



10 February 2022

**A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS**

From 2008 to 2009, I had the privilege of serving as Chief of Staff for the KFOR Headquarters in Pristina, Kosovo. My commander was an Italian lieutenant general, and our staff included representatives from 29 countries. It was a graduate-level education in international relations and an experience, which reinforced what I had learned firsthand in both routine and combat operations across the globe: our allies and partners are a source of tremendous strategic advantage.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of America’s allies and partners on the trajectory of our Nation and the world. From our War of Independence to ongoing operations against ISIL/ISIS in Iraq and Syria, our allies and partners have stood with us shoulder-to-shoulder. We have faced down tyrants and terrorists, made the seas free and open for the trade of nations, and provided life-saving humanitarian assistance to millions recovering from natural disasters. We have fought and bled together to defend our people, combat oppression overseas, and buttress democracy. We faced every challenge together.

Today, we confront challenges both new and familiar. Autocrats once again bully neighbors and threaten war, the risk of nuclear proliferation grows, terrorism persists, and climate change portends new conflicts and humanitarian crises. The volume and magnitude of challenges we face demand that we both reaffirm our commitment to each other—as allies and partners—and recommit to the ideals that bind us together. As the late Secretary of State—and Marine—George Shultz noted, our ties with fellow democracies endure, “precisely because they rest on a moral base, not only a base of strategic interest.”

This issue of the *Marine Corps Gazette* features articles on our alliances and partnerships. There are few topics of greater strategic import. While Marines and our international military counterparts should be rightfully proud of all we have accomplished together, we cannot afford to be satisfied. As we stand together in defense of the free and open international order, we must move faster in building interoperability and compatibility—both in the “hardware” of shared systems, and the “software” of common operational concepts and procedures. We must increase the complexity and realism of our training and exercises and find new and innovative ways to operationalize our exchange and liaison networks. Finally, for Marines, I charge you to approach our international relationships with a healthy measure of humility. As Secretary of Defense Mattis noted, “Not all good ideas come from the country with the most aircraft carriers.”

Semper Fidelis,

David H. Berger  
 General, U.S. Marine Corps  
 Commandant of the Marine Corps