Thank you for the invitation to speak today. It’s a real pleasure to here today and thank you for the opportunity to share the Navy and Marine Corps team’s message.

We all know and appreciate the importance of the seas when it comes to commerce and international prosperity. We also know that freedom of the seas is a cornerstone for international relations and for international peace in general. Securing the safety of the maritime lines of commerce is not a job that any single nation can accomplish. Represented here today are many nations who are even now working hard in both the Atlantic and the Mediterranean to help secure the safety and security that is so important to global commerce.

To all responsible nations, I’d like to foremost convey that the United States Navy and Marine Corps team is dedicated to being the best international partner you could hope for. I see true partnership when shared risks lead to shared rewards. We are all consumers of commerce. We all are maritime nations - beneficiaries and users of the global maritime lanes of commerce. We all have a responsibility to provide security and contribute to the collective safety and stability of the global market. This is true all over the world, but it is critically important in the Mediterranean where 21 countries spanning 3 continents all border that body of water. Because there are so many interested parties, American resolve and commitment must be matched, and even exceeded, by the international community.

In light of the recent events in the Mediterranean over the last few years, the United States has been pleased with the renewed efforts of our partners and allies in the Mediterranean as it pertains to safety. As always, you will find the United States Navy and Marine Corps is forward deployed and deeply involved in the regional stability and security of the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean. In addition to the humanitarian considerations at play, as you know, there are 3 critical chokepoints in the Mediterranean and we must plan ahead to ensure their security against potential bad actors - whether they be state or non-state entities.
Of course, we all realize and must acknowledge that financial constraints sometimes limit what we can do, but those very constraints are why international cooperation and partnerships are even more important.

But it’s not just public partnerships that we need to bring to bear on the issue of security in the Mediterranean. We also need private industry to partner with us and also partner with our regional partners. Nation states are not the only beneficiaries from the stability generated by security forces. We need industry, especially multinational corporations, who have vested interests in the region to work with us - to provide solutions and resources for the challenges in the region. I see there are many representatives from the private sector here, I know you understand when I say that from my time in the private sector, I know that partnerships are critical to business.

As we seek to find value in our partnerships with both the private sector and international allies and partners, I also know that the United States Navy and Marine Corps team needs to modernize and refine our processes in order to deliver the capabilities needed to secure the Mediterranean for everyone. We need to modernize and refine our ability to get in past the defensive and offensive capabilities of peer and near-peer militaries and also to defeat asymmetric threats. We need to be more efficient in how we conduct our business in order to deliver the value to our taxpayers, just like corporations need to find value for their shareholders. To that end, I know that both the United States and other nation states can learn from industry to spur innovation and efficiency. The Department of the Navy is examining our acquisitions processes with a high powered lens to extract the capabilities we need, at the right price to taxpayers. And just like any other consumer, that means that we have to learn how to be a better educated customer. It also means that the suppliers need to work with us to find that value based on shared risks.

You may ask why the United States is so interested in security in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Some might say it would be easy for the United States to sit back and do nothing, let the neighbors solely bear the responsibility.
I disagree, as we are interested in all the global areas of maritime commerce - the costs of being hands off, in both lives and treasure, would far exceed the costs of being involved and being a responsible neighbor and partner. The American mainland may be physically protected by oceans, but we know that threats remain and we will not surrender our international responsibilities. The forward deployed United States Navy and Marines Corps team is in the Mediterranean because we must be a consistently reliable ally and partner so we may deter all would be adversaries. Deterrence isn’t just about protecting our homeland - it’s about providing safety and security to our allies and partners.

The United States Navy and Marines have been in the Mediterranean since the founding days of our Republic. We were there to help ensure the safety of our ships and the safety of commerce. We were there then, we’re here today, and we’re here to stay. The challenges we all face in this region are great indeed, but not insurmountable - not if we work together towards our common goals. With the help of our allies and friends, we have a persistent presence that serves as both reassurance to our friends and reminder to potential adversaries.

Please join with us in working to ensure equal and free access to not just the Mediterranean, but to all the global lanes of commerce. Thank you again for your time and for the opportunity to speak to you. I look forward to working with you and hearing your thoughts and ideas on how we can - together - move forward to a more secure and prosperous future in the Mediterranean.