Secretary of War Announces Marine General, Navy Flag Officer Nominations

From the Department of War, April 15, 2026

ARLINGTON, Va. — Secretary of War Pete Hegseth announced that President Donald J. Trump has made the following nominations:

Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Roger B. Turner Jr. for reappointment to

the grade of lieutenant general, with assignment as commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific and commanding general, Fleet Marine Force Pacific, Camp H. M. Smith, Hawaii. Turner is currently serving as commanding general, III Marine Expeditionary Force and commander, Marine Forces Japan, Okinawa, Japan.

Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Keith D. Reventlow for appointment to the grade of lieutenant general, with assignment as director for Logistics, J-4, Joint Staff, Pentagon, Washington, D.C. Reventlow is currently serving as commanding general, Marine Corps Logistics Command, Albany, Georgia.

Marine Corps Maj. Gen. George B. Rowell IV for appointment to the grade of lieutenant general, with assignment as deputy commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Camp H. M. Smith, Hawaii. Rowell is currently serving as director, J-5, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Camp H. M. Smith, Hawaii.

Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Thomas B. Savage for appointment to the grade of lieutenant general, with assignment as deputy commandant, Training and Education, and commanding general, Training and Education Command, Quantico, Virginia. Savage is currently serving as commanding general, 1st Marine Division, Camp Pendleton, California.

Marine Corps Maj. Gen. James B. Wellons for appointment to the grade of lieutenant general, with assignment as deputy commandant for Programs and Resources, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Pentagon, Washington, D.C. Wellons is currently serving as special projects officer to the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, Pentagon, Washington, D.C.

Marine Corps Col. Peter D. Houtz for appointment to the grade of brigadier general. Houtz is currently serving as assistant judge advocate general of the Navy, Office of the Judge Advocate General, Office of the Secretary of the Navy, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C.

Navy Vice Adm. John F. Wade for reappointment to the grade of vice admiral, with assignment as senior military assistant to the Secretary of War, Pentagon, Washington, D.C. Wade is currently serving as commander, Third Fleet, San Diego, California.

Navy Rear Adm. Douglas L. Williams, for appointment to the grade of vice admiral, with assignment as director for Strategic Systems Programs, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C. Williams is currently serving as director for Test, Missile Defense Agency, Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Airbus and Lakota Connector Partners Successfully Execute Fourth Autonomous Flight Test

WASHINGTON (April 15, 2026)—Airbus U.S. Space & Defense, in partnership with Shield AI, L3Harris Technologies (NYSE: LHX), and Parry Labs, completed its fourth autonomous flight test on the H145 Airbus helicopter and successfully integrated all four company's technologies into a single aircraft together for the first time.

The test flights, which took place at the Airbus facility in Grand Prairie, Texas, focused on refining the aircraft's perception system to ensure it provides accurate, real-time information to an autonomous pilot ensuring obstacles are avoided within a landing zone.
"This test was vital for us to show the Lakota Connector's development in performing aerial logistics missions for the U.S. Marine Corps,"

said Rob Geckle, Chairman and CEO of Airbus U.S. Space and Defense. “Perception systems can make or break the success of an unmanned mission in the field, and I am excited to see our aircraft perform so well under uncertain conditions.”

During the tests, each partner’s contribution enabled the H145 aircraft to autonomously evaluate a landing zone, detect any obstacles obstructing it, and reroute to an alternate site as needed.

“L3Harris is delivering the digital backbone that advances autonomous aviation from concept to combat-ready capability,” said Jason Lambert, President, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, L3Harris. “Our Modular Open System Architecture enabled this team to integrate four partner technologies seamlessly, demonstrating the speed and interoperability that will define the future of unmanned logistics for the Marine Corps.”

Shield AI’s Hivemind demonstrated its core capabilities and autonomous perception of the aircraft.

“This H145 flight test proves Hivemind delivers scalable autonomy across rotary and fixed-wing aircraft without custom redesign,” said Christian Gutierrez, vice president of Hivemind Solutions at Shield AI. “That speed and flexibility are critical in contested logistics.”

Parry Labs provided edge compute and autonomy-enabling software infrastructure supporting onboard perception processing and real-time decision-making.

“Autonomy only works when perception and mission software operate together at the edge,” said Parry Labs CEO John “JD” Parkes. “This flight test showed how partner technologies can be rapidly integrated to deliver real-world operational capabilities.”

Airbus U.S. is currently in the second year of the Aerial

Logistics Connector Middle Tier of Acquisition (MTA) Rapid Prototyping Program, which aims to provide the service with aircraft prototypes to demonstrate capabilities to the warfighter through a series of operational demonstrations and experiments.

In May 2024, Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) awarded Airbus U.S. Space & Defense a Phase I Other Transaction Authority (OTA) through the Naval Aviation Systems Consortium, based on its unmanned UH-72 Logistics Connector concept, a variant of the proven UH-72 Lakota platform.

The Aerial Logistics Connector effort is one of several initiatives across the Department of Defense aimed at delivering logistical support in distributed environments during peer or near- peer conflicts.

Philippine, U.S. Forces Kick Off Most Expansive Balikatan Exercise to Date

From the I Marine Expeditionary Force

CAMP AGUINALDO, Quezon City, Philippines – The Armed Forces of the Philippines and the U.S. military will conduct the 41st iteration of Exercise Balikatan across the Philippine archipelago from April 20 to May 8.

Coinciding with the 75th anniversary of the U.S.-Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty, more than 17,000 personnel from the Philippines, United States, Australia, Japan, Canada, France, and New Zealand will train shoulder-to-shoulder, and an additional 17 nations will participate as part of the international observer program.

“Balikatan is the embodiment of our nation’s commitment to a strong and credible defense posture” said Philippine Army Maj. Gen. Francisco F. Lorenzo Jr., Armed Forces of the Philippines Education and Training Command Commander. “This exercise is a prime opportunity for the Armed Forces of the Philippines to accelerate our modernization and enhance our capabilities as a vanguard of regional peace. Training shoulder-to-shoulder with our oldest ally and our many partners ensures our forces are prepared to face any challenge, together.”

The exercise will feature cutting-edge training across the air, land, sea, space, and cyber domains. Key events include:

- AFP and U.S. forces will sharpen their ability to command and control by establishing parallel exercise joint task forces to navigate a challenging training scenario.

- Field training exercises throughout the Philippines will culminate in capstone events to rehearse warfighting skills in maritime security, coastal defense, and the integration of combined and joint fires.

- Dynamic maritime sustainment and distributed logistics through ship-to-shore equipment offloads and movements. Prior to the start of Balikatan 2026, the AFP and U.S. forces rehearsed equipment and supply offload from maritime prepositioning force shipping at Port of Cagayan de Oro that was transported and distributed across Luzon. Supplies and equipment movement and distribution will continue throughout the exercise in support of the training.

- Ships from four countries will participate in a multi-day multilateral maritime exercise along the west coast of the Philippines conducting deck landing qualifications, live-fire gunnery, anti-submarine warfare, and search and rescue training.

- Humanitarian and civic assistance activities including engineering and construction projects and community health engagements at five locations across the archipelago to directly benefit Filipino communities and

strengthen humanitarian assistance preparedness.

“Our alliance with the Philippines has been a cornerstone of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific for 75 years,” said U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Christian Wortman, I Marine Expeditionary Force Commanding General. “Balikatan 2026 is a powerful demonstration of our ironclad commitment to that alliance. By training together with our friends and partners using the most advanced systems, we are not just enhancing our shared capabilities; we are forging the trust and readiness required to secure a prosperous and peaceful future for the region.”

HII Hosts PAE Maritime Christopher Miller at Ingalls Shipbuilding

From HII

PASCAGOULA, Miss., April 09, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) — HII (NYSE: HII) hosted Christopher Miller, the U.S. Navy's portfolio acquisition executive for maritime (PAE Maritime), at its Ingalls Shipbuilding division Wednesday. During the visit, Miller met with company leadership and received updates on current ship programs, facility investments and Ingalls' expanding production capacity to support the Navy's current and future fleet requirements.

"Ingalls is fully committed to our partnership with the Navy and the Marine Corps and our shared mission to strengthen the fleet with urgency," Ingalls Shipbuilding President Brian Blanchette said. "The skill and determination our shipbuilders apply to every destroyer and amphibious ship are essential to that mission, and we were honored to show Mr. Miller firsthand the commitment they bring to accelerating the Navy's needs."

HII has invested more than $1 billion in infrastructure, facilities and advanced tools at Ingalls to prepare for next-generation shipbuilding requirements. These investments, combined with the shipyard's expanding distributed shipbuilding network across the Gulf Coast, ensure Ingalls is ready to support the Navy's "Golden Fleet" of advanced surface combatants while continuing to deliver destroyers and amphibious assault ships.

The visit marked Miller's first trip to Ingalls since assuming the PAE Maritime role in March 2026. In addition to meeting with leadership, he toured several areas of the shipyard, including amphibious transport dock *Harrisburg* (LPD 30), currently under construction.

"The critical work happening at Ingalls reflects the strength and technical expertise of our nation's shipbuilding industrial base," Miller said. "As the Navy prepares for future demands, our industry partners and their experienced

workforce are pivotal to delivering the platforms and capacity needed. The maritime industry is critically important to our national defense and I am committed to supporting the industrial base efforts needed to deliver at speed and scale.”

Miller also visited HII’s Newport News Shipbuilding division at the end of March, where he met with leadership and toured construction progress on aircraft carrier programs at the shipyard. Together, the visits reinforced the shared commitment between HII and Navy leadership to deliver the platforms that strengthen the fleet, advance future capability and ensure sailors and Marines have the ships they need.

U.S. Strengthens Maritime Security Cooperation with Kenya During NAVAF Commander’s Visit

Adm. George Wikoff, commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa, and Major General Paul Otieno, commander, Kenya Navy, take part in the Close Quarters Battle (CQB) Facility Inauguration ceremony, on Kenya Navy Base Mtongwe in Mombasa. (U.S. Navy Photo by MC1Robert J. Baldock)
From By U.S. Naval Force Europe, U.S. Naval Forces Africa, March 31, 2026

U.S. Naval Forces Africa (NAVAF) strengthened its longstanding security partnership with Kenya during Adm. George Wikoff's visit to Nairobi and Mombasa, March 24–25.

The visit, Wikoff's first to Africa as the NAVAF commander, highlighted the United States Navy's ongoing support to Kenya's maritime operations, counterterrorism efforts, and regional security leadership along the Western Indian Ocean and the Somali border.

Throughout his engagements, Wikoff underscored the shared U.S.–Kenya commitment to enhancing interoperability, expanding

partner capacity, and investing in infrastructure and training that enable Kenyan forces to deter and respond to emerging threats.

“Kenya is a critical maritime and security partner in East Africa and the Western Indian Ocean,” said Wikoff. “Our cooperation is built on shared interests and shared sacrifices, and together we are working to promote stability, protect vital sea lanes, and counter those who threaten regional security.”

In Nairobi, Wikoff met with the Chief of the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF), General Charles Muriu Kahariri, to discuss ongoing collaboration in counterterrorism, maritime security, regional stability, and long-term defense modernization and innovation.

The discussion focused on aligning defense cooperation with broader U.S. diplomatic and economic goals, reinforcing strategic coordination at the senior level, and advancing Kenya’s role as a security anchor in the region.

“General Kahariri and I reaffirmed that our defense cooperation is not just a one-time effort – it is strategic, ongoing, and aligned with our broader diplomatic and economic partnerships,” Wikoff said. “Together, we are focused on countering terrorism, strengthening maritime security, and modernizing our forces so we are ready for current and future challenges.”

In Mombasa, Wikoff met with Major General Paul Owuor Otieno, commander of the Kenya Navy, to review ongoing maritime initiatives, including joint training, information sharing, and efforts to improve maritime domain awareness across the Western Indian Ocean. The leaders discussed ways to bolster Kenya’s ability to secure its maritime approaches, counter illicit maritime activities, and further integrate Kenyan naval forces into regional and international security

efforts.

Wikoff and Otieno then attended the after-action review for Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) 2026, a series of naval exercises with African partners, including Kenya, to bolster maritime security, improve interoperability, and address regional security challenges in the Western Indian Ocean. The review assessed operational effectiveness and interoperability gains and identified lessons to guide future joint exercises and operations.

“CARAT 2026 shows what we can achieve when we train and operate together,” Wikoff said. “By integrating our capabilities and sharing information, we are better prepared to secure the maritime domain, disrupt illicit networks, and respond swiftly when threats emerge.”

Wikoff and Otieno concluded their visit by commissioning the Kenya Navy Marine Range and Close Quarters Battle (CQB) Complex at Kenya Navy Base Mtongwe in Mombasa County. The new facility will provide a modern, specialized training environment to significantly enhance the operational readiness of the Kenya Navy Marine Commandos, supporting advanced training in close-quarters combat, marksmanship, tactical movement, and integrated maritime operations.

“The Marine Range and CQB Complex is a tangible demonstration of our commitment to Kenya’s security and regional leadership,” said Wikoff. “By investing in infrastructure and training, we are empowering Kenyan forces with the tools and skills they need to lead in securing their coastlines and maritime approaches.”

The KNAV Marine CQB Complex is a $750,000 Section 333 Building Partnership Capacity (BPC) design-build contract managed by Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) Europe, Africa, Central (EURAFCENT). This specialized facility is designed to enhance the maritime and coastal interdiction

capabilities of the newly established KNAV Marine Commandos, who are playing an increasingly prominent role in regional counterinsurgency operations along the coast and littorals. The scope includes a 100-meter small-arms range, a live-fire shoot house, and a dry-run rehearsal facility.

Wikoff’s visit reaffirmed NAVAF’s role as a trusted, long-term partner to Kenya amid increasing competition from external actors.

Through senior leader engagements, joint exercises, and targeted investments in training and infrastructure, the United States and Kenya are working together to strengthen counterterrorism cooperation, enhance maritime security, and promote stability across East Africa and the Western Indian Ocean.

“Our partnership with Kenya is enduring and future-focused,” Wikoff said. “Together, we are building the capabilities, relationships, and trust that underpin regional security and create the conditions for lasting peace and prosperity.”

For more than 80 years, NAVEUR-NAVAF has forged strategic relationships with Allies and partners, leveraging a foundation of shared values to preserve security and stability. Headquartered in Naples, Italy, NAVEUR-NAVAF operates U.S. naval forces in the U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command areas of responsibility.

I MEF launches Operation

Clean Sweep IV to improve barracks habitability

From I Marine Expeditionary Force Communication Strategy and Operations

March 30, 2026

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – I Marine Expeditionary Force and Marine Corps Installations West-Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton launched Operation Clean Sweep IV today, continuing a focused effort to improve barracks conditions and strengthen operational readiness.

OCS IV is part of the I MEF / MCI-West Barracks 360 Reset initiative and supports the Commandant of the Marine Corps' broader Barracks 2030 effort to improve unaccompanied housing across the force. The operation focuses on resident empowerment, leadership engagement and measurable, proactive

maintenance.

Barracks 360 Reset began in 2024 with recurring standdowns to surge maintenance and self-help support. The first iteration at Camp Pendleton ran Oct. 16-30, 2024, addressing deferred work through both self-help and contracted support. OCS II followed March 24-April 11, 2025, expanding training while broadening resources to additional bases. OCS III ran Sept. 15-26, 2025, and continued expanding these efforts to Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms and Marine Corps air stations Miramar and Yuma.

I MEF and MCI-West continue Barracks 360 Reset efforts to improve living conditions and operational readiness through enhanced command oversight, maintenance backlog reduction and resident engagement.

Marine Corps Leaders Visit Ingalls Shipbuilding to Advance Veteran-to-Workforce Pipeline

From HII

PASCAGOULA, Miss., March 19, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) — HII's (NYSE: HII) Ingalls Shipbuilding division recently welcomed senior enlisted leaders from the U.S. Marine Corps for a visit focused on strengthening pathways between Marines completing active service and long-term careers in the shipbuilding industry. The visit underscored the longtime partnership between Ingalls and the Marine Corps, particularly through Ingalls' role as the nation's primary builder of amphibious warships.

"Marines bring discipline, technical aptitude and a service mindset, all qualities that can translate directly into the complex work of shipbuilding," Ingalls Shipbuilding President Brian Blanchette said. "Those strengths are vital to delivering world-class warships to the U.S. Navy fleet, and we're honored to work with the Marine Corps to expand pathways for Marines transitioning to civilian careers as we continue building the amphibious platforms that keep them mission ready."

During the visit, Marine Corps leaders met with Ingalls leadership and toured the Maritime Training Academy, where they learned about the company's apprenticeship and career development programs. They also visited several areas of the shipyard, including the amphibious assault ship *Bougainville* (LHA 8), gaining a firsthand look at the craftsmanship and technical expertise required to build the platforms that many Marines call home during their worldwide service.

"Our goal is to set Marines up for success after they hang up the uniform," said Sgt. Maj. Carlos A. Ruiz, the 20th sergeant major of the Marine Corps. "This visit was instrumental in collaborating on a direct pipeline for Marines to transition seamlessly into the shipbuilding industry, using tangible and intangible skills gained through their military service."

Ingalls' decades-long history of designing and constructing amphibious warships creates a natural alignment for Marines seeking post-service careers in shipbuilding, as Marine Corps missions depend on the platforms produced at the shipyard. With more than 6,700 veterans employed across its divisions, HII recognizes that U.S. veterans bring essential leadership, technical expertise and operational insight that strengthen the shipbuilding workforce and support delivery of the world's most powerful ships and all-domain solutions for the nation's military.

Bell Completes SPINE Upgrades on First Two H-1 Aircraft

The first AH-1Z and UH-1Y to be completed under the Structural and Power Improvements for NextGen Effects (SPINE) program, formerly SIEPU, have left the Amarillo Assembly Center
From Bell Textron

AMARILLO, Texas. (March, 17 2026) – Bell Textron Inc., a Textron Inc. (NYSE: TXT) company, has announced the completion of the first AH-1Z and UH-1Y aircraft to receive full upgrades to their structure and power delivery mechanisms under the US Marine Corps' SPINE program. The program was recently renamed from Structural Improvement and Electrical Power Upgrade (SIEPU) to the Structural and Power Improvements for NextGen Effects (SPINE) program to emphasize the importance of this essential modernization effort and to highlight the increased survivability and lethality SPINE will enable throughout the lifetime of the H-1 fleet.

The completed aircraft departed the Amarillo Assembly Center and are now at Naval Air Station (NAS) Patuxent River for continued flight testing. These tests will determine the final SPINE configuration to be modified in Amarillo and fielded to the USMC in future contracted

efforts.

The SPINE program will enable the H-1 fleet to utilize enhanced weapons systems and other future capabilities and is part of the H-1 program's modernization plan to increase lethality and enhance survivability by improving modern warfighting capabilities.

"To have these first two aircraft completed under the SPINE program is a huge moment for us," said Scott Sims, H-1 program director, Bell. "At Bell, crew safety and aircraft effectiveness remain the number one priority on everything we do. These upgrades will ensure that our H-1 aircraft remain the most capable aircraft available, while operating at the forefront of modern missions. They will continue to excel at the job they were designed to do for many years to come."

Bell's effort to modify these first two aircraft began at the company's Drives System Center (DSC) and Repair and Overhaul Center (ROC) and culminated in the aircraft electrical and structural modifications that took place over the last 19 months at the Amarillo Assembly Center. Successful execution has been a result of years of work between U.S. Government, Bell, and industry partners. The completion of the first modification effort at the Amarillo Assembly Center sets the stage for future growth as Bell looks to support modification of the Marine H-1 fleet over the next decade.

"In the competitive world that the H-1 lives and thrives in, it's vital to remain competitive with current and future capabilities and to excel in every environment where these aircraft are deployed," said Danielle Markham, program manager, Bell.

"The SPINE program represents the next step in the H-1 evolution, ensuring the platform has structural strength,

electrical capacity, and digital foundation needed to operate as a fully interoperable member of the modern joint force.”

13th MEU Forms Complete Marine Air-Ground Task Force with Full F-35 Squadron

A U.S. Marine Corps F-35B Lightning II aircraft assigned to Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 211, Marine Aircraft Group 13, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, conducts a vertical landing on the flight deck of the amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli (LHA 7) as part of Steel Knight 24 while underway in the Pacific Ocean, Dec. 3, 2024. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by

Sgt. Luc Boatman)
From the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, March 16, 2026

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. — The 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) has officially formed as a complete Marine Air-Ground Task Force with the addition of its major subordinate elements, bringing the MEU's full capability together under one command.

The 13th MEU Command Element welcomed Battalion Landing Team (BLT) 2/4, which will serve as the Ground Combat Element; Combat Logistics Battalion (CLB) 13, which will serve as the Logistics Combat Element; and Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 364 (Reinforced) and Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 211, which together form the Aviation Combat Element. VMFA-211 will provide a full squadron of F-35B Lightning II aircraft, significantly expanding the aviation capabilities of the unit.

Together, these units form a Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF), enabling command and control of ground, aviation, and logistics capabilities and forming a single, rapidly deployable force capable of executing a wide range of missions from the sea.

"Compositing the 13th MEU brings together the full capabilities of a Marine Air-Ground Task Force," said Col. Richard Alvarez, commanding officer of the 13th MEU. "That integration gives national leaders another flexible, lethal, sea-based force ready to respond when needed."

As the Ground Combat Element, BLT 2/4, provides the infantry forces of the MEU and serves as the principal ground maneuver element of the MAGTF.

The Aviation Combat Element, comprised of VMM-364 (Rein.) and VMFA-211, provides the MEU with a full spectrum of Marine Corps aviation capabilities in support of MAGTF operations.

CLB-13, the Logistics Combat Element, provides a broad range of sustainment capabilities that allow the MEU to operate and sustain itself in any environment.

“The strength of The Fighting 13th has always been its Marines and Sailors,” said Sgt. Maj. Gerald Furnari, the senior enlisted advisor of the 13th MEU. “Every generation that serves in this unit adds to its legacy, and today’s team stands ready to answer the nation’s call.”

The composite of the MEU marks the beginning of an intensive training cycle during which the command, ground, aviation, and logistics elements will train together before deploying aboard U.S. Navy amphibious ships as part of an Amphibious Ready Group.

The 13th MEU was established at Camp Pendleton on Feb. 1, 1985, as the 13th Marine Amphibious Unit, and was redesignated as the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit on Feb. 5, 1988. Known as “The Fighting 13th,” the unit has deployed around the world in support of combat operations, crisis response missions, and humanitarian assistance efforts.

Projecting Power in Contested Regions: Marine Corps’ EABO Moves from Paper to Reality

U.S. Marine Corps Pfc. Aiden Mcmahon carries an M224 60mm mortar during a field training exercise at the Central Training Area, Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan, May 14, 2025. The FTX allowed Marines to build tactical proficiency in support of expeditionary advanced base operations. *Photo credit: U.S. Marine Corps | Lance Cpl. Rodney Frye*

The Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) concept debuted in 2019 as a new strategy for the U.S. Marine Corps to fight not only with the support of naval forces but also to defend and support those forces in turn, coordinated operations that project and hold power from sea to shore in contested littoral regions.

In a sense, the time honored-quip that Marines “aren’t retreating, just attacking in a different direction” reflects a new capability to attack in any direction from any island chain or coastline.

In March 2019, Marine Corps Commandant General Robert Neller and Chief of Naval Operations Admiral John Richardson jointly announced the development of the EABO strategy as a way to

hold a contested region and dissuade a potential adversary from detecting, much less engaging, in an area where flexible mobile bases would be an elusive target with high-tech capabilities.

Neller and Richardson approved and signed the previously classified Concept for Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations, beginning a development that in the past seven years has rapidly progressed from words on paper to hands-on exercises and innovations in the maritime environment.

The initial blueprint for the evolving concept was the Marine Corps' Tentative Manual for Expeditionary Advanced Operations, followed by a second edition in March 2023. The vision of the two service chiefs is described in the 134-page manual, which includes "a foundational naval concept to address challenges created by potential adversary advantages in geographic location, weapons system range, precision and capability," while also "integrating Fleet Marine Force (FMF) and Navy capabilities to enable sea denial and sea control, and support sustainment of the fleet."

EABO on the Move

The U.S. Navy has had the Marine Corps' back for more than 80 years of expeditionary warfare in the Pacific, but with EABO the Corps holds much more than the high ground. Instead, the vision is to cover an extensive, spread-out littoral region of coastline, island and choke points with advanced technology that can strike not only surface and aviation targets but also can direct surface forces on incoming threats. The concept also calls for quickly packing up and redeploying to a different austere location with equal firepower and air assets defending against aggressors who might not know where the Navy-Marine Corps team is.

Recent exercises halfway around the globe in the High Countries like Denmark demonstrated how NATO countries can

work in concert with Marines to quickly set up bases with advanced equipment airlifted onto remote fields with short runways and minimal facilities.

High Countries were an apt description for Marine Corps Europe taking part in a Norwegian-led Arctic operation that took place from Sept. 1-3, 2025, the latest test of Expeditionary Advance Based Operations. It demonstrated that NATO Allied forces from the United Kingdom Royal Air Force and Norwegian armed forces could work alongside Marines in a first-of-its kind mission to quickly insert military assets to a remote and austere location.

The prime focus of the operation was to practice real-world NATO sea denial and maritime domain awareness capabilities. In turn. the operation helped contribute the ability to quickly respond and defeat any crisis or threat to NATO allies.

The deadliest threat to adversary surface combatants was also tested with rapidly deployed Light Tactical Vehicles (LTVs) airlifted as a stand-in for launch bases of the U.S. Marine Corps special weapon for littoral regions and choke points, the Navy-Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS), pronounced “Nemesis.”

The Marines also tested NMESIS anti-ship missile deployments earlier in the year in arguably the most highly contested area of future conflict, the Luzon Strait, a choke point for China to wage war against Taiwan and threaten merchant shipping.

The lethal component of the unmanned mobile launcher gives Marines the ability to sink warships and other maritime targets from land, one more aspect of the EABO doctrine.

U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant Brandon Arey, a Light Armored Reconnaissance Marine with White Platoon, Bravo Company, 2nd LAR Battalion, 2nd Battalion, 6th Marines, throws a Puma RQ-20B drone into flight during Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, Dec. 6, 2021. *Photo Credit: U.S. Marine Corps | Cpl. Armando Elizalde.*

Back to the Future

"Hit 'em where they ain't" was the Korean War motto of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur as he pulled an end run against Chinese and North Korean forces nearly encircling the South Korean capital of Seoul. EABO does something similar but more to the tune of, "Where we ain't you'll never know until it's too late."

The different between the classical island-hopping expeditionary operations and Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations is summed up on the Marine Corps website: "EABO support the projection of naval power by integrating with and supporting the larger naval campaign. Expeditionary operations imply austere conditions, forward deployment and projection of

power. EABO are distinct from other expeditionary operations in that forces conducting them combine various forms of operations to persist within the reach of adversary lethal and nonlethal effects."

All three Marine Expeditionary Forces have conducted exercises using the Stand-In Force concept and EABO in multiple regions globally.

"Our two Marine Littoral Regiments are reinforcing the Marine Corps' Force Design vision for distributed, lethal, maneuverable and purpose-built formations in the Indo-Pacific," said Marine Corps Combat Development Command's Lieutenant Colonel Eric Flanagan.

"Sustaining Marines in contested environments is just as critical as sensing the enemy or maintaining command and control. The Marine Corps is shifting from traditional supply chains to a more agile, resilient sustainment network – one designed to maneuver under threat, reinforce dispersed forces, and sustain operations across the vast distances of the Indo-Pacific," Flanagan said.

The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps are addressing a key gap in the Indo-Pacific by developing the Medium Landing Ship (LSM), designed for enhanced mobility, beach access and sustainment in contested littoral environments.

As part of this effort, the Navy has selected the Damen Naval Landing Ship Transport 100 (LST 100) design as the basis for the LSM program. The non-developmental design will reduce cost, schedule and technical risk. Feeling the need for speed, both the Navy and Marine Corps are eager for the urgently needed capability to reach the fleet thanks to accelerated timelines made possible with the proven design.

Critical Enablers

The rapid move from 2019 theory to present-day reality

includes the just-completed 2025 Aviation Plan, which provides a renewed focus on distributed operations and emphasizes sustained operational effectiveness in contested environments through enhanced logistics, sustainment strategies and expeditionary advanced base concepts.

Flanagan, from his perspective as director of communications strategy and operations, sees the future as present with the airborne forces of the Marine Corps.

“Our modern technologies like the ACV, MV-22, CH-53K and F-35B are all critical enablers of Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations, enabling forward-deployed, distributed operations. Years of wargaming, experimentation and study have matured our concepts for EABO,” Flanagan said, “so that our concepts align with the way the broader force will fight.” .

Jim McClure’s first exposure to the Marines was as a four-year scholarship Marine Option Midshipman at the University of Notre Dame. He is a Life Member of the Navy League of the United States and a frequent contributor to Seapower*. This story first appeared in the February-March, 2026, issue of* Seapower*.*