

Pacific Marines, Philippine Marines Meet for Annual Staff Talks



U.S. Marine Corps Col. Christopher Oliver, left, assistant chief of staff, G-5, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific, and Philippine Marine Corps Col. Bayani Curaming, Chief of Philippine Marine Staff, have a conversation during staff talks on Camp H.M. Smith, Hawaii, Feb. 13. *U.S. Marine Corps | Lance Cpl. Matthew Benfield*

CAMP H.M. SMITH, Hawaii – Senior leaders from U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific, and the Philippine Marine Corps held their annual Marine-to-Marine Staff Talks here from Feb. 12 to 15.

The annual Marine-to-Marine Staff Talks are a key component of the U.S.-Philippine defense relationship. They serve as a

forum for senior military leaders to exchange views on regional security issues and enhance bilateral cooperation. The discussions from this week further reinforce the strong and enduring bond between both nations and their commitment to regional stability and security.

“The importance of integrating our militaries cannot be overstated,” stated Marine Corps Brigadier General Daniel L. Shipley, deputy commander of U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific. “Regular discussions, such as these staff talks, and consistent engagement during exercises like Balikatan and KAMANDAG, are key reasons why we are able to come together to rapidly support each other as we are currently doing in Mindanao in response to the flooding.”

The annual event emphasized the significance of the U.S.-Philippine military relationship and provided an opportunity to collaborate on common interests. During the three-day meeting, leaders from both militaries discussed a variety of topics including recent experiences with amphibious operations, methods of modernizing training, and advancing capabilities to remain ready and responsive in the Indo-Pacific region.

This year’s iteration focused heavily on the development of the Republic of the Philippines-U.S. Mutual Defense Board-Security Engagement Board cycle and development of an assessment model for current and future engagements. The MDB-SEB cycle enhances defense cooperation between the two countries, while the assessment model will enhance improvements to the readiness and capability of both forces. This process helped compile a list of events for 2025 that will serve as a foundation for the rest of the MDB-SEB cycle.

Representatives participating in the PMC-MARFORPAC Staff Talks discussed future exercises meant to strengthen interoperability between the two services. Militaries from both countries regularly participate in a variety of

activities and exercises, such as Balikatan and KAMANDAG, to mutually develop their defense capabilities while aligning to common goals shared between both nations.

During the opening program, the Head of the Philippine Marine Corps delegation, Col. Bayani V. Curaming, the Chief of Marine Staff, PMC, emphasized that “everything about bilateral engagements between the two Marine Corps should be contextualized and in-sync with realization of the Archipelagic Defense and the Marine Corps’ Strategic Posturing that goes with it.”

The U.S. and the Philippines have a long-standing diplomatic relationship dating back to 1951, with the signing of the Mutual Defense Treaty, which serves as the foundation for close security cooperation. More than 70 years later, the two nations continue to work closely together towards common goals based on shared values and interests in the region.

Chesty XVI, Mascot of Marine Barracks Washington, Promoted to Lance Corporal



Chesty XVI, mascot of the Barracks, receives his promotion warrant during a ceremony at Marine Barracks Washington, Jan. 17. Chesty XVI was promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal by Carlos Del Toro, secretary of the Navy. *U.S. Marine Corps | Lance Cpl. Chloe N. McAfee*

In a momentous ceremony at Marine Barracks Washington last week, presided over by Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro, Chesty XVI, the official mascot of Marine Barracks Washington, was promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal.

“At a time when our nation is being challenged in many different ways, we need Marines like each and every one of you to represent everything that’s great about this country,” Del Toro said. “And Chesty XVI represents everything that’s great about the Marine Corps.”

After the Battle of Belleau Wood, U.S. Marines adopted the moniker “devil dogs,” a term believed to have originated from

the defeated Germans who, in awe of their tenacious adversaries, allegedly referred to them as “teufelhunden,” meaning hell hounds. Following World War I, the nickname gained prominence and began to feature prominently on Marine Corps recruitment posters, often accompanied by an iconic depiction of a scowling, helmet-clad English bulldog, symbolizing the indomitable spirit of the Marine Corps. While the nickname played a significant role in shaping the Marine Corps identity in the 20th century, it’s worth noting that there isn’t evidence to confirm its origin as a reference to the Marines by German troops.

Chesty XVI’s Pup Predecessors

During his tenure as the commanding officer of the Marine Barracks at Quantico, Virginia, Brig. Gen. Smedley D. Butler extended the nascent tradition by enlisting “Private Jiggs” into the Marine Corps on Oct. 14, 1922. Jiggs was born in Philadelphia on May 22, 1921, and boasted an impressive pedigree. The mascot experienced rapid promotions within the ranks, attaining the position of Sergeant Major on July 17, 1924.

Remaining true to custom, the Barracks welcomed Private First Class Chauncy into its ranks in 1956. Following Chauncy, Chesty I assumed the mantle, bearing the name in homage to the legendary Marine Lt. Gen. Lewis “Chesty” Puller, the most decorated Marine in the history of the Corps. Chesty I made his debut during the very first Evening Parade on July 5, 1957.

Over the years, numerous English bulldogs have faithfully served at the Barracks, with some receiving formal burial honors within the Barracks’ hallowed grounds. This enduring tradition underscores the profound connection between legend and the fighting spirit of every Marine, past and present.

Former U.S. Marine Keith Burns, who served as a Marine

Barracks Washington mascot handler in 1998, had the opportunity to escort Chesty XI to the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Belleau Wood.

“As this battle was the birthplace of the mascot’s role, being there 80 years later with our mascot was humbling and awe-inspiring,” said Burns. “Being part of an ongoing tribute to our history and moniker of ‘devil dog’ made me feel even more connected to the Corps and served as a reminder of how our past continues to shape our present, and future.”

Chesty XVI enlisted in the Marine Corps February 2022. He relieved Chesty XV of his duties on May 6, 2022, and marched in his debut parade that evening.

Chesty XVI’s promotion to Lance Corporal not only embodies the Marine Corps’ legacy but also highlights the mission of Marine Barracks Washington to represent the Marine Corps to the nation. The “Oldest Post of the Corps” continues to stand as a keeper of tradition and beacon of the Marine Corps’ values, inspiring patriotism and showcasing the unwavering commitment of Marines who have served, are

BAE Systems Delivers First Production-Ready ACV Command Variant to U.S. Marine Corps



BAE Systems' ACV-C variant. *BAE Systems*
STAFFORD, Va. – BAE Systems delivered the first Amphibious Combat Vehicle Command and Control (ACV-C) variant under the full-rate production contract to the U.S. Marine Corps.

The ACV-C will provide Marines with a mobile command center which enables situational awareness and operations planning in the battlespace.

ACV-C provides true open-ocean and ship-to-objective amphibious capability, land mobility, survivability and ample growth capacity and flexibility to incorporate and adapt future technologies. Through previous studies with the Marine Corps, BAE Systems has proven that the ACV is truly customizable and has the built-in growth capacity to integrate future mission critical technologies, including new battle management capabilities, advanced communications, multi-domain targeting management, beyond-line-of-sight sensors, and manned-unmanned teaming (MUM-T) with autonomous and unmanned systems.

“We are thrilled to deliver this critical capability into the hands of Marines in the field,” said Garrett Lacaille, vice president of the amphibious vehicles product line for BAE

Systems. “As the Marines begin to familiarize themselves with the new ACV-C, BAE Systems and our strategic partner Iveco Defence Vehicles remain ready to fulfill any of the Corps’ critical amphibious warfighting needs to ensure the Fleet Marine Force is mission ready.”

The Marine Corps and BAE Systems entered full-rate production on the ACV program with a contract award in December 2020. Currently, two of the four ACV variants are in production today at BAE Systems facility in York, Pennsylvania: the ACV Personnel variant (ACV-P), which provides transport for 13 combat-loaded Marines and three crew, and the new ACV-C variant. Production Representative Test Vehicles are currently in production for ACV 30mm (ACV-30). ACV-30 is armed with a 30mm Remote Turret System that provides the lethality and protection Marines need while leaving ample room for troop capacity and payload.

The fourth variant on contract, the ACV Recovery variant (ACV-R) recently completed phase one of the design process. BAE Systems will deliver production representative test vehicles in 2025. ACV-R will provide direct field support, maintenance, and recovery to the ACV family of vehicles.

ACV production and support is taking place at BAE Systems locations in Stafford, Virginia; San Jose, California; Sterling Heights, Michigan; Aiken, South Carolina; and York, Pennsylvania.

New Air Defense System

Advances Corps' Air Dominance



U.S. Marines with Marine Corps Systems Command fire a Stinger Missile from a Marine Air Defense Integrated System (MADIS) at Yuma Proving Ground, Arizona, Dec. 13. U.S. *Marine Corps* | *Virginia Guffey*

YUMA PROVING GROUND, Arizona – The Marine Corps is one step closer to defeating unmanned aircraft systems. In December, Program Executive Officer Land Systems successfully tested the Marine Air Defense Integrated System, or MADIS, low-rate initial production model, hitting several launched drones during a live-fire test at the Yuma Proving Ground in Arizona.

The live-fire test subjected MADIS to actual battlefield scenarios, where it detected, tracked, identified, and defeated unmanned aerial threats. “MADIS can complete the entire kill chain, and we witness that during this event,” said Col. Andrew Konicki, program manager for Ground Based Air Defense. “It is a linchpin for mission success and our ability to neutralize airborne threats...which in turn, increases our lethality.”

MADIS is a short-range, surface-to-air system that enables Low Altitude Air Defense Battalions to deter and neutralize unmanned aircraft systems and fixed wing/rotary wing aircraft.

Mounted aboard two Joint Light Tactical Vehicles, the system is a complementary pair. MADIS includes multiple disparate systems, including radar systems, surface-to-air missiles, and command and control elements. In layman's terms, one detects, and the other attacks.

Drones continue to be a threat, especially with the emergence of easily accessible, commercial off-the-shelf products. MADIS uses real-time communication and coordination to destroy or neutralize low-altitude aerial threats in defense of the Marine Air Ground Task Force.

"The importance of countering UAS threats cannot be overstated," said Konicki. "We see it all over the news. MADIS is the key. We're excited to get this out to Marines."

During the test, MADIS successfully tracked and hit multiple targets using the Stinger missiles and 30mm cannon. Information passed through the Common Aviation Command and Control System to the "fighting pair" of vehicles, executing the engagements while continuing to track other UAS targets.

"We've taken multiple disparate commercial off-the-shelf and government off-the-shelf technologies and put them together," said Konicki. "This is a capability the Marine Corps has never had, and it was a challenge for the acquisition community. This test event shows we met that challenge."

The program office has additional live-fire testing planned for new equipment training, system verification testing, and initial operational test and evaluation in FY24, prior to the start of fielding, said Maj. Craig Warner, product manager for Future Weapons Systems. The 3rd Littoral Anti-Air Battalion will be the first battalion in the Marine Corps to receive the MADIS.

Marine Corps 'Monster Machine' Enters Full-Rate Production



Two of 13th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion's rough terrain container handlers posture at terminal 46 in Seattle, Wash. outside of CenturyLink Field Event Center where Soldiers are setting up a hospital in support of the Department of Defense COVID-19 response, April 4. U.S. Army Reserve / Maj. Brandon R. Mace

QUANTICO, Va. – A Marine Corps vehicle designed to transport International Standards Organization containers to supply Fleet Marines just reached a key acquisition milestone.

The Rough Terrain Container Handler moves 20-to-40-foot ISO containers and shelters on rough terrain, beaches and other surfaces to assist with land and amphibious missions. The machine can lift and transport objects weighing more than 50,000 pounds.

In September 2020, an upgraded version of the material handler reached full-rate production.

"The Rough Terrain Container Handler resupplies Marines during battle," said Matt Wilson, project officer for the RTCH program at Marine Corps Systems Command. "It's a big, monster machine that you'd have to see in operation to really appreciate."

RTCH operates worldwide on rough surfaces, including sandy terrain, and is capable of ordnance ammunition handling

operations. The vehicle can be quickly configured for transport by road, rail and marine landing craft, or by air in C-5 or C-17 cargo aircraft.

The vehicle is commonly used during amphibious landings, where engineer equipment operators can employ the RTCH to offload containers, stage them on the beach and push cargo and supplies out to Marines as needed. The machine can also travel through shallow waters and transport ISO containers onto floating bridges called causeways.

The Marine Corps began fielding the RTCH in 2006. While the vehicle has served Marines well, MCSC is always looking for ways to improve their technologies and maintain a competitive advantage over adversaries.

“We communicated with Fleet Marines to determine what they wanted to see improve within the Rough Terrain Container Handler,” Wilson said. “We also looked at what the manufacturer could improve on the system.”

After assessing this input, MCSC decided to upgrade the RTCH through the Service Life Extension Program as opposed to field an entirely new vehicle. The RTCH SLEP gives the RTCH at least another 10 years of operation, said Wilson.

The SLEP also saves the Corps time. Instead of beginning at the start of the process – Milestone Decision Authority – the program began at the Milestone C stage, just prior to the production and deployment phase.

“This has been a very streamlined process,” said Jarrett. “Instead of testing every part of this RTCH, which has already been done before, we only had to focus on the specific modifications to ensure those still met the requirements of the legacy vehicle and what we wanted to do with our SLEP program.”

Since MCSC awarded the RTCH SLEP contract in January 2020, both the Army and Navy have joined the Marine Corps' SLEP to acquire additional machines.

"The Army and Navy are now involved in the program," said Wilson. "When the Marines, Navy and Army seek the same materiel solution for the RTCH, it benefits all in Acquisitions, Provisioning and sets the Marine, Sailor and Soldier up for success."

Marine Corps Fields New Service-Wide Pistol



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Michael Pritchard, 423rd Security Forces Squadron (SFS) patrolman, fires an M18 handgun during a qualification course, at RAF Molesworth, England, July 28, 2020. The M18 is now being adopted by the U.S. Marine Corps. U.S. Air Force / Senior Airman Eugene Oliver
QUANTICO, Va. – For the first time since former President Ronald Reagan's Administration, the Marine Corps is fielding a new service-wide pistol replacement.

The M18 comprises capabilities previous pistols lacked. For example, the M9 – the most widely issued pistol among Marines – is a steel-framed, single-action/double-action hammer-fired pistol. This means it is a heavier, metal gun with two different trigger pulls for single- and double-action.

Conversely, the M18 is lighter and does not include two different trigger pulls.

“For some Marines, having two trigger pulls, like with the M9, is difficult to get used to because different forces are acting upon the gun,” said Sgt. Randall McClellan, pistol program manager with the Weapons Training Battalion aboard Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia. “With the M18, the trigger is going to be the same weight every time.”

The M18 has increased modularity when compared with previous pistols. The gun includes interchangeable components to fit small, medium or large hands. It comprises a receiver module inside the pistol grip that enables Marines to remove the trigger mechanism and insert it into a new grip size, said Nelson.

The weapon also includes an accessory rail that enables Marines to attach lights or lasers underneath.

“Marines can attach more things to the M18, such as a red-dot sight, once approved for use,” said McClellan. “The modularity and ergonomics of the gun benefits the warfighter, as they can change parts out more easily.”

Army collaboration

The handgun is an Army-led program fielded in 2017. The program consists of the M17—the full-size pistol—and the M18. MCSC is only purchasing the M18, the compact variant, as well as holsters through the Army contract.

The Marine Corps’ Combat Development and Integration collaborated with the Army on the development of the M18 requirement. CD&I requirements managers and other Marines actively participated in the assessment and selection of the MHS.

“The M18 is unique in that it is a utility player capable of supporting a broad range of missions in which a handgun is

required,” said Billy Epperson, the Infantry Weapon Capabilities Integration officer at CD&I. “Because of this versatility, the M18 will replace the four pistols in the Marine Corps inventory.”

Tom Vass, the Army’s project officer for the M18, believes the weapon will greatly benefit Marines, noting how it is a more reliable, accurate and effective pistol than previous ones.

“Overall, the adoption of the M18 by the Marine Corps is an extremely positive decision that will benefit the Corps and enhance Marines’ safety and effectiveness when conducting missions,” said Vass.

‘Very emotional’ transition

In June 2020, a group of Marines and civilians from various Marine Corps organizations, including PMO and Marine Helicopter Squadron One, converged upon a firing range aboard Marine Corps Base Quantico to learn and qualify with the M18 during the Instructor and Key Personnel Training.

After the two-hour event, Marines and subject matter experts spoke about the benefits of the system. Sgt. Journey Granados, a weapons trainer with MCB Quantico’s PMO, said the M18 is much easier to grip and shoot than other Marine Corps pistols.

“I feel more comfortable holding the M18 than I do holding the M9, largely because of the interchangeable grip,” said Granados. “This pistol is definitely easier to shoot, is a lot more accurate and should improve Marines’ qualification score.”

The requirement for Marines to qualify with a pistol will not change. Those required to qualify annually will still do so, said Nelson. Combat Marksmanship Trainers will qualify with

the M18 during New Equipment Training, and these individuals are responsible for qualifying other Marines.

“The only thing changing in the qualification course now is the verbiage in regard to single action/double action and the decocking,” said Nelson. “WTBN will hold the marksmanship symposium later this year, and they will review data to decide if the course as a whole will need to be changed.”

Maj. Mike Brisker, weapons product manager in MCSC’s Program Manager for Infantry Weapons, expressed excitement for the M18 because of its capabilities and its potential in helping Marines carry out their missions.

“This is the first service-wide replacement of the pistol since the M9 in the 1980s,” said Brisker. “The M18 is important in terms of modernization and lethality.”

Fielding the M18 is part of a larger effort to modernize and increase the lethality of Marines. The addition of the M18 to the Marine Corps inventory will be an exciting experience for many Marines, said Nelson.

“This is the first new service pistol in more than 30 years, so it’s going to be a very emotional transition for Marines,” said Nelson. “Fielding the M18 is a big step for the Marine Corps.”