

Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT
Online Event
**“On the Future of the Marine Corps: Assessing Force
Design 2030”**

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FEATURING
Dov S. Zakheim
Former Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)

Robert Work
Former Deputy Secretary of Defense

Lieutenant General Paul Van Riper, USMC (Retired)
Former Commander, Marine Corps Combat Development Command

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Mark F. Cancian: Good afternoon. I'm Mark Cancian. I'm a senior advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. I'd like to welcome you all to our event this afternoon, the Marine Corps Force Design 2030, an assessment. The event today is part of CSIS' effort to facilitate discussion on key national security issues.

As many in the audience know, the current commandant of the Marine Corps, General Berger, has instituted a series of major changes in the Marine Corps, focusing it on China, which the department describes as the pacing threat, and employing new operational concepts that focus on distributed operations and long-range precision strike. Many outside the Marine Corps, particularly in the general officer community, are concerned that the Marine Corps will lose its capability for global employment. They also worry about whether the reorganization duplicates capabilities that are already in other services, and whether the Marine Corps might be undermining its traditional strength in combined arms operations.

With that, I'd like to introduce our panel. We're very fortunate in having a distinguished panel with a broad set of backgrounds and experiences. On my left is the Honorable Robert Work, former deputy secretary of defense and currently owner of TeamWork, a company which specializes in national security affairs and the future of warfare. He's also a retired Marine Corps colonel. To his left is General Anthony Zinni, who's a former commander of Central Command and currently chairman – former chairman of the board of the Middle East Institute. To his left is the Honorable Dov Zakheim, former undersecretary of defense, comptroller, and currently vice president of the FPRI board of trustees, and a senior advisor here at CSIS. And finally, on the right is Lieutenant General Paul Van Riper, former commander of the Marine Corps' Combat Development Center, and a frequent commentator on national security issues.

Our program for today will go as follows. Each one of the panelists will have five to seven minutes to make some opening comments. Then as the moderator, I'll ask some questions of the panelists. And then finally we will open the floor to questions from the audience. Those questions can come in through the CSIS website. So with that introduction, let me turn the floor over to the honorable Mr. Work.

Robert Work: Thank you, Mark. Good afternoon, everybody, both here and online.

You know, I was a big fan when FD 2030 came out. It was published in March of 2020, and it outlined, as some people would say a very bold and other people would say a reckless, vision of the future of the Marine Corps. But by and large, I was quite supportive of it. And I was surprised that a service chief would make such a bold move. Now, on March 25th of this year, a

former highly decorated Marine veteran, secretary of the Navy and Virginia Senator Jim Webb, wrote an op-ed piece in The Wall Street Journal, which really caught me by surprise.

Essentially, it made the following argument: That the changes being made by General Berger had not been well thought out, that he did not have carte blanche to make these changes, that he did not get permission from either the secretary of the Navy or the secretary of defense to make the changes, and that Congress – because of COVID and the turbulence surrounding the election of 2020 – was essentially asleep at the switch and approved General Berger’s plans without thinking about it.

So my first comment I wanted to do is set the record straight and say: Look, Title 10 invests in the commandant of the Marine Corps, and in all service chiefs, the ability to make a POM – a program objective memorandum. And that POM describes how the service chief, the commandant in this case, wants to expend the resources that are being provided to him or her by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and how he wants to organize the Marine Corps. And I’ll use “he” in this case because General Berger is the current commandant.

He briefed it to then-Secretary of the Navy Richard Spencer, who approved the plan. He briefed it to then-Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, who approved the plan. He then briefed Force Design 2030 – and I don’t know if he personally briefed it or the ACMC did, the assistant commandant, to what is called the Deputy’s Management Action Group, which is the place where all of the services come in and say: This is how we want to go forward.

I spoke with Deputy Secretary Norquist, who was the deputy secretary at the time. And he said, I vividly remember this, because the commandant came in and did not ask for any money to do the plans he was going to do. He said, I am going to free up – I’m going to divest things. I’m going to free up resources. And I’m going to pay for everything I want to do. And the deputy said, wow, this is – this is different. Normally services come forward and say, I don’t have enough money, please give it to me. But he was very impressed. He asked the China red team, which is the team in the Department of Defense, to look at the plan. And the China red team said, this is a very, very good thing for us to do.

So he recommended it be approved by the secretary of defense in the secretary’s program. He did. It was sent to OMB, the Office of Management and Budget, who makes it – creates what is called the BES, the budget estimate submission, that sends it to Congress. In essence, once that goes from Office of Management and Budget, it reflects that the president has approved it. It goes to Congress and was approved in the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, and again in 2022.

So the whole idea that this was some type of a sleight of hand is crazy. It literally could not happen. No service chief would be able to do what Secretary Webb described in that article. And if you saw the hearings last week, both the HASC and the SASC broadly support what Commandant Berger is trying to do. So the furor that was going on in the press with all of the retired general officers was shocking to me. I know of nothing like it in Marine Corps history.

And I started to think, how would I explain this to somebody who isn't a Marine? And the way I kind of came down on it is I said: This is a custody battle between the grandparents and the parents of a beloved child. The Marine Corps is the child. The grandparents are the retired general officers. The parent is the commandant. And they have different views on how to raise the child. In a custody fight between grandparents and a parent, the bar for the grandparents is extraordinarily high. They essentially have one of two options.

They can argue that the parent is unfit to be a parent. And no one's arguing that. General Berger's record of command and combat is sterling. Or they can say, due to extraordinary circumstances, the parent is threatening the welfare of the child. And that is the tactics that the retired general officers have pursued. And we're going to get into the arguments this afternoon. I would just like to say, I have read everything General Berger has written. I've read every single article that – I think – I think I've read every single article that has been written by the opponents of the plan.

And I have to say that essentially what the opponents are saying is: I want an injunction in court. Congress being the court. I'd like Congress to stop what the commandant is doing until there is some type of an independent review. Unstated is who would do this review. Would it be Congress itself? Would it be a congressional commission? Would it be the retired general officers? That is all – nothing is talked about that. And essentially what it's saying is that Congress should ignore two years of experimentation, analysis, exercises, analysis. Stop what the commandant's doing and have some type of review with no indication that whoever was going to do the review would know anything more about the future than Commandant Berger.

So I will argue this afternoon I think the chances of Congress doing that is very small, primarily because they've approved it two times. And there's no doubt that they're going to approve it a third time, in my view, in the POM '23 discussions. It just doesn't make sense to stop what the Marine Corps is doing and then go over the plans for another year, or six months, or however long it would take. So I'm looking forward to the arguments for and against. What's very interesting about this argument, it's all in the press. You can read everything the commandant has written about FD 2030 and everything

that the opponents have written against it. And you can make your own judgements on whether – you know, which side the argument is on.

So I think that's where I'll stop my initial comments. And I look forward to the discussion and questions from the audience.

Mr. Cancian: Thank you very much. General Zinni.

General Anthony Zinni (Ret.): Well, I'm a grandfather. I have seven grandkids, three kids. I talk to them every day. And they often seek advice. It's interesting that General Berger decided to get counsel from the aunts and uncles, some retired lieutenant colonels and colonels, that he contracted that basically provided him this – what Force Design 2030's supposed to be. And I'd like to talk about that a little bit. So it was OK for the aunts and uncles, the retired colonels and lieutenant colonels, who were under contract to provide the thoughts. His own general officers were not consulted.

So how did we, the retired general officers, get into this? You know, is it that we just suddenly decided we didn't like it, or heard about it? We had a number of active duty, very senior all the way to NCOs, come to us, and retired members of the Marine Corps, former members of the Marine Corps, that were concerned about what they were hearing. And what they were hearing was divestiture decisions being made, tanks, artillery, heavy engineers, bridging – capabilities that are being ripped out of our Marine Corps expeditionary forces. I've commanded a Marine Corps expeditionary force. I've employed them in combat.

Now, why did this all come about? Where did it come from? Our first approach to this was to ask General Berger. We met with him. We met with him several times. We met with him over an entire course of seven hours at one time to ask questions, to try to understand where this came from, help us understand. We were alarmed by seeing the reduction in combat power that bothered us, understanding what the combatant commander requirements were. Which in the war plans are for four Marine expeditionary forces-plus throughout the regional combatant commanders.

We were seeing terms like we're going to return to our roots – our naval roots. We never left. You know, it happens, because of Goldwater-Nichols – which wasn't mentioned in this – that besides Title 10 that made the Marine Corps a full-up, paid-up service component. And if you read componency into General Berger's own manual, it said you must be prepared to provide forces not only to the joint maritime force component commander, but to joint land component commander, the joint special operations component commander, and the joint air component commander, or to function as one of those. That's the role of the Marine Corps.

This mission to go back to your roots, to be a tight command under the U.S. fleets, is something that we left back in the '70s. It's something we can do. It's something we are required to do. But it is by no means the principal function of the Marine Corps. We have our own structure, in Title 10. And it says that there'll be three division wing teams and a reserve division wing team. And when we look at the gutting of the combat power, we have serious concerns about its ability to meet the requirements we have in places like Korea, and the defense of Japan, possibly defense of Taiwan, in European Command on the northern flank, and in CENTCOM, if Iran started to get adventuresome.

That has been the crux of our problem. And in terms of this thing being tested, I've been the deputy of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command. General Van Riper has been the commander. We've talked to General Gray, who created it, former commandant. General Krulak, who updated it and developed the processes. We see that this is nowhere in line with the way the combat development process was meant to be conducted. Decisions were made, and then they were studied and experimented. Now, maybe this is old think, but I thought you tested and experimented and validated first, before you made decisions. We haven't seen that.

And I just want to end with, what is Force Design 2030? The latest I've heard from the commandant of the Marine Corps, he said it's not an end state. That's curious. It's not a structure? It's not a strategy? What is it? Well, he says it is a campaign of learning. Now I'm sure somebody is going to explain that to me. He also said it's a process. Well, I don't know how you have a process and a campaign without an end state or an objective. So I'm curious to learn what that is. So from a concerned grandfather, I think there's a lot to be discussed about Force Design 2030, what it really is, and what it really means, and what risk it poses to our ability to meet the current requirements of our combatant commanders.

I see a lot about strategy, about how Marine forces are going to be employed and exactly where they're going to be employed – particularly in the INDOPACOM theater. The last I heard, that was the job of the COCOM commander. I have never heard a service chief talk about where his forces would be employed and how they would be employed. In my time at a combatant commander, we would have a come to Jesus with the secretary of defense if we had a service chief – whose job is to provide forces not to tell a COCOM commander how and where they're to be employed. Thank you.

Dov. S. Zakheim: Thank you.

Mr. Cancian: Mr. Zakheim.

Dr. Zakheim:

Well, I'm the only non-retired Marine on this panel. (Laughter.) And I'm not going to claim superiority over General Zinni because I have 16 grandchildren. However, I've been working on analytical issues for the Marine Corps for about 40-odd years. I was involved in the debate about pre-stocking in Norway all those years ago, in the 1970s. So I can just give you a perspective on how I see what's going on here. And I've chatted with General Berger about this as well.

It seems to me – and you've just heard two articulate cases made both for and against. And I think there's merit in both sets of the arguments. On the one hand, we're in a different century. We're in a different situation – world situation. And that's before Mr. Putin decided he wanted to get our attention. And so I don't think it's out of bounds for the commandant of the Marine Corps to think about how does the Marine Corps function in this new environment, where China's the long-term threat.

At the same time, I think the – and it's not just the retired generals. I agree with General Zinni that there are people further down the Marine Corps chain of command who also have serious concerns. My biggest concern, quite frankly, is let's assume that this becomes the way you use your Marines. How do you support them? Where's the logistics here? And I can talk more about that during the discussion. But it seems to me that that whole part of the discussion, of the concept, really needs to be fleshed out. And as a former comptroller, I can also tell you, it needs to be funded. So there's an issue there that I believe has yet to be fully resolved.

On the other hand, it is true, as General Zinni says, there is stuff that's left the Marine Corps and will not be coming back. Howitzers for Ukraine, for example. But there's a role for the Marine Corps in Northern Europe, and not just in Norway. Should Finland and Sweden come into NATO, and I would argue even if, for whatever reason, one or more of the NATO nations blocks their coming in – and, as you know, it has to be unanimous. We've got 30 NATO nations now. So the odds that all 30 will come on board, I wouldn't bet the family farm against it, but I wouldn't bet the family farm on it either.

But let's say even if they don't, they are so closely entwined both with their NATO Nordic members and with us, that one can – should seriously consider what is the role of the Marine Corps not only in the far north, but in the Baltic. And I can expand on that as well. And then, as General Zinni said, Iran isn't going away and neither are most of our forces in the Middle East. The rhetoric is one thing and the actual placement of forces is very different. So there's a role for the Marines there.

How all that fits together, even if you assume that General Berger's concept will hold up, is an open question, in my mind. So it seems to me that there's a lot more that needs to be discussed, debated, analyzed, war gamed,

exercised, that has yet to be done. And while I totally agree with Secretary Bob Work that Jim Webb was completely out of line – I can vouch for that because there's no way – even if he wasn't asking for more money from the comptroller or Dave Norquist, the deputy secretary at the time, just moving monies around would have required the comptroller to sign what's called a program budget decision. And clearly, it was signed. And therefore – and I can tell you, as comptroller, you didn't sign those things if you knew the secretary or the deputy were unhappy with them.

So the top echelon clearly supported what General Berger was doing. But they weren't going into the analysis. They weren't going into the details. They weren't asking the kinds of questions that I've just asked and that General Zinni asked. And those questions must be answered. And why don't I stop there?

Mr. Cancian: Thank you very much.

General Van Riper.

Lieutenant
General Paul Van
Riper (Ret.):

We're using the analogy of a grandparent. Let me pick it up also. I'm undoubtedly the oldest grandparent here this afternoon, at almost 84 years of age. It is not a custody fight for the grandchild. It's the life of the grandchild. What the leadership of the Marine Corps is doing is an existential threat to the Corps. I, and those other retired generals who are concerned, don't believe the Marine Corps will exist if 2030 is fully implemented. That's how serious we take it. So not a custody fight. We're talking about the life of the child.

I have a number of concerns. Let me talk first about risk. Even if you stipulated that everything that General Berger wants to do is well and good and ought to be done, it ought not to be done in the manner in which he's doing it. That is, divesting of capability before the replacements are aboard. Let's take the 72 M-777 howitzers, which he gave up and went to Poland – or – went to Ukraine. The tanks probably went to Poland. Those were given up before the missile batteries that are replacing them are available. They will not become available until, at a minimum, a year from now in 2030 before they're fully replaced. Why would you risk national security by giving up that sort of capability?

I'm also concerned about process. As General Zinni said, I was the commanding general of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command, where the combat development process originated. It has been used for 30 years quite successfully. General Berger did not use that process. He brought a small group of retired colonels around him. They came up with the idea. And it was handed off to the rest of the Marine Corps as fiat. We are talking

to active-duty generals, we're talking to recently retired who told us they were never involved. The process was not used.

Anyone who has done a study and have been – or, looked at any studies on innovation and change in organizations tell you, that is a recipe for failure. If you do not involve the organization, almost the entire organization, in innovating ideas, it's not going to take. And we're seeing that now. These sorts of ripples you're seeing are a result of failure to use that well-tested process. I'm concerned about Navy support. I have heard no Navy buy-in to this. Is the Navy going to be willing to support these isolated units? Are they going to be willing to risk their sailors, their equipment to take out casualties, to bring in resupplies? Are they going to support Marines who try to do the same thing?

Now, the question is if it's been approved all the way up through, theoretically, the president and through the Congress, it's easy to see why because the tough questions have not been asked. You're talking about a commandant with about 40 years of experience. If you just take the retired four-star generals, that's 1,200 years of experience. Start looking at the three-stars and the two-stars, you're talking about tens of thousands years of experience. I know of only two retired generals who believe this is a good idea. Why is it that one man has insight that all of this wealth of combat experience – look at our combat records here. Look at our units we commanded. There's a lot of experience here that's been ignored.

Let me give you one example. The idea of a stand-in force is to put units on small islands that will be low observable. Which means it'll have stealth capability. There is no item of equipment in the force that is being proposed that has any stealth capabilities. They will be seen, in the case of our most frequently used, the Chinese. They will be seen, they'll be targeted, and Marines will die because of this flawed concept. No stealth capability. Their vehicles, their radars, their trucks. In the case of just a missile battery, 43 vehicles, not counting any of the sensors or the anti-air weapons that go in with it.

It's also operationally flawed and strategically flawed. And I can get into that as we go along. So if the tough questions had been asked last week of the commandant, the tough questions that were asked yesterday of the Army – for example, the same representative who gave softball questions to the commandant, Representative Gallagher, demanded of the Army yesterday: How are you going to go onto these islands? Who's going to give you permission? And there was no answer. There is no answer from the Marine Corps either. That's why this thing has flown through. Thank you.

Mr. Cancian:

Well, thank you very much, gentlemen. As the moderator, let me ask a couple of questions. But I can say that if nothing else this afternoon we have

established the metaphor of the Marine Corps as a dysfunctional family. (Laughter.) But let me ask a question – sort of the broader question. Is there a compromise or hedge position that meets Commandant Berger's desire for long-range precision strike in the Western Pacific but also responds to concerns about combined arms and global employment that the – many of the retired generals have brought up? So let me work down our panelists here, starting with Secretary Work.

Mr. Work:

Well, a lot to unpack here. First of all, the commandant's primary vector for Force Design 2030 is we are moving into an era where almost all of the military competitors will have guided munitions, loitering munitions, the C4IS – you know, the battle networks to employ them, and he's saying we're not ready for that future, and the primary guiding factor of FD 2030 is what the commandant refers to as distributed operations, getting to the smallest units that have the most operational capability, disaggregating them, and operating that way.

The commandant is not trying to make stealthy units. He's trying to develop a force design that provides for some level of survivability in this incoming future. So that's the primary vector. Then who's the primary threat or who is the pacing threat? He's saying, of course, we're going to have to deal with China. We've been told by our leaders we have to be prepared for that.

So the III Marine Expeditionary Force, which is based in the Pacific, he has said, we're going to reorganize them to have what he refers to as Marine littoral regiments, which are these units that would be able to operate along the first island chain. The I Marine Expeditionary Force in California and the II Marine Expeditionary Force in Camp Lejeune are going to remain the same expeditionary forces that they've always been. They won't have tanks, that is true. They will have fewer cannon batteries but more rocket batteries, multiple launch rocket systems.

In my view – I'm a Marine artilleryman – the fires that are being developed for Force Design 2030 is far beyond the fires capability of the current force we have now. If something happens in Europe, II MEF goes to Europe. If something happens in the Middle East, it's going to probably be IMEF out in California. They'll go. Marine IV reserve forces will be able to add in. They're going to be an operational reserve rather than a strategic reserve. They're going to fight the same fight. This Marine FD 2030 would be able to do a Desert Storm operation with four Marine infantry regiments and six cannon battalions.

So the idea that the Marines are not going to be employed anywhere else in the world is just not correct. The commandant has already said, look, we're going to make one MLR – Marine littoral regiment. We're going to test it. So he converted the third Marine regiment on Hawaii into an MLR as the

experimental unit. He's already asking the III MEF commander, how should we do this? And the III MEF commander has come back and said, hey, we're looking at this. Maybe instead of going three Marine littoral regiments, maybe we should go two Marine littoral regiments and keep one infantry regiment, to which the commandant may say, let's do that if the experiments show that that is more effective.

So the Marine Corps is going to still be the force in readiness. It's still going to be the U.S. 911 force. It's still going to be able to do all the combat tasks that the Marine Corps of today can do and, I would argue, do them better.

So, you know, there is no stepping back and making the Marine Corps just focused on China. China is the pacing threat. It's the stress test. If we can't win there, we have a problem.

Mr. Cancian: Thank you. General Zinni?

Gen. Zinni: Well, you know, it's interesting to me to hear that we need to purpose design certain forces to meet specific missions. The hallmark of the Marine Corps has been that we have maintained balanced combined arms forces in what General Gray called three reservoirs of combat power, each of our Marine Expeditionary Forces, and these could task organize for a mission.

So my question would be, and this is a question, I believe, the III MEF commander asked, why can't I just keep my infantry regiments, keep my organization, and I could task organize for a specific mission like this little island strategy that's come up, which, by the way, I think, as General Van Riper pointed out, is highly questionable in terms of its survivability, its ability to get in place, and its ability, because of its immobility, not to be detected by Chinese forces spread through the Spratlys on other islands, and now have made a security pact with the Solomon Islands, which, I think, is behind that island chain, in fact.

So it's a strange mission, and why have we had to have the severe cuts in combat power without an analysis of what it means? When we question about the tanks the answer we get is, oh, the Army will provide tanks if we need them. Well, one, I wish somebody would check with the United States Army because what I hear is they have no intention of providing tanks to the Marine Corps.

And, by the way, if I'm a MEF commander and I have no experience with employing armor or have nothing like it in my organization and you give it to me, you think I'm going to effectively employ it? Now, we've been able to do that. Since Desert Storm was brought up, since we want to bring up history, it was a hell of a lot more combat power than existed there. We did get a brigade from the Army - an armored brigade - but we had tank battalions

from two different MEFs also there, which allowed the Marine Corps to understand how to employ it.

I'm not saying the M-1 tank is the answer. But what I'm saying is armor, modernization, improvement if we need to, we're all for that. We come from a history of innovation. I did my doctoral thesis on military innovation, organizational innovation, and I studied corporate innovation. I studied military innovation. Ninety-five percent of innovations that fail are done the way that this commandant has approached this and that is to have a small group that is outside the basic organization provide you with the ideas or thoughts and then direct decisions before you've tested and experimented, then backtrack and try to reinspect and validate and experiment and test out the ideas, and then make adjustments.

That confuses the organization, which we've seen here. And I've commanded a Marine Expeditionary Force. I've also commanded the Marine – combined Marine Expeditionary Force for Korea. We had five divisions underneath that MEF and two air wings because we looked at the threat and saw what we would face, and I would tell you the combatant commander at that time said to me, can you handle this, a core level area zone of action? Can you see everything in here? Can you strike everything? Can you maneuver through out of it? Can you logistically support it? And most of all, can you command and control it?

I take issue with the fact – the thinking that currently the way that Force Design 2030 is headed that that can be done in the long run. And by the way, the latest I heard is these other two MEFs are not organized that way. One MEF is supposedly the, quote, “warfighting MEF,” which, to me, is insulting to the other two MEFs, and then II MEF is supposed to become some sort of crisis response JTF MEF.

First of all, I didn't know the commandant had the authority to designate joint task forces. I guess as a COCOM commander, we've ceded that to a service chief. You know, and I'm not sure what that means. We had three balanced MEFs. You want to improve? You want the technology to improve it? You want the modernization to occur? You want adjustments in the structure? We've lived through that.

The commandant said that we have not had a change – a significant change in our structure since the 1950s. That's an insult to the commandants that went before him and all the changes that we have seen in the time we've been in the Marine Corps, the years that General Van Riper mentioned.

I want to give you a quote from the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Milley, at his testimony last month. He said, “Decision in war is, ultimately, achieved on land, and maintaining a capable land force in the

United States Army and Marine Corps is key to our overall deterrence capability and our national security.”

I guess General Berger didn't get the memo. But that doesn't sound like to me we're all on the same sheet of music as to what the requirement is going to be for the Marine Corps, always have been not only the nation's crisis response force but the ability to fight up to a Corps level, to become a joint task force to handle operations at the lower spectrum and to meet the requirements of every combatant commander.

We have seen the component – Marine components being reduced in size and strength, even the seniority of the senior component commanders being reduced by this service chief in other combatant commands where he seems not to be interested to invest as much as he had in INDOPACOM. How much has he written about those missions in those other COCOMs? All we hear is this island chain strategy. Thank you.

Mr. Cancian: Thanks. Secretary Zakheim?

Dr. Zakheim: Well, I don't want to get caught up in an internal Marine-friendly discussion.

Look, a couple of points as an outsider. First, Title 10 does say that it's the service chiefs who are in charge of organizing, training, and equipping. So if the commandant wants to organize and train and equip differently, he's got every right to do so under Title 10. Title 10 does not give that responsibility to the combatant commanders. That's just a fact.

The combatant commanders then say, I need X, Y, and Z, and the job of the service chiefs is to make that available to the extent they can and to the degree that the Office of the Secretary of Defense says they should. That's just the rules of the road, regardless of this debate. That's number one.

Number two is, as you heard from Secretary Work, the changes that are being made are specifically Pacific focused and it really is a challenging question, how do you deal with China. We're not going to invade the Chinese mainland.

This is not going to be the Korean War. It's going to be very, very different. Different equipment. Different enemy. Obviously, the geography is not exactly conducive to fighting that kind of war because, quite honestly, it's the same problem with Iran. Very big country.

So the issue then becomes how do you think about that? How do you organize for that? How do you train for that? And what General Berger, the commandant, has said is, I've got to do it differently. He's not the first that tried to do something differently, as radically different as that. General “Shy”

Meyer tried to do that the late 1970s, early 1980s, and, basically, the way he looked at warfare was we're going to fight the next wars in the Middle East, and he was right, and everybody thought he was wrong. But he was just 20 years ahead of his time.

I don't know that the Chinese will give us 20 years. So that's – but, nevertheless, you know, there is that 5 percent that General Zinni acknowledged. The question is, is this the 95 percent or is this the 5 percent?

The other thing is, and I mentioned this in my brief remarks earlier, there is a role for the classic Marine Corps approach to the way it's been fighting wars in the Baltic Sea. One possibility is for much more extensive training in the Baltic, exercises, say, with the Swedes on Bornholm, exercises, say, with the Finns on the Åland Islands. Why? Because you've got that Russian enclave called Kaliningrad that threatens our Baltic allies.

Now, 25 years ago we didn't have those allies. Now NATO is a – really, the Baltic Sea is a NATO lake. But you got to protect it. You got to ensure that it remains a NATO lake. You got to have a threat against Russia that just wasn't necessary or, really, wasn't possible when it was all part of the Soviet Union.

Who's going to materialize that threat? What other allied nation has a Marine Corps like ours? The answer is self-evident. None. So the Marine Corps has a role there in addition to what General Berger is trying to do in the Pacific, and as I said, there are some very, very important questions that have to be addressed. How do you supply these guys on these islands? How do they move around?

You know, there was an article in the Proceedings – Naval Institute Proceedings the other month where somebody suggested moving around on mules. I don't know. I'm not a muleteer. But, clearly, there are issues about tactical mobility and supply. Maybe you want to use submarines. I don't know. But that has to be worked out.

Nevertheless, there is a role in Europe and there will be a continual role in the Middle East because Iran's not going away. And as Secretary Work said – as Bob said – the commandant's not changing those two MEFs. Now, one could get into a debate, as you just heard, as to what's happening with one of those MEFs.

But that's a debate. It's clear that he's not doing with those two MEFs what he wants to do with the one in the Pacific, and the one in the Pacific, clearly, has a very, very different challenge from what it had 20 years ago, 25 years ago, 40 years ago. It's just different. And what he's trying to do is get his arms around how do you deal with that different sort of challenge. It's not simple. It's not easy. But it's going to require breaking glass.

Mr. Cancian: Thank you.

General Van Riper?

Lt. Gen. Van Riper: Really, two issues on the table now. It's the actual changes being made and how those changes are being directed to be made. Let me take the actual changes, and this gets into the question of why haven't – has there been more push back. You've got to go a little bit into the nomenclature to understand what's happening underneath.

We're talking about the Pacific. We're talking about the III Marine Expeditionary Force, which has an air wing, a logistics element, and a Marine division. A Marine division normally has nine battalions – nine infantry battalions plus artillery battalions in support of it. Those nine battalions fall under three regiments. Those regimental headquarters fight those battalions. They move them. They bring in the fires. Maneuver and fires.

In the commandant's plan, those three maneuver regiments go away. They're gone. Only three of those infantry battalions stay as infantry battalions, and there's no headquarters for them and it means the division will have to fight them. The remainder of the forces go into these littoral regiments and they are incapable of fire and maneuver. They're divided across these many islands with missiles.

They don't have the weapons, the equipment, to do what infantry units normally do. These are the type units that would be needed in a situation in Korea if you wanted to reinforce Japan if there was a threat, and a number of other places in the Pacific, not just the island chain.

So it sounds good to say we've got a MEF but they're – we've got a division. It's what's underneath. It's not there. What also happens is to pay for that you've got to come clear back to the East Coast and the II Marine Expeditionary Force and the second division, which should have three regiments with nine battalions. One of those regiments and its battalions are gone to pay for what's happening out in the Pacific.

So if you think about going to Europe with a Marine division it's not there. Twenty-five percent of the United States ground forces are provided by Marines. There are only 10 Army divisions or three Marine divisions. There won't be three Marine divisions. There will be one full division, one completely gone, and the other two-thirds strength. That's what's happening underneath that the questions aren't being asked.

Let's talk about how you go about thinking about this. General Zinni, I come from an era when more changes were made than, perhaps, are being made

now. It was under a commandant by the name of General Al Gray, followed by General Mundy, followed by General Krulak.

During that period, there were open discussions. There were articles in magazines. We would meet at night and argue, and I would walk into a room, there would be a general there. There would be a Marine captain. There would be majors and lieutenant colonels. It was never the rank. It was never the billet that that person held; it was the merit of the ideas. And if the idea didn't stand up when the general presented it, it went away. If the captain's idea had merit, it stuck.

It was an intellectual exercise. It wasn't by fiat. And out of that came probably the most powerful ideas that the Marine Corps has ever had called maneuver warfare. Published in a book called "Warfighting," it's been transferred into 13 different languages and guides – it's supposed to guide the Marine Corps today, and even though the commandant claims it does, it does not. General Gray, General Krulak, and the author of that manual have all said it does not. He is not following the doctrine he claims he's following.

Mr. Cancian: Well, thank you very much. Let me turn to some of the questions that are coming in from the audience, and if I could ask the panelists to try to keep their answers short so we can get through as many as we can.

But the first question, actually, I think, is for the generals and the question is does the recently released annual update on Force Design 2030 – and I actually happen to have a copy of it right here. Just came out, I think, last week. Does it answer any of the concerns that you have about the general direction of the Marine Corps?

Let me start with General Zinni and then we'll go to General Van Riper.

Gen Zinni: Well, what I've found is it's sort of backtracking. It's suddenly now found experimentation and maybe realistic wargaming. We've heard that the war games done before to, quote, "validate" these – by the way, war games do not validate anything. It's just a way to propose an idea. Validation is done through experimentation. It's done through testing. It's done through exercises, and then once implementation occurs it is done through feedback and modification.

It's sort of a recognition that this wasn't done. We're now back revisiting decisions that were made, putting back some structure that was out. I take issue with the fact that you're saying that the two – the other two MEFs are exactly the way they were. Well, if I was a MEF commander, I'd go looking for those tanks that were exactly here. I'd go looking for those heavy engineers and that bridging equipment that was supposed to be here.

I'd be looking for all those helicopter squadrons that were supposed to be here. And, by the way, if I started counting the PAA, the number of helicopters and – or fixed-wing aircraft in the squadron, I might find that there's some missing. So I take issue with that it's the same.

Now, we are going to find technology that's going to replace that. Hey, I'm all for it. Prove it to me. But before you step off that damn lily pad, make sure you got one to step onto. You know, we have experienced the siren song of technology replacing capabilities. We saw it with the McNamara line in Vietnam. General Van Riper and I both have had two tours in Vietnam. I still have one round in me from Vietnam. We'd both been wounded seriously there. The McNamara line was going to do away with the need to patrol the DMZ with ground forces.

Well, first of all, you shouldn't trust the guy that gave us the Edsel. And then I would take you to desert – to the recent attacks in Iraq and Afghanistan, and we decided or the Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld decided we had too many ground forces. That was obsolete. That was old.

You know, General Milley's testimony be damned. Shock and Awe was going to resolve it. He cut the ground forces by two-thirds that was in the CENTCOM plan for Iraq. And what did we have to do? Well, the troops called Shock and Awe "awe, shucks" because then there had to be a surge that put more ground forces back in to try to recover the momentum we lost, and it never worked.

Be careful of that siren song of technology. Admiral Stavridis has just written an article about technology. We love technology. We should embrace it. We should understand how it fits, how it integrates. We should be careful about assuming it does away with other capabilities rather than complement it, and that's been our point throughout this.

Lt. Gen. Van Riper:

Let's go back to the annual update. I'll only take one point in the update. That's task number 20. That is to do a study of fires, of MEF fires. Fires means artillery, rockets, missiles, and in some cases aircraft. Why are you doing the study now, after you've already gotten rid of so much of your artillery? That's a little late. Talk about putting the cart before the horse.

Now, I want to draw on this for a minute, because we're going to go from 21 cannon artillery, which you normally understand of artillery, to five batteries, maybe seven. We're going from 21 to five or seven. We're replacing them with missile batteries. Does the Marine Corps need missiles? Absolutely. Does it need 14? Absolutely not. You know why it doesn't need 14? Because when you fire an artillery round, you're a couple of hundred dollars. When you fire a rocket round, you're somewhere between 10,000

(dollars) and \$100,000. When you fire a naval strike missile, the one that's going there, \$1.7 million. That's what you're firing.

Now, I can tell you, as a ground officer, I won a lot of fires. I won suppression fires. I don't want one round with a 200-pound warhead. I want a hundred, 200, 300 artillery rounds coming in. And you're never going to do that at \$1.7 million. And they don't exist. So that's the problem.

Now, those missiles don't have the same type of warheads that artillery does. I asked the question to some of these bright folks around our commandant; I said where in the future are the Marines going to get illumination rounds? Because rockets and missiles don't have them. Where are they going to get smoke if they want to obscure their movement? Where are they going to get white phosphorous if they want to mark a target? You know what I was told? Wars in the future won't require that. I guess the Russians and the Ukrainians didn't get the message. Or if they do, Marines won't find in them.

I don't even know how to talk to folks like that. So why do I get mad? That's what's going on to our Marine Corps. And nobody except the retired officers, some of whom just recently retired, seem concerned about it.

Mr. Cancian: Well, thank you.

The next question –

Mr. Work: Could I say something?

Mr. Cancian: Oh, certainly.

Mr. Work: We are still going to have cannons. The cannons will still shoot smoke. They'll still shoot a lume. They'll still shoot white phosphorous. But what we will have is more rocket artillery, and that gives us much more range, much more precision and much more lethality.

The MLRS missile can be tuned to either fire a ballistic trajectory or a vertical fall of shot. The MLRS is the only indirect-fire weapon that was used to support troops in combat in urban canyons, because the missile is so – I mean, the rocket is so accurate, and it comes from a vertical fall of shot, that you can operate those within 200 meters of troops in contact, in an urban environment.

We're still going to have all the cannon artillery that we've had in the past, in the same rounds. But essentially what – you have to think of an MLRS as a small-diameter bomb, same warhead weight, 200 pounds, extraordinarily accurate, and the Marines will be able to drop these types of unitary charges everywhere – charge of suppression. They have an alternative warhead

which has 160,000 tungsten pellets. This is a giant shotgun. And it will do suppression, believe me.

So it's not – then, on the infantry side, Secretary Mattis created a Close Combat Lethality Task Force. His basic assumption was we never do the things we need to do to make the infantry more lethal in close combat. And they made all sorts of different recommendations. The Marine Corps redesigned infantry battalion is going to get the vast majority of those. It will be a more lethal infantry battalion than we have today, without question.

The Marines are still going to be able to close with and kill the enemy through fire and maneuver. They're still going to be able to do that. There's two MEFs, a reservoir of capability. The commandant says that's going to allow us to take care of all of these other things. But as Dov said, in the Pacific I need to fine-tune the MEF organization so they can handle the pacing threat. That does not seem to be something that is off base.

So there's a lot of assertions that the new design will be less lethal, but there's no analysis to suggest that – none. There's more analysis to suggest that the changes that the commandant are making are going to result in a very, very, very – well, a continuing lethal Marine Corps.

Lt. Gen. Van Riper:

Mr. Secretary, could we see that analysis? Because we've asked to see the analysis and never have. Moreover, the retired community has offered to play the opposition force against Force 2030 and have been refused. The leadership of the Marine Corps will not allow the retired community to play against it. You might ask the question, if the Marine Corps is so sure of itself, why are there no active-duty Marine Corps generals up here today?

But also, Mr. Secretary, you changed the subject. I was talking about artillery and artillery batteries – 21. An artillery battery associate cannon – associated with every infantry battalion. There's going to be 21 – there are going to be 21 infantry battalions and five artillery cannon. How do you do that? You can put the missile batteries with them, but you're putting them with the 1.7 million (dollars). They're not going to be able to do the suppression fires, fire the smoke, et cetera.

You changed the subject to the infantry and Secretary Mattis's lethality. I was a member of that group. I know what that was all about. I'm not talking about – I applaud what General Berger is doing for increasing the lethality of the infantry. It has nothing to do with my concern about the artillery. And I'm really surprised, because the secretary was an artillery officer.

Mr. Work:

Again, you task organize for the fight. So if you – as everyone has said. So if a MEF needs to go into a fight that requires more cannon artillery, then you task organize that way.

Gen. Zinni: Why don't we task organize for these MLRs?

Mr. Work: Well, the MLRs are an experimental design unit to take care –

Gen. Zinni: But what's so – what needs to be done? You know, you looked at the components that they need. Obviously, there's some technology. But even the three MEF commanders were saying let me task organize for the mission. So we make an argument for traditional approaches on one side. Then we make an argument against it on another side.

You know, one of the things we're trying to do is sort this out. Every time we see another update to this thing, we're back into the experimental phase, the testing phase. I mean, to me it seems that we ought to wait to make decisions – and this was our point – until after you've done the analysis and the testing, and also bring in all your people in your leadership, because – guess what – they've got to live with it and fight it. That's what the point we tried to make.

Mr. Zakheim: Let me jump in here for a second. I mean, I can't talk about the tactics on the ground with retired Marines who are far more experienced in that regard. But I can talk a little bit about how analysis works, because I've been doing that for decades.

You come up with a hypothesis and an idea, and that's when you test it and that's when you analyze it. You don't analyze first and then come up with the idea. That's not – you just don't test things that way.

Gen Zinni: An idea is different than a decision.

Dr. Zakheim: Well, but look, the commandant has basically said I am open to revision. That's what this latest document was. And that's the proper way to do it. If you're trying to revolutionize something, then you throw out this concept. You say this is what I want to do, and yeah, I'm open to refinement. That's when the analysis comes in. And you're right. You do need to have not just war games and analysis. You do need to have exercises. But those are the things that help you modify, fine-tune, and adjust.

And quite frankly, I can understand, with all due respect to you, General Van Riper, why the commandant doesn't want the retired Marine community to be the red team on this, because, quite frankly, you already know what answer you want to have. That's not what he needs.

Gen. Zinni: No, we don't. Who said that? I mean, that's an assumption. First of all, he brought in retired officers and actually took their advice rather than consult his own active-duty general officers.

Dr. Zakheim: Well, then, you just proved my point. You know, he doesn't want to have people who already are fixed and locked in, but he's certainly willing to listen to everybody.

Gen. Zinni: Why are we fixed and locked in?

Lt. Gen. Van Riper: We are definitely not locked in. The Marine Corps needs to change. The Marine Corps needs new technology. It will be different than the Corps we served in. We're not longing for some long old days. What we're saying is come up with an operational concept. Do the analysis. Do that before you make changes. Those 400 tanks aren't coming back to the Marine Corps. Those 72 artillery pieces aren't coming back. Those aircraft we've given up aren't coming back.

Why would you – and when you cut structure, you cut talent. The NCOs, the officers, the mechanics, the technicians for all these units are gone. They either left the Marine Corps, retired, went off to do something, or went into the Army. You can't bring – you can't snap your fingers and bring them back overnight. That takes years to develop. That's what I said. That's where we're killing the kid. That's why we're in court, not for custody. We're trying to save the kid's life.

Gen. Zinni: The CD&I process at Quantico says two to seven years to process these. You can have all the ideas in the world. As a matter of fact, we would encourage them. We would insist on them. They're introduced in games. Games do not validate anything. It's the introduction of an idea. That idea, when it's introduced, the game's purpose is to look at the advantages and disadvantages, the questions, the hard questions, and then they go into experimentation. They go into study. They go into live exercise.

When they go into implementation, there's a feedback loop on them. We – General Van Riper commanded the organization. The process did it. I was a deputy in it. We know how to do analysis. We were, under General Gray and under General Krulak and everybody else, looking for ideas. But an idea is not a decision. It comes at the end of a process, not at the beginning. And then you test it.

Dr. Zakheim: Well, all I would say is –

Mr. Cancian: Let me – let me jump in.

Dr. Zakheim: – I don't disagree with anything you said except –

Gen. Zinni: Thank you.

Dr. Zakheim: – and this is clear to me – that when you have the higher-ups, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, buying into it, they're operating, I think, from a somewhat different premise, which is they know the Marines are giving up tanks. They know the Marines are giving up aircraft. They certainly are not unaware of the issues you two gentlemen just raised. So the question is, why are they doing it? They're not stupid. I think the answer tends to be they're looking at it in the context of a joint force.

Gen. Zinni: And why did those secretaries give us the McNamara line and shock and awe?

Dr. Zakheim: Well, let me tell you something. We're not talking about McNamara. Last time I knew Jim Mattis, he was a retired Marine with a –

Gen. Zinni: He does not agree with this – what's going on.

Dr. Zakheim: But he hasn't spoken out.

Gen. Zinni: And you can talk to him. I won't speak for him.

Dr. Zakheim: Jim hasn't spoken out. Maybe somebody else has.

Mr. Cancian: I have one last question here. We're slightly over time. But the elephant in the room is tanks, as we've noted. And I wanted to talk a little about that before we close, because it gets a lot of attention. Now, the Marine Corps has made three arguments for getting rid of tanks. One is that they don't see tanks as useful in the kinds of conflicts they foresee that they will participate in. The second is that the Army will provide tanks in the unlikely, in their view, situation where they do need tanks. And the third is that tanks are obsolete, that there are many effective antitank weapons on the battlefield and that the day of the tank has passed.

So if I could ask each one of the panelists to give me two sentences in response to that, we can close out. Secretary Work.

Mr. Work: The commandant has said the tanks are not worth the opportunity cost. They're extraordinarily heavy. They're extremely maintenance-intensive. They are giant gas suckers. And they're not useful in a campaign against China. We're not going to be fighting tank battles against China.

Then, in the other fights, he's saying that technology is making tanks more vulnerable on the battlefield, and therefore we have to make adjustments for that. And he has done that by pursuing organic precision fires, long-range precision fires, down to the squad level, where, you know, a \$10,000 antitank round will take out an \$8 million Abrams tank. And the commandant has

said tanks are not obsolete; just for the future that we see, we don't need them.

Mr. Cancian: OK, General Zinni.

Gen. Zinni: I'll give you two sentences. Why hasn't the Army come to the same conclusion? And why is President Zelensky asking for tanks?

Mr. Cancian: OK, thank you. Secretary Zakheim.

Dr. Zakheim: I would argue they're not obsolete, but you have to look at the context. In the context of the Army, you need them. In the context of the Marine Corps, in certain circumstances you may not. And what General Berger has concluded is in East Asia they don't make sense. I would argue personally that they do make sense in Europe. But that's why the Army has a lot of tanks.

Gen. Zinni: And Korea?

Dr. Zakheim: And Korea. But remember –

Gen. Zinni: That's in Asia, last time I checked.

Dr. Zakheim: But the last time I also checked, the Korean – the ROK military, conventional, was pretty damn strong, which it wasn't in 1950.

Mr. Cancian: General Van Riper.

Lt. Gen. Van Riper: What they forget is any time you have a weapon, you're going to have an anti to that weapon – anti-air, anti-armor, whatever it is. It goes back to a rock and a shield. What was happening to the Marine Corps tanks, a system was putting on called Trophy, which would protect them against anti-tank weapons. The Israelis, who have – that's their system. They have a 95 percent success rate in combat of stopping missiles. So this idea that the tank is obsolete misses what's going on. And the very tanks that we gave up were having those systems installed on them. And there are more advanced programs that will provide that kind of protection.

I asked a member, a senior member of the intelligence community, what nation or what military in the world was giving up tanks? Just doing an informal survey; I don't want you to get in classified and come back and tell me. He said Liechtenstein. No other military in the world except the United States Marine Corps has decided to give up tanks.

Mr. Cancian: Well, thank you very much. We've come to the end of our time. I'd like to thank our panelists for joining us. And I ask people to thank our panelists for taking the time from their schedules to have this very lively conversation. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

