***Ladies and Gentlemen, the Marine Corps is at an inflection point – we must change.***

For those anxious about how all this change will affect the GCE we know and love, don’t be. It’s not a zero sum game. Yes, we *may* need to get smaller and we *do* need to divest of some marquee platforms, but fundamentally - we will remain an *agile* and *lethal* combat force . . . undergirded by tactical excellence at every level.

This is a time to be *excited*, to be *motivated*. To lean forward and change, because as we all know, with new challenges there are always new opportunities. So yes – it’s a great time to be a Marine because throughout our history the Marine Corps has ***never*** backed away from a challenge – we get out in front and stay there.

While our threat-based design effort was initiated at my direction in July, we continue to rigorously war game design options as well as develop an independently verifiable analytic foundation for our conclusions. I expect to be able to share these with you in the next 90 days.

While I won’t speak to the details that many of you would like to hear tonight regarding the proverbial “eaches” of our new force design, I think it *is* appropriate for me to share with you the *observations and assumptions* we used for design . . . the *hypotheses* we developed and are working to validate . . . and *the conclusions* we’ve reached so far.

***First – Our observations driving Force Design***

China’s pivot to the sea as the primary front in a renewed great power competition has fundamentally transformed the operational environment in which the Naval and Joint Force must operate.

Specifically, the Navy & Marine Corps must confront the new reality that *presumptive sea control* is no longer assured for the United States – we will compete for it. And just as a reminder, per our amphibious doctrine – sea control and air superiority are pre-requisites to success…along with surprise and spectrum dominance.

Put simply . . . **Our naval forces today are not optimized for gray zone competition; nor are we optimized for conventional deterrence against a modern peer adversary.**

China and Russia carefully observed our military operations over the past two decades. They took good notes, then built a force designed to counter our strengths. And they did that while we were largely focused on counterinsurgency operations in the Middle East.

For us, then, staying ahead means we need ***new*** concepts and approaches from the Sea Services to compete and deter peer adversaries. It will also require us to operate outside of our traditional comfort zone and embrace a new cooperative mindset to employ ***integrated*** American seapower.

How can we leverage various authorities by integrating Navy, Marine, Coast Guard, and inter-agency assets and personnel to show adversaries a new look and complicate their decision cycle? How do we employ this strategy *afloat*, together with our allies and partners in direct contact with adversary military and para-Naval forces? How do we win the information battle, informing and influencing international audiences about China’s coercive approach? It’s apparent to me that we will need to think more broadly as we work our way through this challenge.

While we must be prepared to respond to threats across the entire spectrum of conflict, *our first priority as a Naval Service must be* *deterrence.* Why? Because the cost of competition will always be less than the cost – in both blood and treasure – of armed conflict.

This means that our *Fleet Marine Forces* will operate *inside* an enemy’s sensor and weapons engagement zone. That’s where Marines are comfortable operating, and how we can best support the Maritime Component scheme of maneuver. That is where we as Marines belong.

Here’s our basic premise: Our ability to conduct sea control and denial operations both from the sea and from key maritime terrain is an *essential* naval capability in modern armed conflict—particularly in vicinity of close and confined seas. And when we use the terms *sea control* and *sea denial*, in basic Marine speak we’re talking about eliminating enemy ships, aircraft, their crews, and land-based forces within a given area and stopping any other enemy units that might try to enter that area.

***So . . . given what I just laid out, what did we conclude?***

**First**: the rise of peer competitors means that *warfare has undergone a paradigm shift* that necessitates changes in the fundamental assumptions upon which we have built the current force.

**Second:** Improving what we ***currently*** have in capability and capacity *will not suffice* to resolve the challenge, *nor* will connecting *new* things to *old platforms* or merely modifying old methods.

**Third**: We will *need new capabilities –* the “means” *-* to fight in *new ways* to generate *better strategic options* for future decision makers*.*

Put those three together, and you conclude that we’re going to have to first *adapt* . . . and then *innovate* the force to actually *bend the character of future war in a new direction* so we can maintain our competitive advantage. That is what ***Force Design*** is all about.

***We started, then with a Force Design Hypothesis – “Stand-In Forces”***

What our nation needs is a future Marine Corps - trained and equipped as a naval expeditionary force-in-readiness - and prepared to operate as an *inside*, or “*stand-in” force* within contested maritime terrain . . . *in support of fleet operations*.

Wargames support this hypothesis, and reinforce the conclusion that naval expeditionary stand-in forces can generate technically disruptive, tactical stand-in engagements that confront aggressor naval forces with an array of low signature, affordable, and risk-worthy platforms and payloads.

In simpler terms, here’s what this means: our adversaries need to perceive a bunch of small, mobile Marine units in their “backfield” with bad attitudes, low signatures, and toolkits full of disruptive, lethal capabilities … basically, throwing a wrench into their entire gameplan.

Our *Inside Forces* will need the advantages of emerging new technologies to create an integrated naval force optimized to operate in close and confined seas. That’s our “sweet spot” as a Corps, our unique contribution to the naval and joint force.

***Let me talk about the Force Design Investments and Divestments . . . what to shed, and what to grow:***

Based on our initial wargame findings, we are **over-invested** in capabilities purpose-built for traditional, large-formation, sustained operations ashore – think DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM - and surge layer capacity. To highlight what I’m talking about, we’re going to need to make cuts in a number of areas to “make weight” as an expeditionary naval force:

* Surge-layer capacity in our Reserves and also in our Maritime Prepositioning Force. Our focus is on contact and blunt layers.
* Manned anti-armor ground and aviation platforms.
* Manned ground transportation and associated movement capabilities
* Traditional towed artillery that we can’t modify for Hyper-velocity projectile use
* Short-range mortar systems that lack precision, necessary lethality and range
* Non-lethal short-range UAS capabilities
* Excess equipment we now maintain in admin storage
* Vehicles, aircraft, and systems that we either can’t afford to procure or can’t afford to sustain over the life of the item

Before you go looking for one of those cardio-pulmonary machines over on the wall to re-start your heart, just a reminder that “over-invested” doesn’t necessarily mean *eliminating* . . . it may mean we need to re-scope that item to what we actually need, and can afford.

Okay, now take a deep breath and let’s consider areas where we may be under-invested for our future force:

* Low-cost, lethal, long-endurance Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicle
* Unmanned lethal and non-lethal ground and amphibious vehicles
* Mobile and rapidly deployable rocket artillery and long-range precision fire missiles
* Unmanned aerial and ground logistics vehicles
* Loitering munitions across all echelons of the force
* Mobile air defense and counter-PGM capabilities to include directed energy systems
* Signature management capabilities
* Electronic warfare capabilities
* Expeditionary airfield capabilities and structure
* More numerous lethal and risk-worthy surface vessels to include LRUSV and other unmanned options.

***Oh, and one other thing . . .***

We’re going to need to figure out if we can afford to stay out in front of our peer adversaries in every aspect of warfighting – or could we conceivably “draft” in some areas and let them expend all their energy setting the pace. Just something to think about. Nobody said Great Power competition was going to be easy.

***(Closing)***

Here’s the deal: making only incremental, minor adjustments to our current force would allow our adversaries to catch up and pass us – and that we will not let happen.

We must *expand the competitive space* and be prepared to win in the next war. To do that, we must redesign our Marine Corps and focus our efforts as a naval expeditionary force.

This is a 10-year effort to redesign our force, and we will no doubt make course adjustments along the way. After all, our adversaries are constantly making changes. The key is for us to force them to react.

Thank you for being here tonight.

Thank you for making the decision to be Marines.

Thank you to your families for the support they provide us as Marines.

Please have a happy Thanksgiving and happy holidays. Thank you for all you do for our Corps and for our country. Semper Fidelis.