

[H.A.S.C. No. 115-62]

**AMPHIBIOUS WARFARE READINESS  
AND TRAINING: INTEROPERABILITY,  
SHORTFALLS, AND THE WAY AHEAD**

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HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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THE WAY AHEAD**

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS,  
*Washington, DC, Friday, December 1, 2017.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 8:01 a.m., in room 2212, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Joe Wilson (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOE WILSON, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM SOUTH CAROLINA, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS**

Mr. WILSON. Good morning. The subcommittee will come to order. I welcome you today to this hearing of the House Armed Services Committee Readiness Subcommittee on “Amphibious Warfare Readiness and Training.”

Today the subcommittee will hear from the Navy and Marine Corps regarding the status of amphibious training and readiness, specifically the challenges of amphibious ship availability and Navy and Marine Corps interoperability. We are also pleased to have the Government Accountability Office present to comment on their recent study of the amphibious operations training released in September 2017.

I ask the witnesses to do their best to describe where shortfalls exist and what can be done to improve the less than optimal state we are in, specifically how better and more consistent funding could help. We have held a number of readiness hearings and briefings on aviation, surface combatants, DOD [Department of Defense] infrastructure, and other topics. Every session points to the same grim conclusion: our services are indeed in a readiness crisis. Marine expeditionary units aboard U.S. Navy amphibious vessels are an important element of our forward deployed strategic deterrent. To be effective, the Navy-Marine Corps team must train together regularly, certainly more than they do today. Because we have too few ships, necessary training is not possible.

President Ronald Reagan frequently used the phrase correctly, “Peace through strength.” I agree with President Reagan and believe we have a higher level of defense funding—must be achieved to achieve that goal. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today on how this capability can be improved.

Before I introduce the witnesses, I am grateful to recognize Ranking Member Madeleine Bordallo, the distinguished gentlelady from Guam, for opening comments she would like to make.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wilson can be found in the Appendix on page 25.]

**STATEMENT OF HON. MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO, A DELEGATE  
FROM GUAM, RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON READ-  
INESS**

Ms. BORDALLO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to all of our witnesses for being here today. I do look forward to discussing the challenges that are impeding amphibious training and the mitigations and long-term solutions to build and sustain readiness in the Marine Corps and the Navy.

Amphibious operations are complex, and they are difficult to say the least. There is a tremendous amount of planning and preparations required to ensure the ships, sailors, and Marines and equipment are properly coordinated to ensure the success of a training event or, in the event of a contingency operation, an actual amphibious landing.

The GAO [Government Accountability Office] report clearly indicates there is currently a lack of overall strategy to allocating limited resources that are needed for amphibious training. The current operations tempo, as well as the limited number of ships, compound this challenge. It is clear that better coordination is required by the Navy and the Marine Corps to ensure this critical warfighting and skill is restored to a readiness level and is required to meet our operational planning needs.

I am encouraged to see that both the Navy and the Marines have concurred with all three recommendations made by GAO, and I intend to monitor the progress as both services work to restore this amphibious operation readiness. This committee is keenly aware of the continuing impacts of sequestration and unpredictable funding on readiness in every aspect of the services.

I encourage the witnesses to share specific examples of how unpredictable funding has impacted their ability to conduct amphibious operations training. And I look forward to the training, and thank you again, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Ranking Member Bordallo.

In connection with today's hearing we welcome members of the full committee who are not members of the Readiness Subcommittee who are or will be willing to attend. I ask unanimous consent that these committee members be permitted to participate in this briefing with the understanding that all sitting subcommittee members will be recognized for questions prior to those not assigned to the subcommittee. Without objection. So ordered.

I am pleased to recognize our witnesses today. I want to thank them for taking the time to be with us and their service to our Nation. We have Lieutenant General Brian Beaudreault, Deputy Commandant for Plans, Policies, and Operations, U.S. Marine Corps; Vice Admiral Andrew L. "Woody" Lewis, the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Operations, Plans, and Strategy, U.S. Navy; and we have Mr. Cary Russell, Director of Defense Capabilities and Management of the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

We will now ask each panel member to make brief opening remarks before we proceed to member questions under the very strict 5-minute rule of Mr. Warren.

We will begin with General Beaudreault.

**STATEMENT OF LTGEN BRIAN D. BEAUDREAULT, USMC, DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR PLANS, POLICIES, AND OPERATIONS**

General BEAUDREAULT. Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Bordallo, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to testify before this subcommittee.

Today Marines and sailors are at sea operating as amphibious ready groups [ARGs], Marine expeditionary units [MEUs]. We have the *America* ARG and the 15th MEU out in the Central Command region with some of its personnel about to embark on allied ships. We have the *Bonhomme Richard* and the 31st MEU out in the Pacific. The *Iwo Jima* ARG is off the east coast of the United States with the 26th MEU embarked preparing to deploy, and we have Black Sea rotational Marines aboard DDGs [guided-missile destroyers] getting ready to exercise in the European theater. So your expeditionary forces in readiness are postured forward and are accomplishing our national security objectives.

The Marine Corps has reviewed the GAO report on Navy and Marine Corps training, and we agree with the study, its findings, and its recommendations.

Today's testimony provides the Navy and Marine Corps the opportunity to inform the Readiness Subcommittee on the challenges associated with amphibious operations training, discuss our shortfalls, and describe our projected way ahead.

The current inventory of 32 amphibious warships is short of our need to satisfy operational requirements, which does negatively impact the naval force's ability to generate readiness and negatively affects availability for training with larger scale formations.

The amphibious force structure is projected to grow to a total of 34 ships starting in fiscal year 2021. And the Marine Corps supports the 38-ship requirement and the requisite funding to develop readiness while concurrently fulfilling validated joint requirements, accomplishing necessary fleet maintenance, and maintaining capacity to respond to potential contingencies. And as the amphibious ship inventory builds toward 38 ships in fiscal year 2033, the Navy and Marine Corps team will continue to explore innovative ways to employ alternative platforms.

So on behalf of our Marines and sailors, civilians and their families, we thank the Congress and this committee for the opportunity to discuss the key challenges your Navy and Marine Corps face, and we thank you for your support.

The most important actions that Congress can take now is to immediately repeal the caps on defense spending in the Budget Control Act, and provide a defense appropriation that ensures sufficient, consistent, and predictable funding to train, man, and equip your Navy and Marine Corps. And with your help we will overcome these constraints and enable your Navy and Marine Corps team to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Mr. Chairman, I have submitted a written statement for the record, and I would ask that to be accepted, and I look forward to answering your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of General Beaudreault can be found in the Appendix on page 26.]

Mr. WILSON. General, thank you very much, and the persons who are here on the subcommittee certainly endorse your statement in regard to the Budget Control Act sequestration. I would like to now proceed to Admiral Lewis.

**STATEMENT OF VADM ANDREW L. LEWIS, USN, DEPUTY CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS FOR OPERATIONS, PLANS AND STRATEGY (N3/N5)**

Admiral LEWIS. Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Bordallo, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today alongside General Beaudreault.

The team before you is inextricably linked. In our past, I have commanded Marines and he has commanded sailors. We train together, deploy together, and fight together. Our bond has been strengthened over the centuries of our great services, and today we look forward to testifying how we will continue that bond in the future. I request my written statement be submitted for the record, and I will keep these remarks brief.

Right now your Navy-Marine Corps team is forward deployed and standing the watch. Sailors and Marines are at sea aboard the *America* Amphibious Readiness Group with the 15th MEU in Central Command, USS *Bonhomme Richard* Amphibious Readiness Group with the 31st MEU in the Pacific, and the *Iwo Jima* Amphibious Readiness Group with the 26th MEU in the Atlantic preparing to deploy.

We are at the tip of the spear and working every day to sharpen it. We reviewed the GAO report on Navy and Marine Corps amphibious operations and training and agree with the study, its findings, and its recommendations. We appreciate the opportunity to inform the Readiness Subcommittee of the challenges associated with Navy and Marine Corps amphibious operations training and integration, discuss our shortfalls, and lay out a projected way ahead.

The GAO report finds the Navy shortage of amphibious ships to be detrimental to our ability to train. The 32 amphibious ships currently in the fleet are stressed to meet both combatant commander operational requirements, ongoing contingency operations, and disaster relief, which impacts the ability of the Navy and Marine Corps to improve readiness and training as an integrated force.

Continuing resolutions and caps imposed by the Budget Control Act have impacted our ability to plan and implement training, ship maintenance, and modernization. While we have prioritized maintenance and readiness dollars, the positive effects of prioritized funding will not remove these deficits in the near term. Restoring the readiness of the fleet requires predictable, stable, and adequate funding over several years to ensure that we can conduct the required maintenance on our ships. This stability would help the



Navy to restore stocks of necessary parts, get more ships to sea on time, and better prepare sailors and Marines for deployment.

Although a continuing resolution may be better than no funding at all, the costs associated with not being able to start new work cannot be overstated. Delays in shipyard maintenance periods cause ships to either have their training pipelines compressed or maintenance deferred. Deferred maintenance creates an increase in costs due to a corresponding increase in machinery to repair.

At the same time the value of skilled artisans is amplified when work is stopped due to the lack of a labor force possessing the qualifications to complete the repairs. Work stoppages created by continuing resolutions force artisans to seek alternate, more stable employment. Skilled shipyard workers require 2 to 4 years of training to reach journeyman certification and 5 to 10 years to reach master. Shipyards and skilled workers require stable, predictable funding to maintain their skilled workforce and invest in these critical training programs in order to maintain and grow the shipyard capacity we need.

Maintaining the fleet is not enough to ensure readiness when adversary capabilities continue to improve. We need a more lethal and effective force, which can only be realized through modernization and new technologies. The same stable, predictable, and adequate funding required for maintenance is critical to the new programs and additional capacity we need to get better. We are working together to overcome these challenges at the direction of the Chief of Naval Operations and Commandant of the Marine Corps.

Through the Naval Board, the services incorporated processes to posture for increased training and integration. The commander of the United States Fleet Forces Command and commander of the United States Marine Forces Command established a co-led maritime working group to provide an enduring interservice collaborative process that integrates capabilities, force development, experimentation, and emerging requirements with exercise planning, scheduling, and resourcing.

The commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet and commander of the U.S. Marine Forces Pacific have similarly developed the Pacific Naval Integration Working Group to represent the Pacific issues. These four commands meet together quarterly to include meeting at this time in Hawaii.

On behalf of all Marines, sailors, civilians, and their families, we thank the Congress and this committee for your support and this opportunity to discuss the key challenges your Navy and Marine Corps face. The President's fiscal year 2018 [budget] request and the recently passed National Defense Authorization Act look toward fleet wholeness and funding to man, train, and equip and organize the Navy and Marine Corps. These funds will only work if they are approved in a consistent, predictable, and timely manner. With your help, we will overcome these constraints and reshape your Navy and Marine Corps to meet the challenges of the 21st century. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Lewis can be found in the Appendix on page 37.]

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much, Admiral. We now proceed to Mr. Cary Russell.

**STATEMENT OF CARY B. RUSSELL, DIRECTOR, DEFENSE CAPABILITIES AND MANAGEMENT, U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE**

Mr. RUSSELL. Good morning Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Bordallo, and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for having me here today to talk about GAO's recent review of Navy and Marine Corps training for amphibious operations.

The Navy and Marine Corps together maintain forces capable of conducting amphibious operations; that is, military operations launched from the sea using naval vessels to project a Marine Corps landing force ashore. As you know, the United States today faces a complex national security environment with threats ranging from large-scale traditional state actors to destabilizing nonstate actors.

Accordingly, the Navy and Marine Corps must have fully trained and ready forces to address these threats in the maritime domain. However, each of the military services today are generally smaller and less combat ready than they have been in many years. For example, over the past two decades the number of Navy amphibious ships has decreased by 50 percent, from 62 ships in 1990 to the 32 that we have today.

For my statement I am going to focus on three areas that we examine in our latest report. First, the Navy and Marine Corps ability to complete training for amphibious operations and factors that limited that training. Second, steps taken by the Navy and Marine Corps to mitigate training shortfalls. And third, efforts to improve overall integration between the Navy and Marine Corps for amphibious operations training referred to as "naval integration."

With respect to the first area on completing amphibious training, we found that the Navy's fleets of amphibious ships and associated Marine Corps combat units that were just about to deploy as part of those Marine expeditionary units had generally completed the needed training for amphibious operations. However, for that majority of forces not nearing a deployment, such as those conducting home station training to build and maintain core competencies, they fell considerably short of being able to complete amphibious training requirements. This was especially noticeable in Marine Corps infantry battalions and V-22 Osprey tiltrotor squadrons.

These deficits can create a potential gap in the Marine Corps ready bench of units. If called on these units could be left scrambling to obtain last-minute training, risking their ability to be fully ready once deployed and underway.

The most prevalent factor we found that hampered training completion was a lack of available amphibious ships on which to train. For example, data we collected or obtained from the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, which operates out of the Pacific, showed that the Navy was unable to fulfill 93 percent of its request for Navy ship support for training in fiscal year 2016.

Other significant factors we identified across the Marine Corps that hampered training included limited access to range space and maintenance delays for amphibious ships.

With respect to actions taken by the Navy and Marine Corps to mitigate training challenges, we identified some important steps that the services have taken. For example, the Navy in working

with the Marine Corps has assessed its needs for amphibious ships to support current deployments while also providing for adequate training and now plans to increase the number of ships in the amphibious fleet from 31 to 38.

Also, the Marine Corps is currently evaluating its amphibious training requirements and the number of forces that must be trained and ready at any given time. However, despite these actions, we found that the service's current approach for amphibious operations training does not fully incorporate strategic training in leading risk management practices, such as prioritizing all available training resources.

For example, the Marine Corps relies more on an ad hoc process to identify units that are available for home station training when an amphibious ship becomes available, rather than a process that would deliberately align the next highest priority units with those ships and other resources.

Additionally, the Navy and Marine Corps have not systematically evaluated a full range of alternatives to achieve training priorities in light of the limited availability of amphibious ships.

Further, while the Marine Corps has endeavored to incorporate simulators and other virtual devices into its training activities, we identified gaps in its processes to effectively develop and use them; namely, weaknesses on the front-end planning and postfielding evaluation of device effectiveness.

And finally, with respect to naval integration for training activities, the Navy and Marine Corps have taken steps to improve coordination between the two services but have not fully incorporated leading collaboration practices that would help drive these efforts. For example, the Navy and Marine Corps lack defined common outcomes that would help them create a more integrated approach to managing and executing their training programs.

This completes my statement, and I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Russell can be found in the Appendix on page 44.]

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much, Mr. Russell, and thank all of you for your succinctness, and we will begin now on the very concise 5-minute rule.

Even before we begin, yesterday, and I was really pleased, and, Admiral, you brought it up again, the consequence of continuing resolution that we have and we are facing that now. And something that would be very helpful as I mentioned, and I hope that both of you could provide succinct examples of what the additional costs are due to a continuing resolution in real world language very brief so that Congresswoman Bordallo and I can receive that and we can provide it to the rest of the subcommittee members so that we could actually use that to explain to our constituents what the consequence of a continuing resolution is.

And it would just be very helpful because it just doesn't come across as it should. And we want to make it where our constituents understand and also even our colleagues, it would be good for them to understand, too.

Admiral Lewis, you clearly articulated in your written statement and in your opening remarks why it is so important to grow the

number of amphibious ships currently in the Navy's inventory. Can you please comment on why you would need additional ships, particularly being challenged when the Navy has plans to take commission LSDs [dock landing ships] offline for up to 4 years at a time? Currently LSD-46, the USS *Tortuga*, does not have planned availability fiscal years 2016 to 2019. Can you please explain this further?

Admiral LEWIS. Yes, sir. In regards to taking the ships offline for maintenance, so these ships are old, and they are ships that, you know, so it is akin to keeping a car that you have had for a long time that the maintenance costs become further and further. And we have—over time we have deferred these maintenance because of continuing resolutions.

As an example of that deferred maintenance, the USS *Gunston Hall* went into maintenance deferred an entire 3-year deferral increased the costs from \$44 million to \$111 million. And the time in maintenance went from 270 days to 696 days. You know, if you compare that to the cost to your personal vehicle that is, you know, a couple months' pay of all of us, regardless of what kind of car it is. So that is a big impact to those funds, those operating funds. That is how we fund those maintenance.

In the case of ships that we have taken offline, as you state, we have really no other choice to do that because we don't have adequate funding under continuing resolutions to do that maintenance, you know, right in quick order. If we had more funding we could, you know, tighten those timelines on that maintenance on those older ships. However, we have done the best that we can do with the funding that we have and spread that maintenance out over time.

Mr. WILSON. I want to thank you for raising that it is not just cost but delay and extension of time, and so if you all could include that, not just costs, but the consequence of offline and delay.

And General Beaudreault, what specific elements do the Marine Corps atrophy and suffer the most from the lack of amphibious ships and training opportunities?

General BEAUDREAULT. Mr. Chairman, it is our ability to train at higher echelons above the Marine expeditionary unit and the amphibious ready group unit. Our forcible entry capability, core competency of the Marine Corps and Navy team here, is at risk above the MEU level. Simply we can do some training through—of the command elements through virtual systems, but at some point you have to put the ships to sea and go through a mission rehearsal.

And the ability to generate the number of ships required to train at a Marine expeditionary brigade [MEB] level just simply isn't there. So we take it in bite-size chunks, and we try to train elements of that MEB the best we can, but it is very, very difficult lacking the capacity to put the entire MAGTF [Marine air-ground task force] and Navy team together at sea. That is the greatest challenge we have quite honestly right now.

Mr. WILSON. Well, and I appreciate you pointing out that virtual can be very helpful, but it is the actual practicality of the operation itself. At this time we proceed to Congresswoman Bordallo.

Ms. BORDALLO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Russell, you identified concerns with the way the Navy and the Marine Corps were utilizing available training resources to conduct amphibious training. Can you please provide us with some specific examples where GAO felt the current process did not effectively prioritize training?

Mr. RUSSELL. Yes, ma'am. Well, I will start out by saying with respect to the units that are just about to deploy for the Marine expeditionary units, they were able to train, and they were able to use those resources.

The issues we had were with that ready bench, that group that was not ready to deploy, and what we found is that more often the assignment of Navy ships to Marine Corps units was done more ad hoc based on the availability of the units for the Marine Corps units to match up to the ship based on the availability of the ship, rather than having a system of prioritization to look at those Marine Corps units that were most likely to need training earlier.

So, for example, some of those units that might be tagged to go as part of the special Marine task forces, the SPMAGTF [special purpose Marine air-ground task force], for example, or other things that might have a priority over others. That distinction was not made in the process, rather, it was more of a matching of availability.

Ms. BORDALLO. Thank you. Thank you very much. Vice Admiral Lewis and Lieutenant General Beaudreault, given the concerns identified by GAO I am concerned that additional funding targeted toward readiness may not be prioritized toward the units that have the highest needs. In light of the GAO report, can you describe what controls have been put in place or that you plan to put in place in the coming year that will ensure readiness resources are properly allocated to the units with the most pressing needs? And you, General, first.

General BEAUDREAULT. Thank you, ma'am. I would say that, yes, we do have a plan and there are controls in place, and it gets to what Mr. Russell just referred to. And we first ensure that we can meet our steady-state requirement. Those next to deploy have to be trained and certified to go forward and execute their missions. 26th MEU, for instance, right now is the priority effort to make sure they have got everything they need before they depart the east coast of the United States to go forward into the Central Command region.

Secondly, it is the ability to ensure of our OPLAN [operation plan] readiness, and that calls for units, of course, in number and in size greater than Marine expeditionary units or amphibious ready groups. So we do take a look at our OPLAN requirements and try to focus those units because the units change all the time as units deploy on their normal schedule, battalions change and squadrons change so we try to keep pace with the units that are back at home station that may be next to deploy. And that next to deploy focus is on those specifically that may have to meet an OPLAN requirement.

Thirdly would be exercises. And with exercises comes experimentation. We can't afford to have sets of ships that are going to exercise and then we need another set to experiment. We have inte-

grated experimentation in with the exercises, and I think Dawn Blitz is our most recent example of that where we wanted to test our ability to shoot High Mobility Artillery Rocket System off of an amphibious platform, which proved itself.

So I would say that is the sequence, that is the plan. It is to make sure that those that are next to deploy, meeting OPLAN requirements, and then exercises and experimentation in that order.

Ms. BORDALLO. Thank you. Thank you, General. Admiral.

Admiral LEWIS. Yes, ma'am. Really to mirror what General Beaudreault said, but I would—the first priority for funding, additional funding that we need, would be go toward ship maintenance, so as to be able to not have to defer any further maintenance and to keep the maintenance time and costs and to get done on time so they can get out and start the training cycle.

The training cycle is about a year long, 6 months in which we do the basic unit level training with the Navy with Marines embarked with their basic core competencies and then the second 6 months is a fully integrated toward the higher end training.

The prioritization really starts with that maintenance to make sure we start on time and then we can have the units that we have in an inventory, which is not enough, but we can have the units we have in the inventory to train with.

And then the third priority would be at the higher end, the exercises, the larger formation exercises where the experimentation takes place, as well.

Ms. BORDALLO. So maintenance, training, and exercises in that—

Admiral LEWIS. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. BORDALLO. Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Ranking Member. We now proceed to Congressman Austin Scott of Georgia.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General, Admiral, it is not lost on me that between the two of you you have 66 years in service to the country. I think if Mattis and Kelly combined probably have over 80 years of service to the country, and as I listen to any of the four of you that have talked, it is pretty clear that the sequester and the caps have done more damage, just Mattis has been very direct about it, than any outside enemy to our military and our capabilities. And I want to reiterate the point that I made yesterday, and I want to say this as respectfully as I know how to do it. As long as you ask for a continuing resolution you are going to get a continuing resolution.

We can put an end to this madness by the end of this year, but only if men like you and General Kelly and General Mattis hold Congress' feet to the fire. Give us Christmas Eve, give us Christmas Day to go home to our families. There are a lot of men and women deployed around the world. Make us stop this madness.

But if General Mattis comes out and says we need a continuing resolution, I promise you, you are going to get a continuing resolution. And from the members of HASC [House Armed Services Committee] I don't pretend to speak for all of them, but I will tell you that I think among the Democrats and the Republicans on HASC we all want to help you solve this problem. All of us do. I believe

that to be true. It is not a partisan issue from the members who are on HASC.

But I just promise you if Mattis and Kelly ask for a continuing resolution, you are going to have a continuing resolution, and until you hold Congress' feet to the fire you are going to have to watch our capabilities further degrade. And so I would just ask for your help in speaking with them and making sure that they say no more continuing resolutions. If Congress has to cancel going home for Christmas, then Congress can cancel going home for Christmas just like the soldiers do.

But, again, I respect both of you, all three of you, and thank you for your service, and I just hope that we can put an end to this madness by December 31st, but it is up to you. It is up to you all. Mattis can do it. Kelly can do it. They have got enough credibility up here.

So Marine Corps logistics base in Albany we talked yesterday about the shortfalls in helicopters. Today we are talking about shortfalls in amphibious ships. General, you have got two Marine Corps logistics centers. The one in Albany is not technically in my district, but I have family that works there, although we don't claim each other for fear of termination. The maintenance on the amphibious assault vehicles, who does that? Is that in Albany or is that in the west coast depot?

General BEAUDREAULT. Maybe both, but I am definitely certain it is happening in Albany.

Mr. SCOTT. Okay.

General BEAUDREAULT. And we greatly appreciate the work that is being done there to include the recovery of the tornado effects.

Mr. SCOTT. Absolutely.

General BEAUDREAULT. In January of 2017 and what has been able to be accomplished by that workforce is nothing short of amazing. To include the reset of our equipment from Afghanistan, we are 94 percent—we had, I believe, almost 87,000 items that were rolled back from combat that needed to be reworked, and we are closing in on the completion of resetting that equipment back in Albany, so tremendous effort by your family members and others in Albany, and we greatly appreciate the support of Congress on that.

Mr. SCOTT. I was there shortly after that storm, and we were very fortunate that that tornado was a little bit further to the south, and we would have lost some lives on that base. They did a tremendous job of cleaning up and getting things back in order.

What systemic challenges do you have at the Marine Corps logistics base in Albany and what changes can we make to help you with any of those challenges?

General BEAUDREAULT. Sir, I better defer that to—I can take that for the record if you might, and I will bring that back to our director for installations and logistics. That was squarely within his portfolio, and I can give you more accurate answers.

[The information was not available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. Perfect. Thank you. And I look forward to seeing you December 23rd up here doing our job, and I hope that Mattis and Kelly will help get us out of this mess by the end of the year. Thank you. I yield.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much, Congressman Scott. I will now proceed to Congressman Joe Courtney of Connecticut.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the witnesses for being here. I would note, as Mr. Scott said, the NDAA [National Defense Authorization Act] is now on its way over to the White House, which passed with the strongest bipartisan vote since 2008, and part of that mark or that bill included the Seapower [Subcommittee] mark which increased the size of the amphibious fleet by one boat above what the President sent over. So there is some signs of intelligent life, you know, on the Hill here, but obviously even at that pace in terms of hitting the requirement of 38 ships it still is going to take a while, and obviously in the meantime you have to figure out the most creative ways possible to boost training.

And, General, a number of us were over in Australia last summer on a CODEL [congressional delegation], and they were describing the joint amphibious training exercise that the Marines did from Darwin in 2016. I mean, is that maybe another sort of avenue in terms of, again, working with allies in terms of doing joint training exercises to again sharpen people's skills?

General BEAUDREAULT. Sir, it is. I think you might be referring to Tandem Thrust. That occurs on a recurring basis down in Australia, so, yes, very much so, not just in Australia to get aboard their partner ships but to get aboard ships from the U.K. [United Kingdom], from Spain, France, the Dutch. So what we refer to as an allied maritime basing initiative, particularly in Europe, it is not uncommon to find U.S. Marines aboard our allied partners' ships.

In addition to that our use of alternative platforms, the ESDs [expeditionary transfer dock] and the expeditionary support bases like the USS *Puller* and soon the USS *Keith* provides that, you know, additional capability for us to get aboard a ship and still exercise our aviation elements and our command and control, so we are trying to be as creative as we can with not just our amphib ships, but alternative platforms as well as allied ships.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you. Mr. Russell, again, your report kind of listed again sort of more creative ways to, you know, increase jointness, and if you had to prioritize I mean—of the recommendations—which one really that you think stands out as probably the most effective in the short term?

Mr. RUSSELL. Well, I would say it is a close call between two of them, but certainly the idea of trying to more systematically evaluate the training priorities and establish or look at the alternatives to the amphibious ships, whether it is maritime prepositioning fleet ships or allied ships, but coming up with a strategic, thoughtful way to look and balance those resources amongst priorities and alternatives is probably one of the top recommendations in order to manage those resources that are available to the best we can.

And then it goes back also to the second recommendation that we made on naval integration, and that is strategically thinking about how you tie together both the Navy and the Marine Corps so that they are looking together at some of the joint aspects of it in terms of leveraging availabilities and creating those compatible systems



and policies and procedures where the two are working together in a more cohesive way.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. WILSON. I thank you very much, Congressman Courtney. We now proceed to Congresswoman Vicky Hartzler of Missouri.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Good morning, gentlemen. In your report, your testimony, General, you talk about how in 1990 the Navy possessed 62 amphibious ships, and we have 32 today and then how there was this, you know, mutually agreed 38-ship requirement. You also mentioned that Admiral Greenert in April of 2014 said that we need about 50 amphibious gray hulls. So can you give me just a little bit of background on how you settled for 38 and how many do you really think you need?

General BEAUDREAULT. Thank you, ma'am, for that question. The number 38 is really centered on a look that occurred in 2009 between the Commandant of the Marine Corps and Chief of Naval Operations. It has held true since for the past 8 years, and that is our requirement to be able to have a forcible entry capability with two Marine expeditionary brigades.

And so if you look at the number of 38 and then it was determined that 34 was based on the perceived funding levels for the future was about 34 ships is what would be fiscally affordable at that time, of which minus 10 percent in maintenance would leave you about 30 operationally available to support the lift of 2 Marine expeditionary brigades. So that is essentially how we got to the 38.

We will get there in fiscal year 2033. So the risk is between now and fiscal year 2033 on getting that to that objective level. It is also the additional assumptions that was made on 10 percent of that fleet being in maintenance when we know that history indicates that we are at a higher percentage than 90 percent, less availability, in other words, than what we are finding in the ARGs, for instance today 14 of 32 ships are undergoing maintenance.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Well, this is very concerning. I just returned from South Korea and Japan and Guam with Chairman Wilson and Madeleine Bordallo and others and saw what our Marines in the past have had to come on the shore at Okinawa and at Guam, and as we look at what is going on in, you know, South Korea we need to have this capability.

Your testimony also refers to the concerns with the capacity gaps with mine countermeasures, naval surface fire support. You say we need a modern and capable mine—counter-mine capability facilitate access and the shortfalls. So what—that is very concerning, as well. Can you tell me more about what you are doing to address these concerns?

General BEAUDREAULT. I can, and then I will maybe have Admiral Lewis add any additional, particularly on the mine countermeasures piece. It is a topic that was brought before the Naval Board, in other words, between the Commandant and the Chief of Naval Operations just a couple of months ago on getting a comprehensive review from the N-95, which is expeditionary warfare there within the OPNAV [Office of the Chief of Naval Operations] staff, on looking at the challenges we have and what are the proposed solutions.

We know that we don't have sufficient capacity in that area, but we are looking at things that are, you know, unmanned capability and other technical technology improvements in that area. Naval surface fire support, we have addressed through the kind of experimentation you have seen again in Dawn Blitz of trying to look at extending the range of a naval gun, which is about 13 miles today to look at what kind of Marine Corps systems can we put afloat that will get us ranges out to 43 miles or perhaps in the future out to a couple hundred miles.

And do we take an amphibious ship like an LPD-17 class that may be available to put a vertical launch system configuration on that ship and bring a rocket system aboard that isn't there today at some relative cost that may not be that great with the existing systems we have today incorporated for shipboard use that will get us though ranges out to 200 and perhaps tracking what the Army is developing for long-range precision fires maybe ranges out to 400-plus miles in the future.

So these are things we are all looking at in terms of filling that gap on naval surface fire support and technological developments on the mine countermeasures.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Let me just ask one more question. The GAO report talked about the virtual training option, but it also—what is the status of your efforts to address GAO's recommendations to develop guidance for the development and use of virtual training devices and to what extent are Marine Corps virtual training devices able to integrate with Navy devices for the purposes of simulating amphibious operations?

General BEAUDREAULT. Within our Training and Education Command, they have really the portfolio for training in general. And that would reside with Lieutenant General Walsh, and I know they are looking hard at this. There is a Marine Corps simulated training environment concept. I think the GAO report is spot on in their assessment on the analysis up front and the evaluation on the back end, but there are some things that we are doing today through simulation that are definite enhancements that allow for our live opportunities to be more effective because we have been able to rehearse some of that, primarily command elements.

But if you look at the comprehensive array of what is out there in the virtual training world, everything from a simulation system for a pilot to rehearse landings on a rolling ship at night in rough seas to the command and control capabilities we have at a place like Marine Corps training and operations group at Twentynine Palms.

If we look at the ability of our MAGTF simulation systems on rehearsing a staff's ability to plan in an integrated fashion with the Navy prior to going to sea we do that routinely with the MEUs. It is called R2P2, rapid response planning process. So they do use some simulation in virtual training to go through the preliminary stages.

In terms of systems that are designed really for amphibious capabilities outside of, you know, what I have referred to in our—we also—I will rewind the tape a little bit there and say we also have some systems that are applicable to operations ashore.

When Marines finally hit the beach, we have a squad immersive trainer on both coasts that can be reconfigured to replicate really any kind of environment. It is really kind of at the squad level. So there are things that are applicable that we are today ashore that would have amphibious operations, but amphib-specific kinds of simulators, there aren't a lot that we have today and perhaps none in the Navy that would get us to where we would want to be in future. So it is a system of systems that you can piece together to project what you need to do once the landing force is ashore.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you. Thank you.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Congresswoman Hartzler. We now proceed to Congressman Trent Kelly of Mississippi.

Mr. KELLY. Well, I broke the mike. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Leave it to a redneck to break something. You know, I want to concur in what Austin Scott said. It is critical that we not hear mixed messages from the military community whether that be at the SECDEF [Secretary of Defense] level or from our generals or our admirals.

CRs [continuing resolutions] kill our readiness. I know that I currently serve in our Guard, and I can tell you it kills our readiness. And you will never hear me say anything other than that. It is not okay for a CR, not a short one, not a long one, not any one. It is killing our readiness. So I just hope that that message will be heard.

The second part is we have gotten so focused on the COIN [counterinsurgency] fight for the last 16 years. I see my soldiers, I see young majors or sometimes a little older majors, I see E-6s and E-7s who do not know how to fight the real fight that we are here for and at the end of the day the Marine Corps is not here to do a COIN fight. They are real good at that, they are real good at a lot of things, but you guys are here to make forced landing on a contested beachhead to get us a foothold to go to war with our enemies to be able to project power from there. It is critical that we have the elements to do those things, we have the training to do those things, and we focus on those tasks that are critical to us. I mean, that is why we have a Marine Corps.

And so I guess going back [to] naval surface fires, you know we don't have battleships anymore. We don't have the—we do not have the ability to have naval surface fire support like we had in the past. Tomahawks and CAS [close air support] are great, but they don't do the same things as those big guns on those battleships used to do, and if you are making a forced landing I assure you, you don't want to go where just Tomahawks and CAS have been because you still got a lot of fighting to do to get through that.

How would you rate—General Beaudreault, how would you rate the naval surface fire's readiness, and what are we doing to improve it?

General BEAUDREAULT. I will defer to Admiral Lewis on any improvements to the naval surface fire support platforms. My understanding of that which is afloat is fine. What we are, just as you referred to, Congressman, is a range limitation. The ship's survivability in a contested environment to close within the ranges that would be required to even get support from a 5-inch gun, for instance, is something we are going to have to rethink.

So the coin of the realm in the future is long-range precision fires, and more ships protection against missile threats and an air threat, which looking at our potential adversaries and our competitors out there, what they are building, stealth capability and likewise is something that we—this technological edge we used to have is something we are very aware of, something we are very concerned about, and something we need to counter.

So survivabilities of the amphibious platforms to get in close is a big concern. We need to make them more lethal. We need to make them more survivable. And the lethality goes to the naval surface fire support piece, and the survivability gets to the missile defense piece.

Mr. KELLY. Admiral, if you can talk about that, please?

Admiral LEWIS. Yes, sir. The contested environment that you referred to years ago was in close to the beachhead. It is now everywhere. If you look throughout the maritime, all straits, Strait of Hormuz, Malacca Straits, wherever and further out into the maritime, so it is all the battlespace now. A priority, a very high priority for the Navy is development of long-range precision surface-to-surface fires that is very much—and it is not just in this fight, it is in what we would call, you know, traditionally a blue-water fight, which has been very much—you know, it has been very blurred in that regard from the contested space.

Where we are right now in surface fires is just over 10 nautical miles, and that is not far enough. Part of that, though, is the systems and the command and control systems and the ability to network our capabilities from Navy ships at sea well out to sea to in close to onshore.

That networking is something that we are very focused on with Navy and Marine Corps first and with the Air Force and with the Army as we go forward. But that is something that it is a real need. We are not close to achieving it. We have got to get to the building blocks first, which is the basic units and the capability of the ARG and MEU.

Mr. KELLY. I thank both of you for your answer. I think that is something we need to really focus on and focus on quick. The bottom line there is a lot of difference going into a beachhead or a hardened target that has been saturated with heavy fires than to go in somewhere that has kind of been just kind of hit a little bit. There is a lot of fighting left and we don't want to use Marines when we can do that with firepower, and with that my time is expired.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much, Colonel, Congressman Kelly. We now proceed to Congressman Mike Gallagher of Wisconsin.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't have a cool southern accent, but I would like to associate myself with the remarks of Mr. Kelly and Mr. Scott. I really think that now is the critical time to get out from under this problem from a budgetary perspective. I don't think we can afford another CR, and so I think we have to make a stand over the next month. And I know it might seem absurd from your perspective for us to put the onus on you, given that we are a separate branch of government which provides you with funding, and it is our job, but we really need your help. Because you guys bring a credibility that Congress does not.

Congress is rocking a 12 percent approval rating right now. I think you guys have a 90 percent approval rating. So we are going to need your partnership over the next month. By the way, that approval rating is lower than cockroaches and colonoscopies to give you a sense of how bad the problem is right now. Because, and I hate to be critical since I have only been here a year, but when it comes to this issue, which should be the most important issue for all of us it just—it perplexes me as to why a year into this Congress we are still in this situation when we know how much damage the BCA [Budget Control Act] and sequester has done to our military and how much damage another continuing resolution would do as the Secretary laid out in the letter to Chairman McCain and some others a month ago. So I would just second the sentiments of Colonel Kelly and Austin Scott.

This next month I view to be as absolutely critical, and I am not going to support any effort that continues to punt this problem down the road any further.

It is just, I can't look my buddies who are still on Active Duty in the eye, given that I am unexpectedly in this role, and do that. So if we have to cancel Christmas, it is fine with me. I am happy to stay here, and they should lock us on the House floor until we get this done.

So thank you for being here and shedding light on these issues, and I just would ask sort of a follow-up of what Congresswoman Hartzler suggested.

So we know we have gone from 61 amphibys down to 32, and the requirement is 38. Is that correct? Do I have that right? So can you just give me a sense, and forgive me if I missed this, how that impacts our OPLANs, particularly in the Pacific, and whether that should require us to rethink these OPLANs or rethink whether they are even realistic to begin with?

General BEAUDREAULT. Congressman, just on the evaluation of our ability to execute any of the op plans if you would permit I will take that question because I think it would—I don't want to breach or wander into any of the classified territory. So I think I can provide you the best most comprehensive answer in that classified forum.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Sure.

Admiral LEWIS. I echo that, but what I would mirror, and at the unclassified level, if there is a conflict in the Pacific that we are faced with right now and the scenario we are faced with right now, it is not going to be like what we have been faced with over the last 15 years. And that is a large-scale conflict with a considerable risk to a lot of American lives.

And that is why—and our capacity in amphibious ships and Marines and soldiers, airmen, sailors, Coast Guardsmen is not where it needs to be. We are going to go to the fight and we are going to win, but that is a real serious thing right now.

And the fact of passing a budget and not having a continuing resolution will get us one step closer to being prepared, but passing a continuing resolution will, as I said in my opening remarks, and you mirrored much better than I have, it has just stemmed the readiness issues. It hasn't reversed them. And we are in a real need of reversing those readiness issues.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Yes.

Admiral LEWIS. And that was the only thing I would say on top of that.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Well, usually I criticize people that use their 5 minutes to give speeches and not ask questions, but I am violating that today. I just want to go back to this point. You know this is our—this is the centennial of our entry into World War I, so I have been doing a kind of nerdy deep dive into Wisconsin's history, and we led the opposition to the war.

Bob La Follette, our most famous politician, was the leader of the progressive Republicans and fought on the Senate chamber to delay Army merchant vessels and all this, but notwithstanding that crazy debate that we had that really divided the country—we had a lot of German-Americans in Wisconsin—we managed to come together afterwards and do the right thing for the country, and the entire country mobilized in support of our troops.

That is not to say it wasn't without problems and we experienced a lot of the interesting and divisive issues on the homefront, but I just feel like this is the time where we got to come together, and I think we can. I think we can. Working with you guys, we can do it. Now is the decisive moment, and I believe what we do over the next month can really put us on the right path for the next decade or if not longer. So thank you guys for being here and taking the time to shed some light on these critical issues.

General BEAUDREAULT. Congressman, I would like to follow up for just one quick note on that and that probably the greatest degradation we faced under the CR is our inability to do the new starts. And we talk about building ships if we can't have new starts. Our adversaries and potential adversaries are cranking out new ships once every 6 weeks.

So we find this again our maritime superiority edge narrowing through the continuing resolutions that is not allowing us to stay on glide path for readiness recovery and maintain a superiority on the sea, to be honest with you.

Mr. GALLAGHER. My time is expired, but I yield.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much, Congressman Gallagher. And as we conclude it is obvious to you that we really are facing the continuing resolution right now. You are, too.

And I appreciate Congressman Scott so eloquently presenting it and backed up, of course, by Congressman Kelly, and Congressman Gallagher, and Congresswoman Hartzler, and then this may be lightning is going to strike, bipartisan with Congresswoman Bordallo, and Congressman Courtney, but it really would be helpful to us to have very brief, as I indicated yesterday and I will restate, to have examples of increased costs, to delays to the costs, and then you actually brought up new items that need to be in this very brief one-page letter, and that would be the new starts.

And then there could be a paragraph as to the capabilities of adversaries that have a 6-week capability. That is just incredible, but we need to have facts and actually Congressman Gallagher was extremely correct.

I was going to point out that we need facts that would be merit-based, but actually you have credibility and that would help us as we explain to our colleagues the phenomenal challenges to our

country and the risk to our country and then we can also, once we take some hard votes we are going to have to go home and explain this to our constituents, and it can best be done if we are presenting specific facts that you can provide. Again, we want to thank you for your service.

It is just inspiring to me with such extraordinary individuals, and we appreciate your service each of you, and, Congresswoman Bordallo, of course, we need to represent—we need to present the wonderful territory of Guam.

Ms. BORDALLO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to go on record to say that I certainly support eliminating the CR.

Mr. WILSON. And again just bipartisan and to address the issue of sequestration we keep punting, but we want to back you up for the defense of our country. And with this we shall be adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 9:00 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]





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# **A P P E N D I X**

DECEMBER 1, 2017

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**PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD**

DECEMBER 1, 2017

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**Statement of the Honorable Joe Wilson**  
**Chairman, Readiness Subcommittee**  
**“Amphibious Warfare Readiness & Training”**  
**December 1, 2017**

Good morning. The subcommittee will come to order. I welcome you today for this hearing of the House Armed Services Committee, Readiness Subcommittee, on “Amphibious Warfare Readiness & Training”.

Today the subcommittee will hear from the Navy and Marine Corps regarding the status of Amphibious Training and Readiness—specifically the challenges of amphibious ship availability and Navy and Marine Corps interoperability. We are also pleased to have the Government Accountability Office present to comment on their recent study of Amphibious Operations Training, released in September 2017. I ask the witnesses do their best to describe where shortfalls exist and what can be done to improve the less than optimal state we are in, specifically how better and more consistent funding could help. We have held a series of readiness hearings and briefings on aviation, surface combatants, DoD infrastructure, and other topics. Every session points to the same grim conclusion...our services are indeed in a readiness crisis.

Marine Expeditionary Units aboard US Navy amphibious vessels are an important element of our forward deployed strategic deterrent. To be effective, the Navy Marine Corps team must train together regularly, certainly more than they do today. Because we have too few ships, necessary training is not possible.

President Ronald Reagan frequently used the phrase, “Peace Through Strength”. I agree with President Reagan and believe we need a higher level of defense funding to achieve that goal.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today on how this capability can improved.

Before I introduce the witnesses, I turn to Ranking Member Bordallo, the distinguished gentlelady from Guam, for opening comments she would like to make.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE  
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

**STATEMENT OF**

**LIEUTENANT GENERAL BRIAN D. BEAUDREAULT**

**DEPUTY COMMANDANT**

**PLANS, POLICIES, AND OPERATIONS**

**ON**

**AMPHIBIOUS WARFARE READINESS AND TRAINING – INTEROPERABILITY,  
SHORTFALLS, AND THE WAY AHEAD**

**BEFORE THE**

**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS**

**DECEMBER 1, 2017**

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE  
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

**Lieutenant General Brian D. Beaudreault**  
**Deputy Commandant for Plans, Policies, and Operations**

Lieutenant General Beaudreault was commissioned in May 1983 upon graduation from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and was designated as an infantry officer upon completion of training.

His operational assignments include: Platoon Commander and Company Executive Officer, 1st Bn, 3rd Marines, Kaneohe Bay, HI; Assistant Operations Officer, Logistics Officer, Maritime Special Purpose Force Commander and G Company Commander, Battalion Landing Team 2/9, 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (SOC), Camp Pendleton, CA (Operation RESTORE HOPE, Somalia); Inspector-Instructor, 3rd Battalion, 23rd Marines, Memphis, TN; Operations Officer, 31st MEU (SOC), Okinawa, Japan (Operation Stabilise, East Timor); Regimental Executive Officer, 1st Marine Regiment, Camp Pendleton, CA; Commanding Officer, Battalion Landing Team 1/1, 13th MEU (SOC)/ Expeditionary Strike Group One (Operation Iraqi Freedom); Commanding Officer, 15th MEU(SOC), Camp Pendleton, CA (Operation Iraqi Freedom); Deputy Commander, Marine Forces Central Command/Commander MARCENT (Forward), Manama, Bahrain; Commanded Task Force South in support of flood relief in Sindh Province, Pakistan; and Commanding General, 2nd Marine Division.

His Supporting Establishment assignments include service as Guard Officer, Marine Corps Security Force Company, Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico and Director, Expeditionary Warfare School, Quantico, VA.

LtGen Beaudreault completed joint duty assignments as Ground Plans Officer (CCJ3-PP), Operations Directorate, US Central Command, MacDill AFB, FL; Deputy Director, Future Joint Force Development, Joint Staff (J7) and Deputy Director, Joint Training, Joint Staff (J7), Suffolk, VA; and most recently served as Director of Operations and Cyber (J3), U.S. Africa Command.

His professional military education includes the following: The Basic School; Amphibious Warfare School; US Army Command and General Staff College; Armed Forces Staff College; Naval War College (MA with Highest Distinction, National Security and Strategic Studies); Higher Command and Staff Course, UK Defence Academy; and CAPSTONE, National Defense University.

Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Bordallo, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, we appreciate the opportunity to testify today.

Today, Sailors and Marines are at sea operating as Amphibious Ready Groups (ARGs) and Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs); AMERICA ARG and 15<sup>th</sup> MEU in the Central Command region, BONHOMME RICHARD ARG and 31<sup>st</sup> MEU in the Pacific, IWO JIMA ARG with 26<sup>th</sup> MEU in the Atlantic, and Black Sea Rotational Marines are aboard Allied ships in the European theater. Your expeditionary forces in readiness are postured forward and accomplishing our national security objectives.

The Navy and Marine Corps have reviewed the GAO report GAO-17-477C “NAVY AND MARINE CORPS TRAINING – Further Planning Needed for Amphibious Operations Training” and agree with the study, its findings, and its recommendations. Today’s testimony provides the Navy and Marine Corps team the opportunity to inform the Readiness Subcommittee on the challenges associated with amphibious operations training, discuss our shortfalls, and describe our projected way ahead.

Foremost, the GAO report finds the Navy’s shortage of amphibious ships is the predominant factor that inhibits our ability to train for “other amphibious priorities” beyond Amphibious Ready Group / Marine Expeditionary Unit (ARG/MEU) requirements. While there are other resource shortfalls, the shortage of amphibious ships is the quintessential challenge to amphibious training. The Department of the Navy lacks a sufficient number of amphibious and expeditionary ships to execute current operations, respond to contingency operations, and conduct the necessary training for both simultaneously. Ideally, the Naval Service would have optimally trained and equipped amphibious forces that deploy when required, with the right quantity of quality forces, on the designated timeline, with a reservoir of non-deployed yet ready



forces that could surge to meet the demands of large-scale contingencies. However, today the operational availability of the amphibious fleet is insufficient to meet the global demands and consequently increases risk. While the on hand number of amphibious warships falls short of the mutually agreed upon 38-ship requirement, the current 30-year shipbuilding plan supports a 38-ship amphibious fleet.

As described in the *Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons (JAM-GC)* – the joint force must maintain access to and maneuver through the global commons, project power, and defeat an adversary attempting to deny freedom of action via the employment of Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2AD) capabilities. To meet these challenges, amphibious forces must be distributable, resilient and employed in sufficient scale for ample duration. Due to amphibious lift shortfalls, the naval force is currently challenged to satisfy these basic requirements – a situation that will only worsen over time if we cannot remedy the problems noted in the report.

Today, of the 32 amphibious ships, 16 are available to support current or contingency operations. The Navy’s 2016 Force Structure Assessment established a requirement of 38 amphibious warships. The Marine Corps supports the 38-ship minimum amphibious fleet and the requisite funding to improve the readiness of the current amphibious fleet and fulfil Combatant Command (CCMD) requirements and contingency response timelines. The Navy’s plan for 38 amphibious ships provides: 12 *Wasp* and *America* Class LHD/LHAs, 13 *San Antonio* Class LPDs, and 13 LX(R) warships that will replace the *Whidbey Island* and *Harpers Ferry* Class LSDs. The GAO report correctly points out that in 1990 the Navy possessed 62 amphibious ships in contrast to the 32 we possess today. The amphibious force structure is projected to grow to a total of 34 ships starting in FY21. The Navy and Marine Corps are currently operating below

the 38-ship level and will continue to do so until FY33. While modern ships are more capable than their predecessors the Naval force lacks the capacity to conduct the necessary training when considering scheduled maintenance availabilities and current operational requirements. Former Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), ADM Greenert, stated in April 2014, that “we need about 50 amphibious gray hulls.” His conclusions are supported by evidence such as registered joint requirements, training requirements as noted in the GAO report, the recent Heritage Foundation Index of Military Strength, operational requirements as noted by the Chairman in JAM-GC; as well as requirements identified in the National Military Strategy. Yet, we remain mindful that the amphibious force is but one sub-set of the overall shortfalls in fleet capacity.

Beyond the amphibious warship shortfalls, we also are seeing significant capability and capacity gaps in mine counter-measures (MCM) and naval surface fire support (NSFS). The shortfalls in MCM and NSFS adversely impacts amphibious readiness and the Naval force’s ability to train for operations in a contested environment. We need a modern and capable mine/counter-mine (MCM) capability to facilitate access to and enable power-projection operations throughout contested littorals/near-seas. MCM shortfalls adversely impact amphibious warfare readiness and may severely limit fleet access during future contingencies.

NSFS represents another area where greater naval integration is warranted. The Marine Corps needs a modern naval surface fires capability that provides precision, range, and volume for current and future threat environments. The current 13 nautical mile range of our naval guns produces significant risk to the amphibious task force. Along with an increased role for the F-35B in supporting fleet operations and enabling the Carrier Strike Group (CSG), the Marine Corps encourages continued study on the potential introduction of vertical launch system (VLS)

capabilities aboard the LPDs to fill fire support shortfalls and further enhance the lethality and resilience of the amphibious fleet.

The Marine Corps welcomes the Navy's effort to develop an extended range munition that is capable of employment from the current inventory of naval guns, and we value the Navy's continued efforts to introduce VLS within the amphibious fleet. The desired objective capabilities includes an amphibious fleet that is capable of sinking enemy combatants and removing threats to the establishment of sea control beyond the reliance on F-35B. Of equal importance, improved lethality and force protection would facilitate the breaking of external dependencies which currently tie-down other surface combatants to protect L-class ships. Success in these endeavors would further mitigate the missile threat to surface combatants, enable a more distributable force, and provide the naval forces a new multi-mission platform that augments surface combatants.

Resourcing challenges are fueled by global requirements, delayed or extended ship maintenance cycles, competing Navy programs, the budget control act (BCA), and repetitive continuing resolutions (CRs). These factors have contributed to the shortage in amphibious ships, which has resulted in reduced training, degraded capability and increased operational risk. In the current fiscal environment, we continue to prioritize deployed and preparing to deploy units and provide them the mission critical resources to the greatest extent possible. We will continue to make tough choices and balance our available resources to meet current operational commitments and simultaneously build the readiness of non-deployed units – our “ready bench” – to respond to emergent crises.

The recent post-hurricane Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) and Foreign Disaster Relief (FDR) operations resulted in two of the three IWO JIMA ARG ships canceling

pre-deployment training, to include a sizable reduction in support for exercise BOLD ALLIGATOR which ultimately caused delays to their deployment schedule. The USS WASP, our first F-35B ready LHD, also participated in the DSCA operations and was delayed in deploying to the Pacific due to maintenance. CR funding levels may yield millions in increased readiness costs. USS GUNSTON HALL (LSD-44) had maintenance cancelled in 2011 due to CR restrictions. The ship is now receiving its delayed maintenance for which the operational and monetary costs have increased from 270 days to 696 days and from \$44.7M to \$111M. We will continue to pay these increased prices if we remain under CR constraints. The shortfall in amphibious lift is exemplified by the deployment of Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Forces (SPMAGTFs) to land-based locations in Central Command (CENTCOM), Africa Command (AFRICOM), and Southern Command (SOUTHCOM). These shore based units satisfy the joint forces' demand for MAGTF capabilities but the forces do not retain the strategic flexibility and responsiveness of afloat forces and are constrained by host nation permissions.

The Navy and Marine Corps are actively integrating capabilities, synchronizing efforts, and moving forward as a unified force while preparing to meet challenges across the range of military operations. Naval integration unites Navy and Marine Corps warfighting doctrine, concept development, task organization, material acquisition programs, logistics, training and command and control. Naval integration maximizes the warfighting capabilities of the Navy surface, subsurface, aviation, cyber, and special warfare communities with the MAGTF to create a credible multi-functional Naval capability that can influence, deter, and compete in all domains. At the Service-level, this implies achieving a greater degree of interdependence in organizing, training, and equipping of the force. At the operational level, this implies a reform to

theater maritime command and control (C2) architectures; and, at the tactical level, this implies the rapid integration of amphibious forces into larger Navy formations.

Historically, sea control has been a purely Navy mission; however, integrating MAGTF air and ground fires capabilities – with the America Class LHAs – will transition this to a naval mission. Establishing sea control against a near peer competitor is an integrated naval and joint mission that leverages Marine Corps concepts and capabilities, such as the Expeditionary Advance Base Operations (EABO), the F-35B and precision rocket artillery.

Doctrinal publications have advanced efforts to increase integration. A Design for Maintaining Maritime Superiority, the Marine Corps Operating Concept (MOC) and Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment (LOCE) all illustrate the importance of an integrated force. Specifically, LOCE describes how an integrated naval force, operating from dispersed locations, both ashore and afloat, will utilize its flexibility, versatility, and mobility to achieve sea control and power projection into contested littoral areas.

Going forward, our integrated training programs require evaluation. We must continue to train as we intend to fight. The Navy and Marine Corps are establishing a Service level policy that prioritizes the limited amphibious assets and outlines Service responsibilities with regards to amphibious training, experimentation and concept development. This co-authored policy for Amphibious Operations Training will result in a Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Instruction to guide the Navy and Marine Corps's Campaign Plan for Amphibious Operations Training (CPAOT). This instruction will better leverage fleet resources to maximize unit level and collective amphibious training in accordance with the following priorities: (1) ARG/MEU Integrated Phase workups and deployments, (2) Expeditionary Strike Group /Marine Expeditionary Brigade exercises such as BOLD ALLIGATOR, DAWN BLITZ, and SSANG

YONG, (3) unit level training to support operational plan readiness, and (4) experimentation and concept development. The results obtained from exercises, experiments, and operations will drive changes to the Navy and Marine Corps doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy (DOTMLPF-P).

Through the CNO and CMC co-chaired Naval Board, the Services identify gaps, recommend solutions, and serve as the primary forum for future naval integration initiatives. Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command (USFLTFORCOM) and Commander, U.S. Marine Forces Command (MARFORCOM) established a co-led Maritime Working Group (MWG) to provide an enduring inter-service collaborative process that integrates capabilities, force development, experimentation, and emerging requirements with exercise planning, scheduling and resourcing to advance naval concepts and warfighting readiness. Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet and Commander, U.S. Marine Forces Pacific also developed the Pacific Naval Integration Working Group (PNIWG) to incorporate PACOM issues into the MWG.

Naval integration is extant today among the forward deployed 5th Fleet, Task Force 51 where 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) provides operational control over the ARG/MEU. This integrated naval staff led by a Marine Corps Brigadier General is supporting Counter Violent Extremist Organization operations and ensuring the free flow of commerce through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. The integrated command ensures that regional naval expeditionary forces can rapidly engage threats emanating from any physical domain; land, air, surface or subsurface.

Our Service level amphibious exercises are providing Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) and MEB commanders with valuable opportunities for the Command Element staffs to train and certify. Additional ships will be required to enlarge these exercises in order to accommodate full

MEB level training. As the amphibious ship inventory builds towards 38, the Navy and Marine Corps will continue to explore innovative ways to employ alternative platforms as a lower cost means to support training and fulfill joint requirements for afloat basing in the absence of amphibious warships. While not replacements for L-Class ships, some joint requirements in more permissive environments could temporarily be fulfilled by alternative shipping such as T-ESBs, expeditionary barges and coastal patrol boats.

Finally, USFLTFORCOM and MARFORCOM have made a dedicated effort to synchronize and optimize training with available ships. For the first time in nearly ten years II Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) units will participate in a Type Commander Amphibious Training (TCAT) event this quarter. TCAT will go beyond training elements of 2d Marine Division's Assault Amphibian Battalion in basic crew proficiency by integrating units from across II MEF to increase MEB level amphibious readiness.

In closing, we conclude the current inventory of 32 amphibious warships is well short of the naval service's operational requirements which negatively impacts the naval forces' ability to generate readiness and negatively affects availability for training larger scale formations. The amphibious force structure is projected to grow to a total of 34 ships starting in FY21. The Marine Corps supports the 38 ship minimum amphibious fleet and the requisite funding to develop readiness while concurrently fulfilling validated joint requirements, accomplishing necessary fleet maintenance, and maintaining capacity to respond to potential contingencies. As the amphibious ship inventory builds towards 38 ships in FY33, the Marine Corps and the Navy will continue to explore innovative ways to employ alternative platforms.

On behalf of our Marines, Sailors, civilians and their families, we thank the Congress and this committee for this opportunity to discuss the key challenges your Navy and Marine Corps

face. We thank you for your support. The most important actions that Congress can take now is to immediately repeal the caps on defense spending in the Budget Control Act and provide a defense appropriation that ensures sufficient, consistent, and predictable funding to train, man, and equip the Navy and Marine Corps. With your help, we will overcome these constraints and enable your Navy and Marine Corps to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE  
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

**STATEMENT OF**  
**VICE ADMIRAL ANDREW L. LEWIS**  
**DEPUTY CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS**  
**OPERATIONS, PLANS, AND STRATEGY**

**ON**  
**AMPHIBIOUS WARFARE READINESS AND TRAINING – INTEROPERABILITY,**  
**SHORTFALLS, AND THE WAY AHEAD**

**BEFORE THE**  
**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS**  
**DECEMBER 1, 2017**

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE  
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Bordallo, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, we appreciate the opportunity to testify today.

The Navy and Marine Corps team is forward deployed and standing the watch. Today Sailors and Marines are at sea aboard the AMERICA ARG and 15 MEU in Central Command, USS ESSEX in the Pacific and IWO JIMA ARG and 26 MEU in the Atlantic. We are on the tip of the spear and working every day to sharpen it.

The Navy and Marine Corps have reviewed the GAO report GAO-17-477C “NAVY AND MARINE CORPS TRAINING – Further Planning Needed for Amphibious Operations Training” and agree with the study, its findings, and its recommendations. Today’s testimony provides the Navy and Marine Corps team the opportunity to inform the Readiness Subcommittee on the challenges associated with Navy and Marine Corps’ amphibious operations training and integration, discuss our shortfalls, and layout our projected way ahead.

The GAO report finds the Navy’s shortage of amphibious ships to be detrimental to our ability to train for “other amphibious priorities” beyond the Amphibious Ready Group/ Marine Expeditionary Unit (ARG/MEU) requirements. As a result of the Budget Control Act and ongoing Continuing Resolutions, the shortage of amphibious ships is the primary challenge to our Amphibious Training. The Navy’s 2016 Force Structure Assessment established a requirement of 38 amphibious warships. The amphibious force structure is projected to grow to a total of 34 ships starting in FY 2021.

While the on hand number of amphibious warships falls short of the mutually agreed upon 38 ship requirement, the current 30-year shipbuilding plan supports a 38-ship amphibious fleet. The Marine Corps fully supports the 38 ship amphibious fleet and the allocation requisite funding to improve the readiness of the current amphibious fleet. Amphibious ships are

deployed to meet both CCMD operational requirements and required contingency operations, such as hurricane or tsunami relief, which impacts the ability of the Navy and Marine Corps to train as an integrated force. Until we reach 38 ships contingency responses and extended shipyard availabilities have a significant potential to impact training and lead to delays in fulfilling enduring requirements. The JSF/CANES modernization period for the LHDs has grown from the originally planned 7-10 months to 16 months, which reduced ARG/MEU availability (LHD Mods will continue thru FY25). These gaps, in addition to our amphibious warship shortage, add layers of risk in preparing the naval service to neutralize an enemy lodgment in a forcible entry operation and operate in a contested environment.

At the direction of CNO and the CMC, through the Naval Board, the services incorporated processes to posture for increased training and integration. The ARG/MEU shall retain unity of command/effort in all employment configurations. The Joint Staff will reflect command relationships for an ARG/MEU such that each ARG/MEU shall be OPCON to a single combatant commander, as adjudicated by the Joint Staff, that most requires its capabilities. In these instances, when another combatant commander requires support from that ARG/MEU, select forces will be provided Tactical Control (TACON) to that combatant commander. The ARG/MEU command elements onboard the LHD will maintain unity of command of ARG/MEU elements operating TACON across CCMD boundaries. This practice will be referred to as “distributed”.

To achieve a fully integrated naval force requires a new approach to training. We must train as we intend to fight. The Navy and Marine Corps have established service level agreements that prioritize limited amphibious assets and outlines service responsibilities with regards to amphibious training, experimentation and concept development. This requires global

force management teams to align Navy and Marine Corps deployment requirements, prioritize critical warship resources, and maximize unit level and MAGTF amphibious training. Both USSF/MARFORCOM and CPF/MARFORPAC have approved Campaign Plans for Amphibious Operational Training (CPAOT) that are rolling 5-yr schedules of USN/USMC amphibious training exercises ranging from Table Top Exercises to Fleet Exercises such as BOLD ALLIGATOR series.

Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command (USFLTFORCOM) and Commander, U.S. Marine Forces Command (MARFORCOM) established a co-led Maritime Working Group (MWG) to provide an enduring inter-service collaborative process that integrates capabilities, force development, experimentation, and emerging requirements with exercise planning, scheduling and resourcing to advance naval concepts and warfighting readiness. Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet and Commander, U.S. Marine Forces Pacific also developed the Pacific Naval Integration Working Group (PNIWG) to incorporate PACOM issues into the MWG.

Eight years of Continuing Resolutions (CRs) and caps imposed by the Budget Control Act have impacted our ability to plan and schedule training, ship maintenance, and modernization. While we have prioritized our maintenance and readiness dollars, the positive effects of funding will not remove this deficit in the near term. Restoring the short-term readiness of the fleet requires predictable funding. This funding will ensure that we can conduct the required maintenance on our ships. It would also enable the Navy to restore stocks of necessary parts, getting more ships to sea and better preparing Sailors and Marines for deployment.

CR funding threatens fleet readiness. For example, USS GUNSTON HALL (LSD-44) had maintenance cancelled in 2011 due to CR restrictions. The ship received its deferred

maintenance, for which the operational and monetary costs increased from 270 days to 696 days and from \$44.7M to \$111M. These are days and dollars that are lost to train our amphibious forces

The recent post-hurricane Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) and Foreign Disaster Relief (FDR) operations resulted in the IWO JIMA ARG plus USS KEARSARGE missing the valuable pre-deployment training exercises such as BOLD ALLIGATOR and operational delays to their future deployment. The USS WASP, our first F-35B ready LHD, which participated in the DSCA operations, has been delayed in reaching the Pacific Fleet due to emergent maintenance repairs, and has been forced to reschedule pre-deployment training. WASP is underway now for a homeport shift to Sasebo, Japan to become part of the Navy's Forward Deployed Naval Forces.

The Navy and Marine Corps are working diligently to integrate capabilities, synchronize efforts, and move forward as a unified force, ready and able to meet all challenges across the range of military operations. Naval integration requires training as a single unit because we will fight as a single unit. A current example of this focus is the evolution of the sea control mission. Modern sea control against a near peer competitor is an integrated naval mission that leverages concepts and capabilities such as the Expeditionary Advance Base Operations (EABO) and the F-35B to seize and maintain sea control.

On behalf of all of our Marines, Sailors, civilians and their families, we thank the Congress and this committee for this opportunity to discuss the key challenges your Navy and Marine Corps face. The President's Fiscal Year 2018 request looks toward fleet wholeness, funding to man, train, and equip the Navy and Marine Corps. These funds will only work if they

are approved in a consistent and predictable manner. With your help, we will overcome these constraints and reshape your Navy and Marine Corps to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

**Vice Admiral Andrew L. “Woody” Lewis**  
**Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Operations, Plans and Strategy (N3/N5)**

Vice Adm. Andrew Lewis is a native of Los Altos, California, and a 1985 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. He was designated a naval aviator in April 1987. He is a graduate of Air Command and Staff College, the Armed Forces Staff College and holds a Master of Arts in Military History from the University of Alabama.

His command tours include Carrier Strike Group 12 deploying with USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71), Naval Strike and Air Warfare Center aboard Naval Air Station Fallon, Carrier Air Wing 3 deploying with USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75), Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 106 aboard Naval Air Station Oceana and VFA-15 deploying on USS Enterprise (CVN 65) and USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71).

Lewis’ operational sea tours include a division officer tour for Attack Squadron 72 deploying with USS John F Kennedy (CVN 67), as an exchange pilot/tactics instructor for 800 Naval Air Squadron deploying with HMS Invincible (R05) and as a department head for VFA-192 deploying with USS Independence (CV 62). Other deployed tours have been as a battle director at the Combined Air Operations Center in Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, and as the maritime operations center director at Naval Forces Central Command Bahrain.

Ashore, Lewis served as an instructor pilot in Air Training Squadron 23, as a branch chief at the Joint Warfare Analysis Center as the executive assistant to the chief of Naval Air Force, and as the executive assistant for the director, Joint Staff. As a flag officer, Lewis has served as the vice director for operations (J3) and director of fleet training (N7) at Fleet Forces Command.

He has flown over 100 combat missions in Operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Southern Watch, Deny Flight, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. He has accumulated over 5,300 flight hours and 1,100 arrested landings. He was the recipient of the Naval Air Forces Pacific Pilot of the Year in 1996.

Lewis assumed duties as deputy chief of naval operations for operations, plans and strategy in August 2017.

His personal awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal with oak leaf cluster, Legion of Merit (six awards), Bronze Star, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal (seven Strike Flight and four Individual with Combat “V”), Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (three awards; two with Combat “V”), and the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, as well as various service and campaign awards.



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United States Government Accountability Office

Testimony

Before the Subcommittee on Readiness,  
Committee on Armed Services,  
House of Representatives

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For Release on Delivery  
Expected at 8:00 a.m. ET  
Friday, December 1, 2017

## NAVY AND MARINE CORPS TRAINING

### Further Planning Needed for Amphibious Operations Training

Statement of Cary B. Russell, Director, Defense  
Capabilities and Management



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Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Bordallo, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today to discuss our recent report on Navy and Marine Corps training for amphibious operations.<sup>1</sup> As you know, the Navy and the Marine Corps (collectively referred to as U.S. naval forces) maintain forces that are capable of conducting an amphibious operation—a military operation that is launched from the sea by an amphibious force, embarked in ships or craft, with the primary purpose of introducing a landing force ashore to accomplish the assigned mission. Training forces for amphibious operations requires extensive coordination and integration between the Navy and Marine Corps. For example, the services must schedule amphibious ships to be used for training, develop operational concepts, and design and execute exercises. This training also requires significant resources, including access to Navy ships, and an adequate amount of range space to realistically conduct live-fire training exercises. The Marine Corps, as well as the other military services, has stated that the use of virtual training—including simulators or computer-generated simulations—could help overcome some of the difficulties associated with training in a live-only environment.

According to the Department of Defense (DOD), the future security environment will require forces to train across the full range of military operations—including types of operations that have not been prioritized in recent years, such as amphibious operations. However, over the last 15 years, continued operational deployments have required U.S. naval forces to focus training for stability and counterinsurgency operations, while limiting training in amphibious operations, among other areas. The Navy has stated that the high demand for presence has put pressure on a fleet that is stretched thin across the globe. Our recent testimony on Navy readiness highlighted that the Navy has increased deployment lengths, shortened training periods, and reduced or deferred maintenance to meet high operational demands, which has resulted in declining ship conditions and a worsening trend in overall readiness.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>GAO, *Navy and Marine Corps Training: Further Planning Needed for Amphibious Operations Training*, GAO-17-789 (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 26, 2017).

<sup>2</sup>GAO, *Navy Readiness: Actions Needed to Address Persistent Maintenance, Training, and Other Challenges Affecting the Fleet*, GAO-17-809T (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 19, 2017).

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In this context, my testimony today discusses the findings from our recent September 2017 report on Navy and Marine Corps training for amphibious operations. Accordingly, this testimony addresses (1) the Navy and Marine Corps' ability to complete training for amphibious operations priorities and factors limiting that training; (2) steps taken by the Navy and Marine Corps to mitigate any training shortfalls, including the Marine Corps' use of selected virtual training devices; and (3) efforts to improve naval integration for amphibious operations. In addition, I will highlight several key actions that we recommended in our report that the Navy and Marine Corps could take to help mitigate training shortfalls and improve the integration between these services for amphibious operations.

To conduct this work, we analyzed unit-level readiness data from fiscal year 2014 through 2016 and deployment certification reports and compared those data against the services' training requirements;<sup>3</sup> reviewed service training initiatives; interviewed a nongeneralizable sample of officials from 23 Marine Corps units that were selected based on their training plans; and selected a nongeneralizable sample of six Marine Corps virtual training devices to review based on factors such as target audience. Our September 2017 report includes a detailed explanation of the methods used to conduct our work. We conducted the work on which this testimony is based in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

In summary, Navy and Marine Corps units completed training for certain amphibious operations priorities but not others due to several factors. The most prevalent factor we found that hampered training completion was a lack of available amphibious ships on which to train. The Navy and Marine Corps have taken some steps to identify and address amphibious operations training shortfalls, but these efforts are incomplete. Specifically, the services' current approach does not incorporate strategic training and leading risk management practices. Further, the Marine Corps has not fully integrated virtual training devices into operational training. The Navy and Marine Corps have taken some steps to improve coordination, but the services have not fully incorporated leading collaboration practices that would help drive efforts to improve naval

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<sup>3</sup>We performed data-reliability procedures on the unit-level readiness data by comparing the data against related documentation and surveying knowledgeable officials, and determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for our purposes.

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integration. We made recommendations to address these issues and DOD concurred with them.


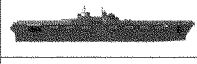


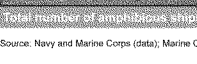
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## Background

An amphibious force is comprised of an (1) amphibious task force and a (2) landing force together with other forces that are trained, organized, and equipped for amphibious operations. The amphibious task force is a group of Navy amphibious ships, most frequently deployed as an Amphibious Ready Group (ARG). The landing force is a Marine Air-Ground Task Force—which includes certain elements, such as command, aviation, ground, and logistics—embarked aboard the Navy amphibious ships. A Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) is the most-commonly deployed Marine Air-Ground Task Force. Together, this amphibious force is referred to as an ARG-MEU.

An ARG consists of a minimum of three amphibious ships, typically an amphibious assault ship, an amphibious transport dock ship, and an amphibious dock landing ship. Navy ships train to a list of mission-essential tasks that are assigned based on the ship's required operational capabilities and projected operational environments. Most surface combatants, including cruisers, destroyers, and all amphibious ships, have mission-essential tasks related to amphibious operations. Figure 1 shows the current number of amphibious ships by class and a description of their capabilities.

Figure 1: Navy's Fleet of Amphibious Ships

	Class	Number	Capabilities
	LHD 1 Wasp Class	8	Landing ship, helicopter-capable, well deck;* large flight decks and hangar decks for embarking and operating numerous helicopters and vertical or short-takeoff-and-landing fixed-wing aircraft
	LHA 6 America Class	1	Landing ship, helicopter-capable, assault; large flight decks and hangar decks for embarking and operating numerous helicopters and vertical or short-takeoff-and-landing fixed-wing aircraft
	LPD 17 San Antonio Class	10	Landing ship, helicopter platform, well deck; smaller flight decks and hangar decks for embarking and operating smaller numbers of helicopters
	LSD 41 Whidbey Island Class	8	Landing ship, well deck; smaller flight decks for embarking and operating smaller numbers of helicopters
	LSD 49 Harpers Ferry Class	4	Landing ship, well deck; smaller flight decks for embarking and operating smaller numbers of helicopters

Total number of amphibious ships = 31

Source: Navy and Marine Corps (data); Marine Corps (images). | GAO-18-212T

Note: LHD is a multipurpose amphibious assault ship, LHA is a general-purpose amphibious assault ship, LPD is an amphibious transport dock, and LSD is a dock landing ship.

\*A well deck is a large, garage-like space in the stern of a ship. It can be flooded with water so that landing craft can leave or return to the ship.

An MEU consists of around 2,000 Marines, their aircraft, their landing craft, their combat equipment, and about 15 days' worth of supplies. The MEU includes a standing command element; a ground element consisting of a battalion landing team; an aviation element consisting of a composite aviation squadron of multiple types of aircraft; and a logistics element consisting of a combat logistics battalion. Marine Corps units also train to accomplish a set of mission-essential tasks for the designed capabilities of the unit. Many Marine Corps units within the command, aviation, ground, and logistics elements have an amphibious-related mission-essential task. To be certified in the mission-essential task of amphibious operations, Marine Corps units must train to a standard that may require the use of amphibious ships.

The Marine Corps' use of virtual training devices has increased over time, and advances in technology have resulted in the acquisition of simulators and simulations with additional capabilities designed to help individual

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Marines and units acquire and refine skills through more concentrated and repetitive training. For example, the Marine Corps utilizes a constructive simulation that provides commanders with training for amphibious operations, among other missions. The Marine Corps has introduced other virtual training devices to prepare Marines for operational conditions and for emerging threats, such as devices to replicate a variety of vehicles for driver training and egress trainers, among others. The Navy stated it does not utilize virtual training devices that simulate amphibious operations, including ship-to-shore movement.

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**Navy and Marine  
Corps Units  
Completed Training  
for Certain  
Amphibious  
Operations Priorities  
but Not Others Due to  
Several Factors**

In our September 2017 report, we found that Navy and Marine Corps units deploying as part of ARG-MEUs completed required training for amphibious operations, but the Marine Corps has been unable to consistently accomplish training for other service amphibious operations priorities. Specifically, based on our review of deployment certification messages from 2014 through 2016, we found that each deploying Navy ARG completed training for the amphibious operations mission in accordance with training standards. Similarly, we found that each MEU completed all of its mission-essential tasks that are required during the predeployment training program.<sup>4</sup> These mission-essential tasks cover areas such as amphibious raid, amphibious assault, and noncombatant evacuation operations, among other operations.

However, we also reported that based on our review of unit-level readiness data from fiscal year 2014 through 2016, Marine Corps units were unable to fully accomplish training for other amphibious operations priorities. These shortfalls include home-station unit training to support contingency requirements, service-level exercises, and experimentation and concept development for amphibious operations. For example, Marine Corps officials cited shortfalls in their ability to conduct service-level exercises that train individuals and units on amphibious operations-related skills, as well as provide opportunities to conduct experimentation and concept development for amphibious operations.

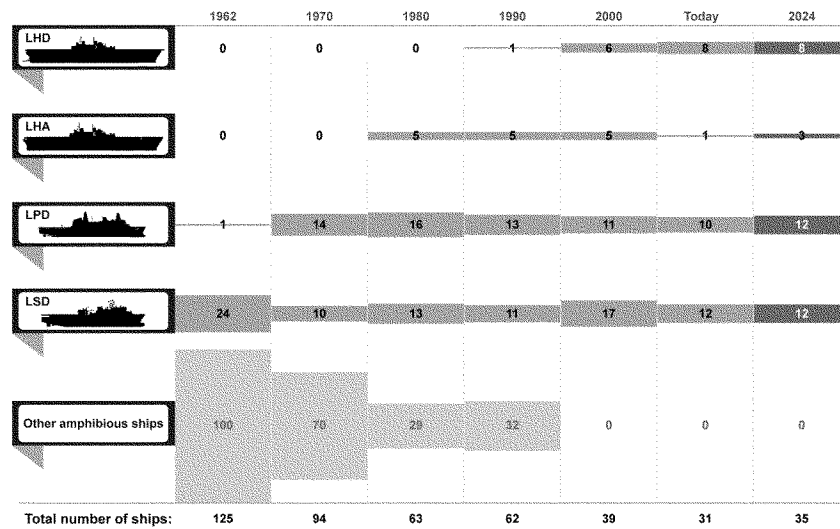
In our September 2017 report, we identified several factors that created shortfalls in training for amphibious operations priorities. Based on our analysis of interviews with 23 Marine Corps units, we found that all 23

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<sup>4</sup>Marine Corps units that are scheduled to deploy as part of an ARG-MEU are to follow a standardized 6-month predeployment training program that gradually builds collective skill sets.

units cited the lack of available amphibious ships as the primary factor limiting training for home-station units. The Navy's fleet of amphibious ships has declined by half in the last 25 years, from 62 in 1990 to 31 today, with current shipbuilding plans calling for four additional amphibious ships to be added by fiscal year 2024, increasing the total number of amphibious ships to 35 (see fig. 2).

Figure 2: Trends in the Size of the Navy's Fleet of Amphibious Ships



LHA - Amphibious assault ship  
 LHD - Amphibious assault ship  
 LPD - Amphibious transport dock  
 LSD - Dock landing ship  
 Other amphibious ships - Includes various older ship types such as tank landing ships and amphibious cargo ships.

Source: GAO analysis of Marine Corps information. | GAO-18-212T

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Marine Corps officials from the 23 units we interviewed also cited other factors that limit opportunities for amphibious operations training, including the following:

- **Access to range space.** Seventeen of 23 Marine Corps units we interviewed identified access to range space as a factor that can limit their ability to conduct amphibious operations training. Unit officials told us that priority for training resources, including range access, is given to units that will be part of a MEU deployment, leaving little range time available for other units.
- **Maintenance delays, bad weather, and transit time.** Ten of 23 Marine Corps units told us that changes to an amphibious ship's schedule resulting from maintenance overruns or bad weather have also reduced the time available for a ship to be used for training. The transit time a ship needs to reach Marine Corps units has further reduced the time available for training.
- **High pace of deployments.** Five of 23 Marine Corps units told us that the high pace of deployments and need to prepare for upcoming deployments limited their opportunity to conduct training for amphibious operations.

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### The Navy and Marine Corps Have Taken Some Steps to Identify and Address Amphibious Training Shortfalls, but These Efforts Are Incomplete

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#### Services' Approach Does Not Incorporate Strategic Training and Leading Risk Management Practices

In our September 2017 report, we identified some steps that the Navy and Marine Corps have taken to mitigate the training shortfall for their amphibious operations priorities, such as by better defining the amount of amphibious operations capabilities and capacity needed to achieve the services' wartime requirements. However, we found these efforts are incomplete because the services' current approach for amphibious operations training does not incorporate strategic training and leading risk-management practices. Specifically, we found that:

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- **The Marine Corps does not prioritize all available training resources.** For Marine Corps units not scheduled for a MEU deployment, officials described an ad hoc process to allocate any remaining available amphibious ship training time among home-station units. Specifically, officials stated that the current process identifies units that are available for training when an amphibious ship becomes available rather than a process that aligns the next highest-priority units for training with available amphibious ships.
  - **The Navy and Marine Corps do not systematically evaluate a full range of training resource alternatives to achieve amphibious operations priorities.** Given the limited availability of amphibious ships for training, the Navy and Marine Corps have not systematically incorporated selected training resource alternatives into home-station training plans. During our review, we identified a number of alternatives that could help mitigate the risk to the services' amphibious capability due to limited training opportunities. These alternatives could include utilizing additional training opportunities during an amphibious ship's basic phase of training;<sup>5</sup> using alternative platforms for training, such as Marine Prepositioning Force ships; utilizing smaller Navy craft or pier-side ships to meet training requirements; and leveraging developmental and operational test events.
  - **The Navy and Marine Corps have not developed a process or set of metrics to monitor progress toward achieving its amphibious operations training priorities and mitigating existing shortfalls.** Current reporting systems do not allow officials to assess the services' progress in achieving amphibious operations priorities or to monitor efforts to establish comprehensive amphibious operations training programs. For example, we found that the Marine Corps does not capture complete data on the full demand for training time with Navy amphibious ships that could be used for such assessments.

In our September 2017 report, we recommended that the Navy and Marine Corps develop an approach to prioritize available training resources, systematically evaluate among training resource alternatives to achieve amphibious operations priorities, and monitor progress toward achieving them. DOD concurred with our recommendation and stated that

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<sup>5</sup>The training plan for amphibious ships is broken up into five phases: maintenance, basic, advanced, integrated, and sustainment. The basic phase focuses on development of core capabilities and skills through the completion of basic-level inspections, assessments, and training requirements, among other things.



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the Secretary of the Navy would develop an amphibious operations training construct capitalizing on the application of primary and alternative training resources.

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**The Marine Corps Has Not Fully Integrated Virtual Training Devices into Operational Training**

While the Marine Corps has stated that the use of virtual training could help mitigate some of the limitations of training in a live-only environment and taken some steps to integrate these devices into operational training, we identified gaps in its process to develop and use them. Specifically, based on our review of a selection of 6 virtual training devices, we found weaknesses in three key areas:

- **Front-end planning.** The Marine Corps' process for conducting front-end planning and analysis to support the acquisition of its virtual training devices does not include consideration of critical factors for integrating virtual training devices into operational training, such as the specific training tasks the device is intended to address, how the device would be used to meet proficiency goals, or available time for units to train with the device. As a result, the Marine Corps does not have a reasonable basis to ensure that it is acquiring the right number and type of virtual training devices to meet its operational training needs.
- **Expected and actual usage data.** The Marine Corps does not consistently consider expected and actual usage data for virtual training devices to support its investment decisions. In the absence of these data, the Marine Corps risks sustained investment in virtual training devices that do not meet operational training needs.
- **Training effectiveness.** The Marine Corps does not consistently evaluate the effectiveness of its virtual training devices to accomplish operational training. Without a well-defined process to consistently evaluate the effectiveness of virtual training devices for training, the Marine Corps risks investing in devices whose value to operational training is undetermined.

In our September 2017 report, we recommended that the Marine Corps develop guidance for the development and use of virtual training devices to address these gaps. DOD concurred with the recommendation and stated it would work with the Commandant of the Marine Corps in its development and implementation actions associated with the use of virtual training devices.

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### Incorporating Collaboration Practices would Further Naval Integration Efforts for Amphibious Operations

The Navy and Marine Corps have taken some steps to improve coordination between the two services, to include issuing strategic documents that discuss the importance of improving naval integration and establishing mechanisms to coordinate their amphibious operations training capabilities. However, in our September 2017 report we found that the services have not fully incorporated leading collaboration practices that would help drive efforts to improve naval integration. Our prior work on interagency collaboration has found that certain practices can help enhance and sustain collaboration among federal agencies.<sup>6</sup> I would like to highlight a few practices that would especially benefit the Navy and Marine Corps' efforts to improve integration for amphibious operations.

- **Common outcomes and joint strategy.** The Navy and Marine Corps have issued strategic documents that discuss the importance of improving naval integration, but the services have not developed a joint strategy that defines and articulates common outcomes to achieve naval integration. This first critical step will enable them to fully incorporate other leading collaboration practices aimed at achieving a common purpose.
- **Compatible policies, procedures, and systems.** The Navy and Marine Corps have not fully established compatible policies and procedures, such as common training tasks and standards and agreed-upon roles and responsibilities, to ensure their efforts to achieve improved naval integration are consistent and sustained. We also found that some of the Navy and Marine Corps' systems for managing and conducting integrated training are incompatible, leading to inefficiencies in the process to manage unit-level training events.
- **Leverage resources to maximize training opportunities.** The services are looking to better leverage available training resources for amphibious operations. However, we identified examples of potential training opportunities during surface warfare tactical training and community relations events where enhancing the services' collaborative efforts could take greater advantage of available training time for amphibious operations.

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<sup>6</sup>GAO, *Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies*, GAO-06-15 (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 21, 2005).

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- **Mechanisms to monitor results and reinforce accountability.** The Navy and Marine have not developed mechanisms to monitor, evaluate, and report on results in improving naval integration and to align efforts to maximize training opportunities. Service-level strategy documents establish critical tasks to improve naval integration, but do not constitute a process or mechanism to jointly reinforce accountability for their naval integration efforts.

In our September 2017 report, we recommended that the Navy and Marine Corps clarify the organizations responsible and set time frames to define and articulate common outcomes for naval integration, and use those outcomes to develop a joint strategy, more fully establish compatible policies, procedures, and systems, better leverage training resources, and establish mechanisms to monitor results. DOD concurred with the recommendation and stated it will develop mutual service naval integration terminology, and training resource application and organizational monitoring constructs to achieve common amphibious operations training outcomes.

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Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Bordallo, and Members of the Subcommittee, this concludes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to respond to any questions that you may have at this time.

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## GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

For questions about this statement, please contact Cary Russell at (202) 512-5431, or at [russellc@gao.gov](mailto:russellc@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this statement. Individuals making key contributions to this testimony are Matt Ullengren and Russell Bryan. Other staff who made contributions to the report cited in this testimony are identified in the source product.



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Cary Russell is a Director in the Defense Capabilities and Management Team at the Government Accountability Office (GAO). He is responsible for managing a wide variety of GAO evaluations involving the Department of Defense's (DOD) military operations and programs to support deployed combat forces. Key projects under his leadership have included reviews of DOD's use and roles of advisors in contingency operations, management and oversight of wartime contingency contractors, counter-IED efforts, air mobility capabilities, distribution of supplies and equipment to Iraq and Afghanistan, and testing and fielding of combat uniforms, body armor and other personal protective equipment for U.S. military personnel.

Since joining GAO in 1990, Mr. Russell has served in various assignments in the agency's headquarters and field offices. From 1990 to 1998, he was an evaluator in the Dallas Regional Office, where he worked on a variety of topics, including immigration, science and technology, and military operations. From 1998 through 2007, Mr. Russell was an analyst at GAO's headquarters in Washington, D.C. in the National Security and International Affairs Division and in the Dallas and Atlanta field offices where he led engagements covering a variety of defense issues to include DOD's land mine detection research, Defense Logistics Agency supply support to the military services, base realignment and closure issues, and logistics support for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. From 2007 through 2011, Mr. Russell served as an Assistant Director in the Atlanta field office leading multiple complex engagements in GAO's warfighter support issues area, when he was appointed acting director in 2011 and relocated to GAO's headquarters in 2012.

Mr. Russell graduated from Texas A&M University in 1990. He also holds certificates as a National Security Management Fellow from Syracuse University and for Key Executive Leadership from American University. Mr. Russell is a Certified Public Accountant and a Certified Government Financial Manager.

