# Commandant Stresses Marine Corps Must Change to Meet Peer Threats

The return to an era of ‘great power competition’ and the emergence of peer military threats “demands in no uncertain terms that the services need to change to meet the challenges of the new world.” For the Marine Corps, that change means redesigning the Corps into a naval integrated force, the commandant of the Marine Corps said Oct. 3.

Although the details of what the future Marine Corps must become will be developed through a period of experimentation, wargaming and testing, “in broader terms, it is an integrated naval force. To be competitive in the Indo-Pacific region and in the Mediterranean and elsewhere around the world requires a truly integrated naval force,” Gen. David H. Berger said at a Heritage Foundation forum.

“We have not focused on that aspect for 20 years. We have to get creative” and examine “what can the Marine Corps … do to help a naval commander fight his fleet. How does that contribute to a joint fight?”

Berger described Marines seizing land within the enemy’s “weapons engagement zone” and using long-range precision fires – or putting Marine weapons on Navy ships – to help the naval commander fight for sea

control.

Redesigning the Corps is his primary focus, Berger said, and the process will be to look at the threat in 2030 and plan back from there to determine how the Corps must change.

"The strategic realities will cause us to think differently. The realities of the world cause us to throw out old assumptions and start afresh. We cannot assume that today's equipment, the way that we're organized, how we train, how we select leaders, all of our warfighting concepts, we cannot assume they will remain relevant in the future. My assumption is they will not," the commandant said.

> *Commandant of US Marine Corps @Heritage "We have to operate inside the enemies threat envelope". "We have to be there to reassure friends and allies." pic.twitter.com/3MGB2xmfNB*
>
> *— James Jay Carafano (@JJCarafano) October 3, 2019*

Based on his observation and that of others, Berger said the current Marine Corps "is not optimized for great power competition. It is not optimized to support a naval campaign. It is not optimized to support the fleet through missions like sea denial. And it is not optimized to deter a pacing threat."

Because the fiscal 2021 defense budget has been submitted to the White House, any major changes will not show up until the following year or later, he said. And his assumption is that those future

budgets “will be flat
or declining, not rising.”

In his sweepingly provocative planning guidance released shortly after he took over as commandant, Berger said he was willing, if
needed, to cut the size of the Corps to have money for the modernization of
equipment that will be needed to counter a peer threat.

In his speech and answers to questions, he repeated his focus on shifting from reliance on the few,  large, relatively expensive amphibious
warships, which he said would be vulnerable to interdiction by Chinese
long-range precision weapons, to a large number of smaller, less expensive
manned ships and a wide range of unmanned surface, subsurface and aerial
systems.

“Mass will have a quality all its own. … And low
cost doesn’t mean cheap,” Berger said.