

STATEMENT OF
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DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS
BEFORE THE
PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
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ON
PERSONNEL ISSUES

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee:

I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the wide range of issues that are important to our Marines. Providing a ready and capable force today and in the future means finding and keeping the right people. This challenge is daunting, but the result is a Corps of Marines ready to answer the Nation's 911 emergency call.

TOTAL FORCE

As a manpower intensive organization, the Marine Corps continues to believe the individual Marine is our most effective weapon. Our emphasis on robust operating forces and lean support forces is visible both in our Active and Reserve Components. Our Corps is young and the grade structure is lean. Over 26,000 Marines are teenagers. The average age of our enlisted Marines is just 25, and 67% of them are Corporals or below. This causes a high turnover rate within the first term, which in turn presents our Recruiting Command with continual challenge.

The Marine Corps Reserve continues to play a vital role in our Total Force by providing trained and qualified units and individuals available for active duty in times of war, national emergencies, and other times as national security may require. Marine Reservists work and train alongside their Active counterparts, participating in numerous worldwide operations and exercises.

The Total Force is not complete without our civilian personnel, who are employed in a wide variety of professional, technical, trade, and administrative functions. These "Civilian Marines" provide essential continuity in their functional areas and are a crucial component of the Marine Corps Total Force. With a population of just 18,000, their

manning of the Supporting Establishment allows Marines to fill billets in operational units thus enhancing training, readiness, and sustainability.

RECRUITING

The Marine Corps Recruiting Command has accomplished its assigned missions for 44 consecutive months in terms of both quantity and quality. In today's difficult recruiting environment, this success can only be attributed to the unswerving dedication, professionalism, and hard work of our recruiters. In Fiscal Year 1998, we attained 100% of contracting goal and 100.1% of our accession requirement. We contracted 66.2% in the upper mental group categories on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Test (ASVAB), compared to the DoD standard of 60%. Similarly, we contracted 96.5% Tier I high school graduates. It is a magnificent effort- particularly considering the very difficult recruiting environment faced by all the armed services.

The Marine Corps is not an all-volunteer force, it is an all-recruited force. Until they met a Marine Recruiter, more than 90% of our recruits had no idea they might one day be Marines. Consequently, our recruiters must be hardworking, innovative, and motivated to accomplish the mission. Our prospects seek challenge. They want to be part of a cohesive team. We offer the opportunity to meet that challenge by measuring up to our uncompromising standards. Our recruiters sell intangibles; our core values of Honor, Courage and Commitment. Recruiters begin the process we call "Transformation" by recruiting quality young Americans of character and by preparing them mentally and physically for the demands of recruit training.

We continually emphasize these values to all Marines. They provide an ethical compass for our new Marines as they learn to walk in the ways of the Corps. The

transformation process accelerates in boot camp where Marine recruits, as they always have been, are taken to levels of moral, mental, and physical accomplishment they would have never believed possible. Boot camp now, however, culminates with a defining moment we call the “Crucible,” a 54-hour field training exercise encompassing continuous physical and mental challenges. The “Crucible” tests the mental and physical toughness of our recruits while teaching them the critical value of teamwork and simultaneously bonding them to each other and to the Corps. Upon completing the “Crucible,” recruits earn the right to wear the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor. This is the first time they can be called “MARINE.” It is their link with our proud heritage.

The transformation process, however, does not end with recruit training. We sustain our core values via continued professional military education and training. Our unit cohesion program has, for example, created a more stable environment for the Corps and the individual Marine. Teams formed at the recruit depot remain intact for years. Our Commanders reap the benefits of this unique transformation process and the resulting unit cohesion will be instrumental in our success on the battlefields of the future.

RETENTION

The vitality of the Marine Corps depends upon more than just the transformation. We must retain sufficient mid career Marines to pass our warfighting ethos on from one generation of Marines to the next; to provide the leadership that will be required in the chaotic 21st Century and to maintain and sustain the technical skills that are increasingly required for effective operations. Though our current retention situation is stable, I am cautious. As the civilian sector continues to offer increasingly enticing alternatives, the pressure on our quality Marines to leave the Corps will continue to increase. This is

particularly true for Marines in high-tech MOSs (information technology, aviation mechanics, and electronic maintenance) whose skills are readily transferable to the civilian sector.

We continue to achieve overall retention objectives, however, we are experiencing minor decreases in the continuation pattern of Marines in our intermediate force, as well as specific skill imbalances in our career force. Generally, these shortages occur in technical skills or skills that readily transfer to the civilian sector. This results in extended tours for some Marines and some unfilled personnel requirements. Despite these skill shortages, we continue to mitigate the impacts on near-term readiness as other Marines work harder and longer. This situation will only become more burdensome over time unless we do everything possible to retain more Marines with these unique skills.

The Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB) program continues to be an extremely effective avenue for addressing our retention concerns. Historically, we have focused our SRB incentives almost exclusively on our first-term Marines. We have now shifted some of the focus to Marines at the second reenlistment, seeking a balance with a growing first-term reenlistment requirement. Simultaneously, we have planned substantial increases to our SRB funding.

We have enjoyed moderate success in our officer career force management. The officer attrition rate for Fiscal Year 1998 was 9.4%. While this is a decrease from Fiscal Year 1997's rate of 9.6%, it is still higher than we would like to see. We also have skill imbalances within our officer corps which are a result of higher attrition in fixed-wing aviation MOSs and some ground MOSs. We have managed these skill shortages within acceptable levels by using promotion and augmentation board precept guidance and, in the

case of aviation, by offering financial incentives. Additionally, we increasingly satisfy our cockpit requirements at the expense of our aviators' non-cockpit assignments that are designed to develop well-rounded, Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) officers. We will likely have difficulty in meeting all our non-cockpit aviator requirements for the next several years.

PAY AND COMPENSATION

Compensation is undeniably a major factor in the stable, secure, and dependable environment our Marines seek. The President's Budget for Fiscal Year 2000 adequately addresses our concerns with a comprehensive compensation triad of pay raises, pay table reform, and repeal of the Redux retirement system. By providing an equitable and stable compensation system, our Marines can focus on the task at hand. While Marines do not serve for the money, we must ensure they are not distracted by the frustrations of inadequate pay.

Pay raises that cut into the military-civilian pay gap are necessary to maintain a ready and capable force. The new proposed pay table, to be implemented on July 1, 2000, will reward successful Marines whose performance has been recognized by promotion while concurrently providing a powerful retention incentive for mid-career officers and enlisted Marines. Retirement benefits are the final element of the compensation triad. Repealing the Military Retirement Reform Act of 1986 (Redux) is General Krulak's top manpower priority. Many Marines believe the Redux plan is unfair. The message they hear is that their service is not valued as much as those who served in earlier years. The military retirement plan needs to be simple and dependable. The problems that our Commanders are seeing with Redux are more than just growing pains; they are

symptomatic of extreme dissatisfaction from those Marines making career choices. Once again, a stable, secure, and dependable compensation environment will allow our Marines to focus on one thing...mission accomplishment.

I must add that we have already programmed and budgeted scarce resources among many needed programs, so our support for any provisions above and beyond those in the Fiscal Year 2000 President's Budget would be contingent upon additional funding. While the heart and soul of the Corps are our Marines, we cannot afford to jeopardize our equipment modernization or other readiness programs.

TEMPO OF OPERATIONS

The Marine Corps is by nature a deploying force; expeditionary and forward deployed. Marines expect to deploy; they join to deploy. We address individual personnel tempo through the effective scheduling of unit deployments. Our standard unit deployment cycle calls for a 6-month deployment with a turnaround ratio of at least 2:1 (twelve months back). We also depend upon our commanders to assign individual Marines to deploying detachments in an equitable manner to ensure no individual is over-deployed. Shortages of Marines with certain critical skills can result in over-deployment. However, as long as most of the contingencies that the Marine Corps responds to are absorbed by our forward deployed forces, our pace of operations and subsequent time away from family should remain reasonable.

QUALITY OF LIFE

The Marine Corps is committed to efficient, effective, and equitable management and delivery of Quality of Life (QOL) programs. Taking care of our Marines and their families is inherent to the ethos of the Corps and QOL is a high priority. Our Marine

Corps Community Service (MCCS) programs touch the lives of Marines every day, and we pay attention to it. Marines get up in the morning and eat breakfast purchased in our commissaries, then put on a uniform obtained at the exchange uniform shop. They leave for work and drop a child off at a DoDD's school or a Child Development Center. Our Marines eat at the officer and enlisted clubs, and work out at the fitness center. These programs impact the daily life of our Marines and it is incumbent upon us to ensure the best possible facilities for our Marines.

Our fiscal and capital performance graphically demonstrates that we are not a complacent organization when it comes to providing the right quality of life for our Marines. Our performance, in fact, is a direct result of our continuing drive to improve our organization and our performance. In 1998, we stood up at Headquarters our new Personal and Family Readiness Division. In January of this year, we began replicating this vision to our commands, merging our Human Resources programs and MWR to create a new and seamless voice for QOL in the Marine Corps, Marine Corps Community Services. MCCS enables us to help commanders prevent problems of Marines and their families before they occur; enables us to better focus on helping Marines live an enhanced, healthy, and rewarding lifestyle; and allows us to further flatten out the organization and eliminate remaining bureaucratic stovepipes with which Marines and their family members must contend. MCCS further reduces staff support overhead, and allows us to focus our resources more directly on delivering the services and programs that Marines want and need.

MCCS also provides a diversified range of programs designed to improve the day-to-day well-being of our Marines. Examples include classes on personal finances, tobacco

cessation, and effective parenting. Networks have been established, such as Key Volunteers, to reach Marines, sailors, spouses and children. Also included are programs that deal with domestic abuse as well as substance and alcohol abuse. The focus of these particular programs is on prevention,-- but where prevention fails, treatment is then available. The Marine Corps Community Services concept is centered on education, prevention, and support. It's goal is to help and assist in the creation of strong facilities which will in turn increase the effectiveness of our Marines.

Another extremely important factor in the quality of life of our Marines is the health care for our families. Tricare is currently going through some growing pains. Our first task, however, should be to make the Tricare process as simple as accessing 911 emergency care. The infrastructure that responds to the military member is complex, and unfortunately, the Tricare user must endure the frustration of incompatible information systems, complicated marketing materials, phone trees, and uninformed or discourteous service representatives to access care. Most family members are pleased with the quality of care they receive but are exhausted by the length and time of the journey getting there. In general, our spouses are also our family health care managers and they strongly influence their Marine's reenlistment decision.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Finally, I would like to address the future of the Marine Corps. We have convened a Force Structure Planning Group to examine and make recommendations on how the Marine Corps of the 21st Century should be organized to carry out Operational Maneuver from the Sea. To the best of my knowledge we are the only service doing this. Through the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab, we are also conducting advanced warfighting

experiments such as Hunter Warrior and Urban Warrior. We know our NCO's will have a larger role in future warfare than previously anticipated. A Corporal may be in a position to influence national policy objectives. That is why continued investment in people is absolutely essential to our future success on the battlefield.

I'm anxiously awaiting the results of our current force structure review to see how we will need to shape the Marine Corps for the next century. Regardless of the future size or scope of the Marine Corps, I assure you we will meet our statutory obligation to be the most ready when the Nation is least ready.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to your comments and any questions.