of the future force in realistic maritime and littoral terrain. Our experimentation must be deliberate and iterative, informed by both threat developments and technology advancements.**

INITIAL CMC DESIGN GUIDANCE

I provided the following specific guidance to bound the Phase II planning effort:

- Use the 2019 Commadant's Planning Guidance as REF A.
- Use approved naval concepts (DMO, EABO, and LOCE) as REF B.
- The legacy 2 MEB JFEO requirement is unsuitable as a force-sizing construct.
- Aside from the CPG's general guidance, orientation, and framing, start with the proverbial intellectual blank sheet of paper or white board, and build the operationally suitable force for 2030.
- Do not be constrained by current programs-of-record.
- The force will be uniquely capable of performing EABO and Distributed Operations (DO).
- Use a threat-informed approach and naval warfare perspective.
- Plan for sufficient capacity to return the force to a 1:3 deployment to dwell ratio.

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OBJECTIVE FORCE

The outcome of the Phase I and II effort was a redesigned "Objective Force" with the following characteristics:

Total Fleet Marine Force (FMF) structure

- Reduction of approximately 12,000 Marines relative to the current Total Force by 2030

Command Element

- Divestment of 3 active component law enforcement battalions

Ground Combat Element

- 7 infantry regimental headquarters (divestment of 1 regimental headquarters)
- 21 active component infantry battalions (divestment of 3 battalions)
- 6 reserve component infantry battalions (divestment of 2 battalions)
- Redesign of remaining infantry battalions in the direction of greater lethality and flexibility, with reduced structure (a proposed reduction per infantry battalion of approximately 200 Marines).
- 5 cannon artillery batteries (divestment of 16 batteries)
- 21 rocket artillery batteries (increase of 14 batteries over current force)
- Zero tank companies (divestment of entire capacity of 7 companies and prepositioned capacity)
- 12 Light Armored Reconnaissance (LAR) companies (increase of 3 companies over current force)
- 4 Assault Amphibian (AA) companies (divestment of 2 companies)

Air Combat Element

- 18 active component fighter attack (VMFA) squadrons, with a reduction in the number of aircraft per squadron to 10
- 14 active component medium tiltrotor (VMM) squadrons (recommended divestment of 3 squadrons)
- 5 active component heavy lift helicopter (HMH) squadrons (recommended divestment of 3 squadrons)
- 5 active component light attack helicopter (HMLA) squadrons (divestment of 2 squadrons)
- 4 active component aerial refueler transport (VMGR) squadrons (increase of one squadron over current force)
- 6 active component unmanned aerial vehicle (VMU) squadrons (increase of three squadrons over current force)

OBJECTIVE FORCE IMPLICATIONS

The recommendations of the Phase II IPT result in a potential savings of $12B to be reallocated towards equipment modernization, training modernization, and force development priorities. However, I must emphasize that these initial results are just that: it remains for us to evaluate and refine during the upcoming Phase III effort. I have high confidence in several of the recommendations advanced by the Phase II IPTs, however, others require additional deliberate analysis during Phase III.

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

I am not convinced that we have a clear understanding yet of F-35 capacity requirements for the future force. As a result, the Service will seek at least one external assessment of our Aviation Plan relative to NDS objectives and evolving naval and joint warfighting concepts.

As described in Congressional testimony, our continued pilot shortfalls are a factor we must consider and either scale programs of record accordingly or implement a sustainable, affordable solution. Other Services face similar shortfalls. This issue has recruiting, training, and retention factors – as well as fiscal and industrial base factors – that we must consider in reconciling the growing disparity between numbers of platforms and numbers of aircrew.

While the decrease in the number of infantry battalions is clearly articulated in the Phase II material, the absence of a major reduction in ground tactical combat vehicles is inconsistent with the systems-oriented reduction discussed above. **DC CD&I will need to assess existing ground tactical vehicle programs of record and recommend appropriate adjustments to approved acquisition objectives.**

FINDINGS IN WHICH I HAVE HIGH CONFIDENCE

Divestment of three infantry battalions

Based on the evolution of joint OPLANS that previously influenced capacity in our "base unit," and on my elimination of the requirement to size the force for a generic "2 MEB JFEO," the remaining 21 battalions will satisfy naval and joint requirements.

Investment in additional rocket artillery batteries

This investment provides the basis, over time, for generating one of the fundamental requirements for deterrence, and ultimately successful naval campaigns – long-range, precision expeditionary anti-ship missile fires. This requirement is based on one of the more well-supported conclusions from wargaming analysis conducted to date.

Divestment of tanks

We have sufficient evidence to conclude that this capability, despite its long and honorable history in the wars of the past, is operationally unsuitable for our highest-priority challenges in the future. Heavy ground armor capability will continue to be provided by the U.S. Army.

Divestment of three heavy helicopter squadrons

Based on analysis by our aviation subject-matter-experts, five squadrons provide sufficient capacity to satisfy our requirements as well as our future force as described in approved naval concepts.

Divestment of three medium-lift tiltrotor squadrons

Given the reduction of infantry battalion capacity and associated combat support, the remaining tiltrotor force should be sufficient to our needs.

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Divestment of at least two light attack helicopter squadrons

While this capability has a certain amount of relevance to crisis and contingency missions which we must still be prepared to execute, it is operationally unsuitable for our highest-priority maritime challenges and excess to our needs with the divestment of three infantry battalions.

Investment in additional Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS)

As a "stand-in" force of the future, the Marine Corps requires a family of UAS capabilities. We need to transition from our current UAS platforms to capabilities that can operate from ship, from shore, and able to employ both collection and lethal payloads. These future capabilities must be expeditionary and fully compatible with Navy platforms and command and control networks.

Divestment of 2 AA companies and reduction of AAV and Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) requirements

With the reduction of infantry battalions and the elimination of the 2 MEB JFEO force development sizing construct, it follows that the requirement for protected mobility to support them also decreases.

Divestment of three law enforcement battalions

This capacity is excess to our current needs, which can be met by the remaining force with some adjustments in current operational practice.

Divestment of Marine Wing Support Groups (MWSG)

We have sufficient evidence dating back to the 2010 Force Structure Review Group analysis to support this move.

Divestment of three bridging companies

This capability is primarily relevant to sustained land operations. Given my guidance to avoid such criteria in designing the force, this capability is clearly excess to our requirements.

Expansion and increased resourcing of training and education

The level of detailed planning and analysis done by the Training and Education IPT is commendable. I am confident that the issues identified by the IPT are accurate, and have full confidence in its overall recommendations. The warfighting impact of all other future capabilities is directly tied to the level of commitment we make to training modernization. We have a lot of ground to make up in this area, and must allocate adequate resources now and into the future to close this gap.

FINDINGS WHICH DEMAND ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS DURING PHASE III

Based upon my assessment of the results of the first two phases of our force design effort, we must now spend additional time ensuring that we have accurately framed the problem before us and continue to refine our understanding of assumptions, constraints, restraints, and operational realities that may affect the design of our future force.

Additionally, there are specific outputs from the initial phases that must be refined through focused analytic work and deliberate experimentation. These outputs include:

Redesign of the infantry battalion

I am not confident that we have adequately assessed all of the implications of the future operating environment on the proposed structure of our future infantry battalion. While I fully support redesign of the infantry battalion in principle, I remain unconvinced that the specific proposed new construct makes the force more capable of Distributed Operations. **We must conduct more live-force experimentation to ensure our proposed design results in a truly DO-capable force.** I would like to see intensive further analysis of this proposed new structure during Phase III.

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Emerging naval expeditionary force formations

I am convinced that a transformation of our current formations is essential for successful integration and employment of future capabilities. While the Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR), recommended as an output from Phases I and II, appears to possess the required characteristics, there is simply not enough evidence at this time to support a wholesale reorganization of III MEF. Therefore, as a first step, we will initially create a singular MLR formation. We will use that initial formation to test and validate our concepts and refine the structure of the Marine Littoral Regiment during Phase III. Before we undertake an ambitious force wide transformation, we must validate our assumptions, wargame rigorously, pursue the necessary modeling, and ensure that our primary warfighting partner – Fleet Commanders – share our conclusions.

Littoral maneuver and sustainment

I am not confident that we have identified the additional structure required to provide the tactical maneuver and logistical sustainment needed to execute DMO, LOCE and EABO in contested littoral environments against our pacing threat. While not an afterthought by any means, I do not believe our Phase I and II efforts gave logistics sufficient attention. Resolving these two areas must be a priority for Phase III.

MEU redesign recommendations

The Phase II IPT seems to have produced an incrementally improved version of today's 3-ship ARG/MEU. This vision falls short of our future needs. We cannot accept or accede to recommendations for incremental change or better versions of legacy capabilities, but must pursue transformational capabilities that will provide naval fleets and joint force commanders with a competitive advantage in the gray zone and during contingency. I am confident that, with refined planning guidance, we can develop more operationally suitable recommendations for analysis and consideration.

Increase in Light Armored Reconnaissance

While I have repeatedly stated that all-domain reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance will be a critical element of any future contingency, I remain unconvinced that additional wheeled, manned armored ground reconnaissance units are the best and only answer – especially in the Indo-Pacific region. We need to see more evidence during Phase III to support this conclusion before engaging in an expansion of our existing capacity, or committing billions of dollars in procurement funds towards the acquisition of an Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicle (ARV).

Retention of 18 VMFA squadrons

Employment of the F-35 in support of future naval expeditionary TACAIR requirements requires additional study, as I noted previously. We will continue to learn more about the various roles that platform will fulfill, and we must be willing to assess and adjust our VMFA force structure and program of record accordingly. In addition, as noted earlier, our continued inability to build and sustain an adequate inventory of F-35 pilots leads me to conclude that we must be pragmatic regarding our ability to support the existing program-of-record. We must conduct a more thorough review of our VMFA capacity requirements and ability to satisfy those requirements. This will require an external review of the issue that will inform our subsequent decisions.

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FOLLOW-ON GUIDANCE

In addition to the refinement areas addressed above, we have logical next steps to take in addressing Marine Corps structure outside the Active Component Fleet Marine Force. **Those follow-on efforts include a comprehensive assessment of our Reserve Component and our Supporting Establishment.**

MARINE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND (MARSOC)

Force design places new demands on our FMF that require us to revisit our current manpower policies supporting MARSOC. We must develop assignment policies that continue to satisfy MARSOC personnel requirements while ensuring appropriate rotation of personnel in and out of MARSOC. Any change to the current policies should not limit MARSOC's ability to recruit, assess and develop relationships and candidates, in coordination with FMF units and leaders. Recommended changes to policy should ensure Marines remain competitive for promotion and have broad opportunities for assignment within the Marine Corps and the joint force.

INFANTRY

I concur with IPT conclusions that our current entry-level and advanced infantry training programs and policies will not meet future demands of our infantry elements. We will need to increase our up-front, entry-level training investment, and then look to make corresponding modifications to advanced infantry training to develop the quality, maturity and capabilities envisioned – including the multi-disciplinary infantry approach – in the IPT findings. This effort should include looking at ways to include all components of the 03XX occupational field, including reconnaissance and LAR. Explore ways to challenge existing models and paradigms to yield a more capable and mature infantry and reconnaissance force. TECOM will develop options for a modernized and more comprehensive entry-level infantry school to fundamentally improve the initial proficiency and skills of our infantry force.

EXPERIMENTATION AND WARGAMING RECOMMENDATIONS

To further refine and develop our understanding of force design changes, **I am directing the immediate implementation of an intensive program of iterative concept refinement, wargaming, analysis and simulation, and experimentation.** I will be personally involved in and responsible for setting priorities and ensuring that necessary resources are made available for this effort. This will be a time-limited "surge" effort aimed at expanding and deepening the analytical basis underpinning our force design conclusions in support of future budget submissions. **The effort will be led by the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory (MCWL), with additional resourcing and personnel augmentation.**

I fully understand the challenges of establishing and sustaining a rapidly iterating research cycle, given the realities of resourcing and available time and personnel. It is also no panacea; there are uncertainties in the future we must account for. Technology and available funding are major factors, as is the rate at which our pacing threat modernizes and expands its operational reach. **We must commit to a continuous cycle of learning and adjustment that ensures a margin of advantage over our adversaries**, while remaining ready to respond to crisis 24/7/365.

DESIGN LEVERS AND FUNDAMENTALS

As we continue to refine our efforts and engage in additional IPTs, we must remain grounded in the fundamentals of force design vice pursuing only incremental change and minor adjustments to the current force. When visualizing the future naval expeditionary force, we will keep the following design levers in mind:

Organizational Design: Developing the form and function of elements (e.g. squad, etc.)

Force Design: Combining elements to form an organization (e.g. Brigade, FMF, JTF, etc.)

Force Structure: Capacities of elements and organizations; aggregate force structure capacities; setting end-strength

Force Posture: Where organizations are physically located and their anticipated activities

Naval and Joint Force Integration: Combining components into a system for employment; scalability and interoperability

New Capabilities: Enablers for doing things differently; impacts all other levers

In addition to the design levers identified above, participants in our follow-on planning efforts should remain mindful of the following design fundamentals that will facilitate their efforts.

- Focus on capabilities and force postures that maximize conventional deterrence such as capabilities that provide the option for us to strike effectively first from a force posture (location and disposition) that balances forward presence and integration with allies and partners and allows for the flexibility to dictate the time and place of action.
- Focus on capabilities required to satisfy approved naval concepts of DMO, EABO, and LOCE.
- Focus on capabilities that create a competitive, asymmetrical advantage in maritime gray zone operations globally.
- Focus on capabilities required to develop a truly DO-capable force that can mass effects while minimizing signature; maximize efficient tactical mobility; reduce logistics demand; and expand the range of mutual support across all tactical echelons.
- Minimize organization reliance on attachments; goal should be to maximize unit cohesion and implicit communication.
- Develop multi-axis, multi-domain precision fires organic at all echelons, enabled by a federated system of networks to ensure all elements can fight in a degraded command and control environment.
- Develop smaller but better-connected formations that organically possess a complete kill chain appropriate to echelon, and that can prevail in a contested operating environment.
- Factor in the increased importance of range and endurance of manned systems, unmanned systems, and munitions given the expanse and non-contiguous nature of Indo-Pacific geography and the ever-expanding range of threat systems.
- Focus on rapid employment and the scalability of Marine force elements.
- Ensure composable force elements constructed from purpose-built modified formations.
- Maintain an all-domain (air, surface, subsurface, space, cyberspace) perspective.
- Create greater resilience in our C4 and ISR systems to counter more sophisticated threat capabilities.
- Develop military deception, camouflage, cover, concealment, and obscurant capabilities to defeat terminal phase attack and challenge broad area surveillance.
- Pursue the development of organic C4ISR, maneuver, and fires capabilities (organic network) at all echelons.
- Create purpose-built forces. (Ensure all elements are equipped and trained for their specified purposes. Aggregating specialized units with base elements creates a tailored multi-domain force in order to provide maximum relevant combat power (RCP) on-demand.)

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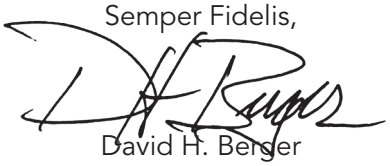
CONCLUSION

We have made significant progress to date in our force design efforts. While these efforts have undeniably been productive and will inform our divestment and investment decisions going-forward, we should view them as first steps in a longer journey. We have much more work to do to ensure our recommendations rest upon a solid analytic foundation. While I am confident in the merits and operational suitability of many of the IPT recommendations, in other areas we have a ways to go before making decisions. We simply must have more analysis and evidence, which comes from modeling and experimentation.

While the Future Force we are developing is different in terms of structure and capabilities, it is consistent with our historical roots as Fleet Marine Forces and directly supports our Title 10 responsibility to seize and defend advanced naval bases, and perform all such duties as directed by the President. It is also important to note that methods and concepts such as Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations are not the sum total of our contribution to the joint force. We will continue to serve as the nation's premier crisis response force around the globe, and contribute to the deterrence and warfighting needs of all combatant commands.

Semper Fidelis,



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SEMPER FIDELIS