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BY THE SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE**

**STATEMENT OF
LIEUTENANT GENERAL DAVID G. BELLON
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS RESERVE
BEFORE
THE SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE
CONCERNING
THE GUARD AND RESERVE
ON
18 MAY 2021**

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Lieutenant General David G. Bellon

Lieutenant General Bellon was born in Fort Polk, Louisiana, and raised in St. Louis, Missouri. He graduated from the University of Kansas in 1987 and the University Of Missouri School Of Law in 1990. He was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in 1989. Bellon began service as an Infantry Officer with 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment. He then served as a Judge Advocate with 1st Force Service Support Group.

In 1997, he left active duty and joined the Selected Marine Corps Reserve serving six years with 4th Light Armored Reconnaissance (LAR) Battalion in a variety of positions. As a civilian, Bellon founded his own law firm in 1999 located in Oceanside, CA.

After 9/11, he returned to active duty for four combat tours in support of both OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) and OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF). During OIF I, he served as Operations Officer for 4th LAR with both TASK FORCE TARAWA and TASK FORCE SCORPION. During OIF II, Bellon served as the Intelligence Officer for Regimental Combat Team 1 during its 14 month deployment in and around the City of Al Fallujah, Iraq, participating in both battles for the city. His third OIF tour was in Command of Battalion Task Force 3d Battalion, 23d Marine Regiment, in 2007-2008. The Task Force executed counter-insurgency operations in and around the city of Al Haditha, Iraq.

In 2008, Bellon was selected as the Marine Corps Reserve's representative in a full-time student status attending Top Level School at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. While there, he was promoted to Colonel and received subsequent orders for deployment in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. Bellon deployed to Afghanistan in September 2009 with the British 6th Division. While in Afghanistan, he served as the Chief of Operations for Southern Afghanistan during NATO's 2010 surge of forces to secure the strategically vital area in and around Kandahar City.

Bellon was promoted to Brigadier General in 2013. His assignments as a General Officer prior to his current billet include Deputy Commander (Mobilization) 1st Marine Expeditionary Force; Deputy Marine Forces Command; Director Reserve Affairs; Commander Marine Forces South; and Director of Strategy, Policy, and Plans (J5) U.S. Southern Command. He was promoted to his current rank and assumed duties as Commander, Marine Forces Reserve on 4 September 2019.

Introduction

Chairman Tester, Vice Chairman Shelby, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, it is my privilege to appear before you and provide an overview on the current state of the Marine Corps Reserve.

The Marine Corps Reserve, as part of the Total Force Marine Corps, stands ready to provide forces for employment across the full spectrum of crisis and global engagement. This past year has brought many challenges with the global pandemic but your Marine Corps Reserve continues to be engaged around the world in theater security cooperation activities, serving side-by-side with our Active Component on a wide array of operations, and making tremendous contributions in support of every Combatant Commander. While the Marine Corps Reserve is supporting current Service and Combatant Command requirements, we are also participating in the Service's efforts to redesign our force and our warfighting capabilities to deter against pacing threats as prescribed by the National Defense Strategy.

I am deeply impressed by the professionalism, competence, and dedication of our Reserve Marines and Sailors. Like their Active Component counterparts, they serve selflessly to protect our great nation. I am inspired by the way they balance family responsibilities, civilian careers, and military service. They do so with humility, without fanfare, and with a sense of pride and dedication that is consistent with the great sacrifices of Marines from every generation. Without a doubt, the success of the Marine Corps hinges on the dedication and selflessness of our Reserve Marines.

A Total Force

Throughout the past year, the Marine Corps Reserve continued global deployments in support of Combatant Commander requirements despite the unprecedented challenges presented by COVID-19. The Marine Corps Reserve provided Combatant Commanders with forces focused on combat operations, crisis prevention, crisis response, and theater security cooperation. In addition to the Marines already activated and deployed, 2020 saw another 1,044 Reserve Marines mobilized to support 20 operational requirements across six geographic Combatant Commands. The Marine Corps Reserve continues to meet the increased demand for use as an Operational Reserve; however, this remains a challenge to our readiness and ability meet strategic requirements.

In 2021, the Marine Corps Reserve is slated to support the Combatant Commanders by mobilizing in excess of 966 Reservists supporting 28 formations. These operations greatly increase the Reserve Component's interoperability with the Active Component, Joint forces, our allies, and coalition partners. I anticipate that we will continue to deploy across the globe and integrate with the Active Component in support of high-priority Combatant Commander requirements for the foreseeable future.

In addition to supporting Combatant Commanders, the Marine Corps Reserve provided direct support to the Marine Corps' accession requirements by responding to emerging COVID-19 requirements. The Marine Corps Reserve activated more than 500 Marines and Sailors to augment and reinforce the Marine Corps Recruit Depots at Parris Island and San Diego. These Marines ensured the recruits awaiting training maintained proper quarantine protocols, enabling assimilation into training platoons with minimal risk of a COVID-19 outbreak during training. As a result of this Total Force effort, the mission to make Marines continued despite the global pandemic.

The Marine Corps Reserve typically uses participation in the Department of Defense Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) program to provide joint/military training in the United States and its territories to increase deployment readiness. IRT simultaneously provides key services (health care, construction, transportation, and cybersecurity) with lasting benefits for our American communities. We saw a significant reduction in IRT programs due to the global pandemic. The Marine Corps Reserve participated in only two projects in 2020 but obtained valuable training that increased deployment readiness in combat engineering skills. Our participating units were able to train to mission essential tasks involving both horizontal and vertical construction, while making tangible, meaningful impacts in their communities. We expect a marked increase in future projects. In 2021, the Marine Corps Reserve is slated to support 16 exercises under the IRT program. Examples include diverse construction training supporting the Girl Scouts at Camp Paumalu, Hawaii; providing logistical support and medical care to communities throughout Kodiak Island, Alaska; and roadwork in Pima County, Arizona. With your continued support of these efforts, we look to expand our footprint in this program, which will include construction, medical, and cybersecurity efforts.

In addition to participating in operational requirements across the globe, the Marine Corps Reserve supports the Total Force by dutifully executing the sensitive and crucial mission of providing casualty assistance to the families of our fallen Marines. There is no responsibility we treat with higher regard than this solemn mission. Inspector-Instructor (I-I) and Reserve Site Support staffs are geographically positioned to accomplish the vast majority of Marine Corps casualty assistance calls and are trained to provide compassionate and thorough assistance to families. Indeed, the vast majority of Marine Corps casualty notifications and follow-on assistance calls to the next of kin are made by our Reserve Marines. During Calendar Year (CY) 2020 our I-I

and Reserve Site Support staffs performed 95% of the casualty calls performed by the Marine Corps. The professionalism and compassion of our Casualty Assistance Calls Officers (CACOs) continues well beyond the initial notification. We ensure that our CACOs are well trained, equipped, and supported by all levels of command through a combination of in-person and online training. Once assigned, the CACO serves as the family's central point of contact and coordinates with funeral homes, government agencies, and other organizations. They assist family members with planning the return and final resting place of their Marine and ensure the filing of appropriate documents so families receive all benefits to which they are entitled. In many cases, our CACOs provide a long-lasting bridge between the Marine Corps and the grieving family.

The Marine Corps Reserve also performs the solemn mission of military funeral honors and our Reserve units take pride in performing the majority of these services for our fallen Marines and their families. Marine Corps funeral honors are dedicated to ensuring all Marines who have served obtain the appropriate honors as a final salute to their life and the final demonstration of the country's gratitude to those who, in times of war and peace, have faithfully defended our nation. COVID-19 presented many new challenges for units performing military funeral honors such as: the temporary closing of our cemeteries; mandatory compliance with local city, state and federal government travel restrictions; and strict adherence to health and safety guidelines. Notwithstanding these challenges, Marine Corps Reserve units accomplished 16,521 military funeral honors, nearly 81% of the previous year's total.

Finally, the Marine Corps Reserve functions as the greatest link between the Marine Corps and communities across the nation. From the Toys for Tots campaigns each holiday season to community engagement events and solemn funeral details, we are the face of the Marine Corps to the majority of the American public. With Reserve units located across the country, the Marine

Corps Reserve is uniquely positioned to interact with the American public and communicate the Marine Corps story to our fellow citizens, most of whom have little or no experience with the Marine Corps.

Personnel

Marines, Sailors, and our civilian Marines are the foundation of all that we do. The resources we dedicate to sustaining and developing this foundation directly contributes to the success of our institution. The vast majority of the Marine Corps Selected Reserve's authorized end strength of 38,600 falls under Marine Forces Reserve. The Selected Reserve is composed of Marines in four categories: Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) Units, Active Reserve (AR), Individual Mobilization Augmentees (IMAs), and service members in initial training (IADTs). Embedded with these Marines are 1,557 Active and Reserve Component Sailors who serve critical roles in the operational, medical, dental, and spiritual readiness of our Reserve force. The success of the Marine Corps Reserve would not be possible without the support of these Sailors and US Navy programs.

In addition to the Marines and Sailors of the Selected Reserve, the Marine Corps Reserve administratively controls approximately 62,000 Marines who serve in the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR). The Marine Corps Reserve continues to monitor the mobilization viability of these IRR Marines through the use of muster events at multiple locations across the country. These muster events allow the Marine Corps Reserve to ensure the IRR Marines meet the requirements for mobilization. The events also provide the opportunity to address administrative issues, conduct mental health and post-deployment assessments, review Reserve obligations and new opportunities, and meet with Marine Corps prior-service recruiters. During the past year the

Marine Corps Reserve conducted 20 muster events which 4,862 IRR Marines attended. In addition to the musters, the Marine Corps Reserve contacted and screened 59,294 Marines.

The Marine Corps Reserve strives to retain the very best Marines capable of fulfilling our leadership and operational needs. The option of continued service in the Reserve Component has become increasingly appealing to young Marines leaving active duty. Marines approaching the end of their current contracts, whether Active or Reserve Component, receive counseling on the tangible and intangible benefits of remaining affiliated with the Selected Reserve. We educate each transitioning Active Component Marine on opportunities for continued service in the Marine Corps Reserve through the Marine Corps' transition assistance and educational outreach programs.

Even as the Marine Corps restructures our forces to ensure we are postured to confront future potential adversaries, we are making every effort to retain those Marines impacted by force design decisions. In 2020 we deployed a series of Personnel Transition Teams (PTTs) to every unit impacted by force design. These PTTs were specifically designed to ensure every impacted Marine was provided information, education, and one-on-one career counseling concerning available incentives, career opportunities, and continued service options. For example, during the divestment of our reserve tank battalion we successfully retained over 52% of all Reserve Marines assigned to those site locations through voluntary reassignment to another Marine Reserve unit, while an additional 24% of those Marines chose to transfer to their local Army National Guard tank unit in order to continue their military service. Survey responses show that 91% of the Reserve Marines felt they had been provided both the information and support needed to make an informed decision, while 89% of the Reserve Marines felt that their best interests were kept in mind.

Recruiting and retaining high quality Marines remains essential to the Marine Corps' reputation as the nation's force-in-readiness. Although we produced Marines safely in the face of

the global pandemic, the challenges associated with COVID-19 have had a significant impact on our ability to recruit. As a result, the Selected Marine Corps Reserve faced a 50.4% reduction in new non-prior service accessions and a loss of 7.9% of the forecasted prior-service accessions. Notwithstanding these notable losses, Marine Forces Reserve still enjoys high affiliation and retention rates enhanced through incentive programs such as occupational specialty retraining, inactive duty travel reimbursement, and bonus payments. These programs are essential to ensure we continue to meet authorized end strength and retain our most talented Marines. Your continued support to these critical programs has helped preserve our overall personnel end strength at 94.3% of the total requirement and maintain a grade and Military Occupational Specialty match rate of 81.7%.

Our personnel readiness is not only reflective of the health of the force, but directly contributes to our overall operational readiness. While we fully expect to meet our Selected Marine Corps Reserve retention and recruiting goals this year, continued use of available incentive programs is critical to optimally align our inventory against our requirements, maintain individual and unit level readiness, address shortfalls in staff non-commissioned officers, and fully rebuild readiness from previous force structure changes.

Equipment

Reserve Component units remain highly interoperable with their Active Component counterparts due to the Marine Corps' Total Force approach to equipment fielding and management. Reserve Component forces are manned, trained, and equipped to standards that facilitate the seamless, integrated employment of forces to meet Combatant Commander requirements. Our Reserve units and personnel continue to be in high demand despite the

challenges associated with the new COVID-19 operating environment. The Reserve Component continues to meet all operational and training requirements, including support to Combatant Commanders worldwide.

This operational tempo places stress on our ability to maintain our equipment and replenish our deficiencies. In the event of a large-scale wartime mobilization, to include any sizable call-up of the IRR, individual combat clothing and equipment deficiencies may become a strategic risk to mission.

With regard to maintenance readiness, the Marine Corps Reserve has mitigated risk for many years in three ways. First, we refine units' Training Allowances (TA), which is that portion of a unit's full Table of Equipment (TE) located at Reserve Training Centers. Our goal is to balance the amount of equipment necessary to conduct training with the amount of equipment that can be maintained within personnel, facility, and fiscal constraints. Second, we leverage operation and maintenance, Marine Corps Reserve, funds to secure mobile maintenance support teams that augment our limited organic maintenance capacity in the Marine Corps Reserve. Third, we contract third party logistics to repair secondary reparable that cannot be repaired organically due to the lack of an intermediate maintenance activity capability. Congressional support for Reserve funding in the Fiscal Year (FY) 22 President's budget request is paramount to our continued success in sustaining our equipment and maintenance readiness.

Upcoming fielding of the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) and Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) will provide the Reserve Component with the latest generation of combat equipment. Additionally, fielding of programs such as the Ground/Air Task Oriented Radar (G/ATOR), Ground Weapons Locating Radar (GWLR), All Terrain Crane (ATC), Platoon Water Purification System (PWPS), and Mobile Integrated Remains Collection System (MIRCS) will

enhance our ability to fight, maneuver freely, and win on the modern battlefield. The KC-130J Super Hercules remains a procurement priority of the Marine Corps Reserve. The Marine Corps Reserve has currently reached Initial Operating Capability (IOC) for 13 of 28 aircraft and is expected to reach Full Operating Capability (FOC) in the future.

Training

The Marine Corps Reserve typically participates in a number of training exercises in the United States and overseas each year to improve combat readiness and enhance our ability to rapidly activate and integrate with the Active Component. The global pandemic presented numerous challenges to the Reserve force's ability to participate in and conduct training. By April 2020, we had canceled drill weekends and annual training periods to protect the Marines, their families, and local communities. In order to limit the amount of lost training opportunities, we created telework drill weekends and increased occasions for Marines to conduct online training. Our local commanders demonstrated initiative and creativity in conducting meaningful training for the Marines. While digital training allowed for an increase in individual skills, it could not replace critical unit training at the company and battalion levels.

With several months of data available, we determined the risk of not providing ready forces as the result of conducting in-person training exceeded the risk from COVID-19. We therefore began to resume in-person drill weekends in June and enabled Marines to conduct their annual training in the 4th quarter of FY20. Operations in a COVID-19 environment became the norm, with precautions including the wearing of masks and social distancing during training. Local commanders adjusted their training to include spreading out unit drills over multiple weekends to ensure compliance with local health mandates for reduced gathering of personnel. Our small unit

leaders performed admirably during this trying period, maintaining communication with their Marines and ensuring mitigation measures were enforced to guarantee quality training while preventing the spread of the pandemic as a result of in-person drills. At the end of FY20, we were able to provide an opportunity for all Reserve Marines to participate in an annual training period, whether in person or virtually.

The global pandemic adversely affected higher level training normally gained during regularly scheduled exercises. Combatant Commanders and host nations canceled joint and bilateral exercises due to COVID-19 restrictions; in FY20, 48 of 71 scheduled exercises across four Combatant Commands were canceled. Reserve participation in the exercises that did take place was largely eliminated due to Restriction-Of-Movement (ROM) requirements. These exercises were designed to provide mission essential task training in a joint environment. This left nearly 3,000 Marines in need of an alternate annual training period. Reserve participation in the annual Service-level Integrated Training Exercise (ITX) conducted aboard Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms California was also canceled due to the global pandemic. ITX improves combat readiness, efficiency in Total Force integration, and enables more rapid activation response times at the battalion and squadron levels. The loss of the Combatant Commander exercises, ITX, and numerous battalion and squadron annual training exercises in CY20 has resulted in a less operationally ready Marine Corps Reserve.

Operating in a COVID-19 environment directly impacted Reserve Marines' ability to complete required resident professional military education (PME) courses. The Marine Corps Reserve converted the majority of its 800 seats in resident PME to online courses to overcome the challenges of educating the force. Employing ROM, wearing of masks, and social distancing, the

Marine Corps Reserve preserved nearly 300 resident seats, enabling Marines to attend PME in person with their fellow Marines.

The Marine Corps Reserve uses training simulators wherever and whenever possible to preserve fiscal and materiel resources. Reserve units employ Indoor Simulated Marksmanship Trainers (ISMTs) to maintain combat marksmanship skills and to maximize the use of their most precious resource: time. The ISMTs enable onsite training and eliminate long distance travel to remote Department of Defense (DoD) training locations. The use of ISMTs as well as increased online training enabled the force to complete mission essential tasks and required DoD and Service-level annual training during the global pandemic.

Facilities

The Marine Corps Reserve occupies facilities in 47 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. These facilities include 158 Reserve Training Centers (RTCs) (22 of which are owned by Marine Forces Reserve and the remaining 136 of which are operated by other Services with Marine Corps Reserve units as tenants), three family housing sites, one permanent barracks, and one General Officer Quarters. Although some of these facilities are located on major DoD installations, most are situated within civilian communities, ranging from neighborhoods to industrial and commercial districts. We continue to improve the maintenance and security of our facilities to ensure the safety of our Marines and Sailors and to provide effective training and mobilization locations.

Fifty-seven percent of the facilities budget supports the day-to-day cost of operating and maintaining existing infrastructure. The Marine Corps Reserve has improved the overall readiness of our facilities inventory through the Facilities Sustainment, Restoration and Modernization

(FSRM) support program and maximized the impact of our budget through divestiture and demolition of excess footprint.

The Marine Corps' Military Construction, Navy Reserve (MCNR) program focuses on providing construction for new and enduring capabilities, as well as recapitalization of our aging facilities. The construction provided by the annual authorization and appropriation of MCNR funding is an important factor in advancing our facilities support mission as we optimize our force laydown throughout the nation. Continued support for our MCNR request is essential as we divest of failing infrastructure and modernize capabilities.

The combined effects of our targeted consolidation, FSRM, and MCNR programs have steadily reduced the number of inadequate or substandard Reserve Training Centers and enabled better support to the force. In addition, our targeted consolidation, FSRM, and MCNR programs have increased the force protection of our Marines and Sailors. These programs have allowed the Marine Corps Reserve to partner with the joint bases and other services to meet the Department of Defense security and force protection lines of effort promulgated by the Secretary of Defense following the 2015 Chattanooga, Tennessee U.S. Navy Reserve Center shootings.

As our infrastructure ages and we continue to implement force protection improvements along with environmental and energy-saving projects, our operating costs have steadily increased. Service level efforts to modernize our force and its infrastructure have also increased costs. The continued support to our annual funding request for our facilities program will enable us to improve the overall physical infrastructure that reinforces the operational readiness of our units.

Health Services

The Marine Corps Reserve Health Services Support (HSS) system prioritizes the health and wellness of our Reserve Marines and Sailors. We continue to improve medical readiness through a robust Individual Medical Readiness program within the Marine Corps Reserve and by accurate monitoring, identification, and supervision of unit level actions necessary to attain readiness goals. Additionally, our Health Services personnel participate in Force Readiness Activation Assessment Program inspections and audits which provide oversight at the unit level and the ability to monitor readiness and adherence to policy.

The Reserve Health Readiness Program (RHRP) has greatly increased overall medical and dental readiness throughout the force. This program provides support using contracted civilian medical and dental providers to work with units that do not have organic medical or dental support personnel or are not supported by a Military Treatment Facility (MTF). During FY20, the RHRP performed 14,946 Periodic Health Assessments (PHAs), 216 Post-Deployment Health Re-Assessments (PDHRAs), 18,229 audiological examinations, and 16,787 dental examinations.

HSS's priority is to achieve the DoD's goal of a 90% medically ready force. National, regional, state and local restrictions on travel and group activities due to COVID-19 community transmission affected scheduling and availability of both organic unit and RHRP readiness events over the course of several months. During FY20, our individual medical and dental readiness rates were 76% and 81%, respectively. Marine Corps Reserve units rely heavily on RHRP to maintain our medical and dental readiness, and continued support of this program is imperative for maintaining overall readiness.

Behavioral Health

In addition to the RHRP, the Marine Corps Reserve continues to execute a robust behavioral health program which includes Combat Operational Stress Control, Suicide Prevention, Substance Abuse Prevention, and Family Advocacy programs. Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) training is conducted at all levels and continues to be provided during pre-deployment training to service members deploying for more than 90 days and all to commands in garrison. This training provides essential knowledge, skills, and tools to assist commanders in preventing, identifying, and managing combat and operational stress concerns as early as possible. Each of these tools supports the commander in building unit strength, resilience, and readiness as well as keeping Marines in the fight.

COVID-19 community transmission has not only impacted medical readiness, but also the mental health of our Marines and Sailors. Amongst our Active and Reserve Component service members mental health effects included increased isolation, relationship stress, and financial strain. The Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery continues to support behavioral health through various independent, contracted programs such as PDHRA and the Psychological Health Outreach Program (PHOP). The PDHRA program focuses specifically on identifying issues that emerge after our Marines and Sailors have returned home from deployment. PHOP secures behavioral health screenings, psychological treatment referrals, and essential follow-up treatment to ensure our service members' behavioral health needs are met. In FY20, PHOP received 584 new referrals through their outreach services. PHOP addresses both post-deployment behavioral health concerns and crisis-related interventions by providing our Marines and Sailors access to local resources through a network of contracted behavioral health programs. These programs are critical to maintaining a resilient force by providing pathways for Marines, Sailors, and families to seek behavioral health assistance.

Signs of operational and combat stress may manifest long after a service member returns home from deployment. This delayed onset of symptoms presents unique challenges to Reserve Marines who may be detached from vital medical care and the daily support network inherent in active duty Marine Corps units. Encouraging Marines to recognize and communicate mental health issues is a pervasive challenge facing our commanders. The Marine Corps Reserve addresses the stigma associated with mental health care through key programs such as the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) and OSCAR. Furthermore, we market all of our behavioral health initiatives and programs through our Marine Corps Reserve website and during key Marine Corps forums throughout the year.

In FY20, we developed and are now piloting a smart phone mobile application (app) that is tailored to Marine Reservists. USMC Connect is a Defense Information Systems Agency approved, enterprise-wide, mobile app that serves as a gateway to public content on government websites. The USMC Connect app was established to deliver portable, timely, and relevant information to Marines, Sailors and their families and to reduce reliance on traditional computers to access career and personal resources. The app is customizable, enabling units to provide Marine Reservists with relevant, unit-specific information. The app includes a mobile Common Access Card (CAC) portal that will allow Marines to pair their devices with a mobile CAC reader to access some CAC-secured sites. USMC Connect will increase engagement, communication, and connectedness through greater access to career, lifestyle and behavioral health resources.

The Marine Corps Reserve Substance Abuse program continues to educate Marines on substance misuse, relationships, stress management, emotional regulation, thinking patterns, and risk awareness. The program provides tools to promote the safety of Marines and their families and to sustain and improve personal readiness and unit performance. The Marine Corps Reserve

relies profoundly on its Drug Demand Reduction Program, which uses random urinalysis testing to deter the use of illicit drugs and misuse of prescription drugs. Each Reserve unit conducts monthly drug testing to screen Reserve Marines for drugs, as well as breathalyzer testing to screen for alcohol use while in a duty status. The Substance Abuse program staff provides quarterly and on-demand education and awareness training on the dangers of misusing and abusing prescription drugs as well as information on the proper disposal of unused and outdated medications. Additionally, the Substance Abuse program increases leaders' awareness of the dangers of abusing prescription drugs through annual supervisor-level substance abuse training.

The Marine Corps Reserve recognizes that the factors contributing to suicide are numerous and complex. Risk factors can include depression, family history of suicide, and substance abuse. Common precipitating stressors include relationship, legal, and financial challenges as well as disciplinary problems. We mitigate stressors using a multidimensional and multilevel approach. Small unit leaders are encouraged to foster a sense of belonging for Marines. Commanders employ messaging to safely and effectively communicate about suicide, conduct Force Preservation Councils to identify risk factors, and provide courses of action to mitigate destructive behavior. Once a possible behavioral health issue has been identified, the command implements intervention and reintegration strategies, as appropriate, to help lower risks, encourages Marines to ask for help when needed, and restricts access to lethal means for those at risk for suicide in accordance with existing laws and policies. The Marine Corps' Unit Marine Awareness and Prevention Integrated Training (UMAPIT) teaches every Marine the basics of suicide prevention. UMAPIT consists of tailored curricula designed to proactively manage challenging situations and improve Marines' ability to address behavioral health issues such as substance abuse, suicide, family maltreatment, and combat operational stress before they become unmanageable. The

Marine Corps' culture is shifting toward recognizing that seeking help is a sign of strength, which will help reduce stigma and barriers to seeking care. Finally, all Marines are taught to recognize suicide warning signs, seek help for their fellow Marines, and never leave a Marine behind.

Care Management Teams focus on supporting Reserve Marines through the Department of Veterans Affairs Transition Care Management Program. Our Marines are assigned a Care Manager who oversees the referrals and follow-on care of the Reserve Marine's individual health care needs. Marine Intercept Program (MIP) is an evidence-informed, targeted intervention for service members who have had an identified suicide ideation or suicide attempt. MIP includes a series of telephonic contacts in which a counselor reaches out to the Marine and assesses them for risk, encourages the use of a safety plan, and identifies and addresses barriers to services or resources. The MIP counselors then incorporate these contacts into the counseling process. These services are also provided to our Reserve Marines through the PHOP.

Our Marines have proven their strength in navigating challenging issues such as frequent moves, deployments, and separations from loved ones. To help with these struggles, our Marines, Sailors, and family members are able to access behavioral health programs at Marine Corps installations through Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) while on active-duty orders. Additionally, we continue to support Military OneSource which provides confidential, non-medical counseling, resources, and support to service members and their families anywhere in the world.

Sexual Assault Prevention & Response

Sexual assault is a complex and challenging matter that is often interrelated with readiness challenges, behavioral health issues, and destructive behaviors. For the Marine Corps Reserve,

addressing the health and safety of our service members and fostering a culture of dignity and respect are top priorities toward reducing and ultimately eliminating sexual assault within our ranks. To accomplish this goal, the Marine Corps Reserve executes a Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) program. Seven full-time, professional employees ensure the efficacy of the program and its services across our geographically-dispersed force. In addition to the force level Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC), each Major Subordinate Command (MSC) within the Marine Corps Reserve has a full-time civilian SARC who serves as a special staff officer to their Commanding General and manages their SAPR program from Marine Forces Reserve headquarters in New Orleans, LA. The program also has two professional civilian SAPR Victim Advocates (VAs) who travel to Marines, Sailors and their families to provide in-person advocacy services, training, and unit-specific program guidance. The Marine Corps Reserve works diligently to improve our victim response, outreach, and sexual assault prevention by approaching these efforts as a team. The SARCs and VAs work together to ensure there is never a gap in coverage, regardless of the MSC. Leaders at every level and anyone in need of support services has access to a SAPR staff member for program guidance.

The SAPR staff trains up to 160 individuals to become VAs each year during courses held quarterly in New Orleans. After completing the 40-hour training course, these potential VAs submit an application for credentialing through the DoD's Sexual Assault Advocate Certification Program. Once credentialed, the VAs are officially appointed by their commanders to serve in the billet at their respective RTCs. In total, the Marine Corps Reserve maintains an active roster averaging more than 200 VAs across the country.

SAPR personnel respond to Marines, Sailors, and adult dependents who request support services related to a report of sexual assault. The SARCs and VAs screen for potential safety

issues, develop individualized safety plans, and offer advocacy services and referrals in the military and civilian sectors. In order to more effectively support the Reserve Component, the SAPR Program developed and maintains a database of nationwide resources for victims of sexual assault who may not have access to military providers.

The Marine Corps Reserve operates a dedicated Sexual Assault Support Line that is staffed by the professional SAPR team 24/7. The Marine Corps Reserve also actively publicizes the DoD Safe Helpline, an additional resource that offers crisis support services for members of the DoD community. The DoD Safe Helpline is available 24/7 worldwide with “click/call/text” user options and can be used anonymously for confidential support.

The Marine Corps Reserve’s prevention strategy is holistic and integrated with other programs aimed toward eradicating sexual assault, such as the Equal Opportunity Program, Safety, Spiritual Readiness Initiatives, the PHOP, Total Force Fitness initiatives, and Behavioral Health. The Marine Corps Reserve continues to set the example by employing a zero-tolerance policy related to sexual assault and harassment and a retaliation-free command climate. Leaders at every level are encouraged to actively engage with Marines and Sailors to create a positive environment free from attitudes and behaviors that are incompatible with our core values. Each year all Marines and Sailors receive SAPR training which covers reporting options, available resources, and prevention techniques. Along with overall education about the SAPR program, these periods of instruction give individual Marines and Sailors an opportunity to interact with their local Command SAPR Representatives, thereby helping to generate trust in the program and confidence that the prevention of sexual assault is a priority for leadership.

Quality of Life

The Marine Corps Reserve strives to achieve appropriate balance and effective performance of our quality of life programs which provide support and assistance during deployment and on the home front. The Marine Corps Reserve is dispersed throughout the country and away from most traditional brick and mortar resources available at major bases and stations. The ability to access the comprehensive set of MCCA programs, which support operational readiness, war fighting capabilities, and quality of life, can have a profoundly positive effect on the well-being of our Marines and families. MCCA programming includes education and transition assistance, fitness and recreation, deployment support, family team building, and prevention. MCCA is a user-friendly and responsive single resource that provides constant and unwavering support to Marines and their families throughout their entire service or affiliation with the Marine Corps. The MCCA Unit, Personal, and Family Readiness Program is supported by civilian Deployment Readiness Coordinators or Uniformed Readiness Coordinators who implement a commander's family readiness vision and help Marines, Sailors, and families maintain a constant state of family readiness.

MCCA programs remain flexible, constantly adjusting to meet the needs of our geographically dispersed Marines and their families. The training programs provided to our commanders, Family Readiness Command Teams, Marines, and their families help to produce a ready and resilient force equipped to achieve success. The Marine Corps Family Team Building (MCFTB) program promotes readiness and resiliency through non-clinical preventative education, professional training, and community-building support to Marines and Sailors and their families throughout mission, life, and career events. MCFTB training events are delivered both in person and virtually through interactive webinars at 158 RTCs. During FY20, the Marine Corps Reserve

conducted 169 training events in which 6,854 Marines and family members received valuable information to prepare for and thrive during deployments and achieve a positive post-deployment reintegration experience.

A key component to our quality of life and resiliency is the religious ministry support provided by 141 Religious Ministry Team (RMT) members. As uniformed service members, RMTs support Marines and their families across the full spectrum of military life including combat and humanitarian engagements. There are 87 RMT members embedded in 46 Marine Corps Reserve units across the country. The religious ministry support includes developing the Commandant's spiritual readiness initiatives as part of the Human Performance Division, providing divine services across the spectrum of faith communities, advising on spiritual and ethical matters, and delivering pastoral care in a safe and confidential environment. Chaplain support is provided to Marines, Sailors, and families at numerous funeral services year-round. The Chaplains provide spiritual guidance at the services and follow-on care as needed, providing a source of healing for family members.

The Chaplain Religious Enrichment Development Operations (CREDO) program provides transformational retreats and workshops, including the Marriage Enrichment Retreat (MER), the Personal Resiliency Retreat (PRR) and the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) class. The MER and PRR equip Marines, Sailors, and their families with practical relationship and communication tools that strengthen marriages and individual resiliency on the home front and during deployments. The PRR helps Marines and Sailors set personal goals, make good decisions, deal with stress, and live their lives with greater purpose and satisfaction. During FY20, 235 individuals participated in five MERs and one PRR.

In an ongoing effort to reduce suicidal events, the CREDO Program offers ASIST and Suicide Alertness for Everyone (safeTALK), evidence-based programs that train individuals to intervene in suicidal ideations and keep the individual safe until they can receive follow-on care. A total of 122 personnel were trained at six ASIST and three safeTALK classes in FY20, providing commands with resources to offer positive outcomes in unit readiness. Participants in these programs self-reported a 68% increase in their likelihood to intervene to help a person having thoughts of suicide. One FY20 enhancement of the program has been a “take it to where the Marines are” option with three of the workshops taking place in conjunction with travel to distant geographic locations.

COVID-19 has significantly impacted the operational tempo of the CREDO Program, inhibiting travel for in-person training and necessitating the cancellation of 10 retreats and five ASIST workshops. The Marine Corps Reserve immediately pivoted to live virtual training in order to continue mission execution. Launching with the motto “Virtual Engagement. Real Impact.” the transition incorporated new Leadership and Personal Growth Workshops (LPGW), Marriage Enrichment Workshops (MEW), and Professional Naval Chaplain Workshops (PNCW). The LPGWs and MEWs incorporate goals of the PRRs and MERs, respectively, in a shorter, non-retreat format using MarineNet’s Adobe Connect platform. The PNCWs are built to enable the CREDO program to train and equip other Chaplains and leaders with skills that directly and positively impact service members, their families, and Federal Civilian employees. One example of this training is Adobe Connect, which instructs participants on the use of the platform for teaching. The Chaplain of the Marine Corps subsequently instructed all RMTs attached to Marine Corps Units to complete the class in an effort to mitigate COVID-19 impact by equipping RMTs across the enterprise. Pilot partnerships were launched to reduce required resources and

simultaneously increase deliverables (e.g., Virtual CREDO, Centers for Adaptive Warfighting, Federal Coaching Network, etc.). In FY20, CREDO conducted 54 virtual and 22 in-person workshops consisting of 680 training hours for more than 2,058 participants.

The Marine Corps emphasizes the importance of readiness for Marines and family members in many areas of life. Personal and Professional Development programs continue to provide training and educational resources to our Marines, Sailors, and their families in a variety of areas. One key program that assists commands, Marines, and family members with readiness is the Command Financial Specialist (CFS) program. The CFS program provides assistance on a wide array of financial issues to include budgeting, diversifying income, credit and debt management, military/consumer protections, car buying, home options, saving and investing, insurance, Survivor Benefit Program, Veteran benefits, retirement, and financial counseling to all members of our dispersed forces.

The technical expertise our Marines have achieved during their service has considerable value to the country's civilian sector. The Marine Corps' Transition Readiness Program emphasizes a proactive approach that enables Marines to formulate effective post-transition entrepreneurship, employment, and educational goals. A virtual transition readiness seminar is available for Reserve Marines and Sailors who are unable to attend an installation-based transition course. The Marine for Life Network links our Marines to employment, education, and community resources in their hometown areas to support their future goals. Tutor.com offers our Marines and their dependents access to 24/7, no-cost, live tutoring services for grades K-12 and college students. Our Marines are also provided with remote access to language courses through Mango Languages, which supports over 70 languages, including English as a Second Language (ESL).

Peterson's Online Academic Skills Course helps Marines build math and verbal skills to excel on the job, pass exams, and advance their careers and education.

The Marine Corps' Semper Fit program is fully engaged in partnering with our bases and stations to provide fitness education activities that promote physical and mental readiness and develop positive self-esteem and healthy lifestyles. Additionally, the High Intensity Tactical Training (HITT) program focuses on physical resilience, combat readiness, and injury prevention. The HITT program provides hands-on, science-based strength and conditioning courses and online physical fitness tools to include instruction on injury prevention, nutrition, and weight management. Our Marines' and Sailors' quality of life is also strengthened through team building and esprit de corps activities such as unit outings and participation in competitive events. These programs are vital to unit cohesion and camaraderie.

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) is a DoD-wide effort to promote the well-being of National Guard and Reserve members, their families, and communities by connecting them with resources throughout the deployment cycle. The YRRP is an enduring and invaluable part of our efforts to build resiliency. Since its inception in 2010, we have conducted more than 922 training events for more than 52,000 Marines, Sailors, and family members. In FY20, we conducted three live and 22 virtual events with more than 3,000 participants.

Our Marines, Sailors, and their families who sacrifice so much for our nation's defense should not be asked to sacrifice their quality of life. We continue to be a faithful advocate for flexible quality of life programs and services that evolve and adapt to the changing needs of our Marines, Sailors, and their families. The combined effect of these programs and services is critical to the readiness and retention of our Marines, Sailors, and their families.

Supporting our Wounded, Ill, or Injured Marines and their Families

The Marine Corps ensures the availability of full spectrum care to all wounded, ill, or injured (WII) service members, whether they are Active or Reserve, through the Wounded Warrior Regiment (WWR). The Marine Corps Reserve ensures Reserve Marines' unique challenges are addressed through a WWR Liaison Officer who provides subject matter expertise and special coordination with the WWR staff.

The WWR staff includes the Reserve Medical Entitlements Determination Section, which maintains specific oversight of all Reservists requiring medical care for service-incurred and duty-limiting medical conditions. Reservists facing complex care and recovery needs have access to WWR's network of 45 Recovery Care Coordinators who provide one-on-one transition support and resource identification for WII Reservists and families often living long distances from military installations. WWR also has medical advocates at the regimental staff who are available to assist Reservists in need of medical care coordination and advocacy. District Injured Support Coordinators dispersed throughout the country also coordinate with Reserve units to ensure we keep faith with all Marines.

The Marine Corps Reserve will not forget the sacrifices our Marines have made for this great nation and we will continue to work with the WWR to establish resources and programs that address the unique and ongoing needs of our Reserve population.

Force Design

The Marine Corps Reserve, operating as both a strategic and operational reserve, remains a critical part of the Marine Corps Total Force. As the Marine Corps transitions towards Naval Campaigning in response to Great Power Competition, the Reserve Component continues to be an

integral element of the planning effort. The Marine Corps force development process is accomplished through deliberate integrated planning teams and comprehensive wargames. The Marine Corps Reserve provides support to this force design effort, while remaining a vital global contributor to meeting Combatant Command requirements.

Although there have been significant adjustments to the Active Component forces, the redesign of the Reserve Component has yet to mature to the point of implementation. While there has been some public mention of specific units identified for deactivation, there is still much deliberation occurring to ensure Reserve capabilities are not inadvertently or prematurely eliminated. Currently, only the deactivations of 4th Tank Battalion and Bridging units across the Marine Corps have impacted the Marine Corps Reserve. The Marine Corps Reserve has been working tirelessly to ensure that each Marine affected by unit deactivations is afforded every opportunity to continue their service to the country. To that end, Personnel Transition Teams (PTTs) have been traveling to all impacted locations to meet individually with all Marines. As it relates to the siting of Reserve units across the country, we are actively analyzing a variety of factors to ensure that if we encounter a situation that forces us to vacate a location, we have both the quantitative as well as qualitative measures to substantiate difficult decisions. As we continue to analyze Service requirements, our site support organizations will remain in place until greater clarity of force design implications are known. The Service is dedicated to maintaining an optimal set of sites for Reserve capabilities in support of the future Marine Corps.

Talent Management

The legacy Industrial Age manpower management processes we use today will not support our larger force design goal. As the Marine Corps continues to develop talent management

objectives in support of departmental objectives, there are unique opportunities worth exploring within the Reserve Component. Our nation's Reservists feel inspired to answer the call to service and are willing to dedicate the requisite time to develop dual careers. The Marine Corps Reserve is actively engaged in developing and managing talent and is currently developing a Reserve Component talent management strategy that aligns the institution's vision, mission, and goals for how talent should be managed to increase warfighting effectiveness while instilling the institution's values. This talent management vision will focus on talent development, leadership development, and diversity & empowerment in order to attract, recruit, identify, incentivize, and retain the most talented individuals across the entire force necessary to achieve institutional and strategic objectives.

Conclusion

Your Marine Corps Reserve is forward deployed supporting Combatant Commanders' requirements, participating in Service- and Joint-level exercises both at home and abroad, and is the constant face of the Marine Corps to our local communities. As part of the Total Force, we are focused on force design, readiness, and manpower to maintain and enhance our Service's ability to deter pacing threats as prescribed by the National Defense Strategy. Given a worthy mission and a clear signal that their individual contributions are valued by the Service, your Reserve Marines will continue to answer their "irrational call to service." With your continued support, we will remain ready. Semper Fidelis!