

Letter: Marines, Navy need our support

By

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As we celebrate Independence Day this year, between the fireworks, cookouts and time with family, it is important that we reflect on how lucky we are to be Americans, and to thank those whose sacrifice enables us to remain a free and independent country.

Our independence was not won with one war, but is fought for every day. Our military services stand ready 24/7 to react to any threat, respond to any crisis. One team fulfills the unique role of preventing wars before they start the U.S. Navy-Marine Corps team.

As America's away team, the U.S. Navy is a global force that reminds other countries and bad actors that we are the strongest country in the world, with the best military and the most advanced technology. The Marine Corps is the nations 911 emergency response force fast, flexible and, when necessary, lethal. Together they remind the world of the power and the strength of the United States and its people. This ability to project power, deter aggression and lend aid when needed is the core of their mission, and is integral to keeping American citizens from harm.

However, this ability is slowly being eroded thanks to severe overextension and underfunding. The Navy-Marine Corps team is the first to respond to any crisis, and their global presence plays an outsized role in our national strategy. Combatant commanders around the globe ask for carriers first, before any other response is taken. This constant demand signal is beginning to strain the teams ability to



respond in an increasingly dangerous world. If we do not take action soon, we risk a broken Navy-Marine Corps team and severe damage to U.S. national security, our ability to support our allies and our leadership role in the world.

Since 2001, the pace of Navy and Marine Corps operations has not slowed. Yet because the work of the Navy-Marine Corps team is out of sight, over the horizon on the vast oceans of the world, many are unaware of their work or the strain that our Sailors and Marines are under.

Years of responding to crisis after crisis and delayed maintenance and modernization are crippling the Navy-Marine Corps team. Aircraft that were designed to fly 6,000 hours are now expected to fly 10,000 hours. The Marine Corps is plagued by old equipment. Many ships have been on deployments for eight to 12 months or longer because of a backlog of maintenance on the ships needed to provide replacement.

If you pay attention to the fine print in the news, evidence of this is all around us: the Marine Corps is considering deployments on foreign warships due to a shortage in the Navy fleet. The Navy is pulling its carrier presence from the Persian Gulf, in the middle of a struggle against ISIS, because of the toll marathon deployments have taken on the condition of its ships and the morale of Sailors and their families.

All of this makes us at the Navy League of the United States concerned that the Navy-Marine Corps team will soon be unable to fulfill the missions that are vital to American national security and economic prosperity. Without a significant funding investment, the Navy and Marine Corps will no longer be able to provide the same tempo of operations necessary to keeping would-be aggressors at bay.

We urge you to spread the word that our leadership needs to provide a significant investment in the Department of the Navy's fiscal year 2017 budget to meet the Navy-Marine Corps teams needs. Without a significant increase in the Department of the Navy budget, we believe that the Navy-Marine Corps team will be unable to continue their critical work of protecting commerce at sea, responding to humanitarian crises and promoting regional stability.

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