

STATEMENT OF
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UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS
BEFORE THE
PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
ON
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CONCERNING
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 retaining the right people, training and then equipping them to complete their missions. This challenge is daunting but as a result of our manpower successes, the Marine Corps remains the Nation's principal force in readiness.

TOTAL FORCE

The Marine Corps ended Fiscal Year 1999 with an active duty end strength of 172,641, which was 441 over our Congressional mandate, and a Marine Corps Reserve end strength of 39,953, which was 65 under. We successfully attained our end strength through the magnificent efforts of our recruiters, through the leadership of our commanders in the field, and by the application of careful force management policies. The Marine Corps was also able to reduce first term non-EAS attrition by approximately 22%. Continued success in this area may allow us to reduce our accessions in the future. We have recently introduced a number of improvements to our accession process that we believe will significantly improve our ability to fill critical occupational shortages.

As a manpower intensive organization, the Marine Corps continues to believe the individual Marine is our most important and effective weapon. The strength of the Marine is the Corps and the strength of the Corps is the Marine. Our concept of "every Marine a rifleman," is as critical now, 225 years after, as it was at our inception. The focus on the individual Marine and small unit skills and leadership will provide us the capability we need to win on the battlefield of the 21st Century.

Our emphasis on robust operating forces and lean support forces is visible both in our active and reserve components. Our active component is young and the grade structure is lean. Over 28,000 Marines are teenagers. The average age of our enlisted Marines is just 25, 67% of them are Corporals or below, and 68% are in their first enlistment. Maintaining the youth of our Corps is a difficult task for our Recruiters as the high turnover of first-term Marines presents our Recruiting Command with the continual challenge of finding qualified candidates.

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

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 approximately 17,000, their manning of the Supporting Establishment allows Marines to fill billets in operational units thus enhancing training, readiness, and sustainability.

RECRUITING

Each year we are required to access approximately 40,000 active and reserve enlisted Marines. In today’s difficult recruiting environment, our continued success can only be attributed to the unswerving dedication, professionalism, and hard work of our recruiters. In Fiscal Year 1999, we attained 100% of contracting goal and 100.2% of our accession requirement. We contracted 65.7% in the upper mental group categories on the Armed Services

Vocational Aptitude Test (ASVAB), compared to the DoD standard of 60%. Similarly, we contracted 95.8% Tier I high school graduates. It is a magnificent effort, particularly considering the very difficult recruiting environment faced by all the services. We have had similar success in the first quarter of FY00. We have achieved 101.5% of our total force accession mission; moreover, 98.5% of these young men and women are high school graduates with 66.8% in Mental Groups I-III A.

The Marine Corps has successfully achieved its recruiting goals, in both quality and quantity, for 56 consecutive months. Marine Corps recruiters are finding the recruiting environment increasingly difficult and extremely challenging. Therefore, now more than ever, we must weigh each and every manpower decision so as to find a careful balance between manning our force structure requirements, maintaining balanced manpower and budget plans, and providing a feasible accession strategy which does not break the back of our recruiters. 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 their mission. In some instances, our recruiters are denied access to our high schools because of local education policies. While a certain school district may have an open policy, the districts themselves often allow their individual high school administrators to be more restrictive. This denial of access to prospective recruits exacerbates the challenges of recruiting and requires us to redouble our efforts to achieve our goals.

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 “Transformation” process by recruiting quality young Americans of character and by preparing them mentally and physically for the demands of recruit training.

The transformation of Marines is reaffirmed the first day at boot camp and lasts until the day they leave the Corps. Throughout their career, we continually emphasize the values of Honor, Courage and Commitment to all Marines. The values provide an ethical compass for our new Marines. The transformation accelerates in boot camp where Marine recruits are taken to levels of moral, mental, and physical accomplishment they never believed possible. We have had continued success with the “Crucible,” our Boot Camp’s culminating exercise. This 54-hour field training exercise encompasses continuous physical and mental challenges, testing the mental and physical toughness of our recruits. Upon completing the “Crucible,” recruits earn the right to wear the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor. This is the first time they are called “MARINE,” which links them to our proud heritage.

The transformation process is continuous, involving a number of practices and strong leadership. Our unit cohesion program has, for example, created a more stable environment for the Corps and the individual Marine. Teams formed during their initial training remain intact for years. Our Commanders reap the benefits of this unique practice, and the resulting unit cohesion will be instrumental in our success on the battlefields of the future. In addition, we sustain our core values via continued professional military education and training.

RETENTION

Though our current retention situation is stable, we remain 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. While 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 are also seeing an emerging and increasing demand for Marines to fill positions as police officers, for example.

We continue to achieve overall retention objectives, however, we are experiencing minor decreases in the continuation pattern of our mid-careerists which contribute to specific skill imbalances in our career force. Generally, these shortages occur in technical skills or skills that are highly marketable in the private 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. We believe that the approval of last year's compensation triad initiatives will have a long-term retention benefit while we cannot presently measure the impact, we must and will expand our efforts to educate our Marine on the value of this triad.

In regard to enlisted first term attrition, we have actually started to see a decline in post-boot camp attrition. Definitive reasons for this decline are uncertain, but there are indications that the Crucible and the Unit Cohesion programs may be contributing to retention of our young Marines. Our unit commanders are noting that Marines are reporting to their units better prepared to complete missions and stay Marine through their enlistment. In light of these successes, the Commandant has directed that all commanders sustain the transformation by strengthening the core values, cohesion, and sense of mission that started at Boot Camp. The energy our commanders expend in this area along with their focus on non-EAS attrition within their units is invaluable to our retention efforts.

The Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB) program continues to be an extremely effective tool for combating 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 while seeking a balance with a growing first-term reenlistment requirement. Simultaneously, we have planned additional increases to our SRB funding. I would like to thank the Congress for supporting increases to our reenlistment bonus. We are currently requesting legislative approval of the Selective Reenlistment Bonus as a lump sum payment, instead of being paid out over a four-year period. Allowing full up-front payment of SRBs will benefit all services. Although there will be up front costs associated with paying both lump sum and anniversary payments that are not accounted for in our FY01 budget, the potential benefits in terms of increased incentives to reenlist are well worth the investment. The risks associated with this policy are minimal, as our current default rate is under 3 percent. The implementation of a lump sum SRB program will be cost neutral over the long term.

The officer attrition rate for FY99 was 10.1%, an increase from FY98's 9.3%. 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. Aviation officer retention is a principal concern for the Marine Corps. In FY97, we began offering a long-term retention bonus, Aviation Continuation Pay (ACP), to eligible aviators in the amount of \$12,000. In exchange for a written contract to remain on active duty after their initial obligation through their 14th year of commissioned service, ACP recipients receive

annual, anniversary installments throughout their extended contract lengths. Starting in FY00 we further tailored ACP payments into three distinct communities to better target our retention requirements. We offer \$18,000 to fixed wing pilots, \$9,000 to rotary wing pilots, and \$6,000 to naval flight officers per year in eligible specialties. While the ACP program has guaranteed a certain inventory level over the years, it is important to remember that a significant number of eligible officers have not applied for the bonus. For the present, the Marine Corps has not decided to take advantage of the increased \$25,000 cap on ACP payments. We have heard consistently from our aviators that the stay or leave decision is not solely financial although it remains a significant factor. We are also careful to not create divisiveness within our MAGTFs over gross pay disparities. As for specific communities, we do not have as many retention difficulties with our helicopter pilots and fixed wing Naval Flight Officers (NFO's), nor do we anticipate a shortage of any helicopter pilots or fixed wing NFO's in FY00. The principal area of concern is fixed wing (FW) aviators. Prior to FY96, we averaged 35 FW resignations per year. That number jumped to 92 in FY96 and rose to 102 in FY97. After ACP was implemented in FY97, the number of resignations dropped in FY98 to 88 and again in FY99 to 68. We are anticipating about 60 FW resignations in FY00. Our projected FY00 fixed wing pilot shortage for an inventory of 1,418 is 398. The shortages will be in the F/A-18, EA-6B, AV-8B, and KC-130 communities.

Compensation is undeniably a major factor in the stable, secure, and dependable environment our Marines seek. The FY00 Budget addressed our concerns, and we very much thank you and the Administration for repealing Redux, offering substantial pay raises, and BAH reform. We must continue to support our young Marines by maintaining competitive yearly pay increases. While we certainly agree with the short-term benefits associated with special pays and bonuses,

we believe that in order to achieve long-term stability, we must focus on across the board basic pay increases. By providing an equitable and stable compensation system, our Marines can focus on the tasks at hand. While Marines do not serve for the money, we must ensure they are not distracted by the frustrations of inadequate pay. The old adage: “You can’t pay a Marine too much, but you can pay a Marine too little” is all too relevant in this difficult retention environment.

The Marine Corps is by nature a forward-deployed expeditionary force. Marines expect to deploy; they joined 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

When Marines are confident that the Corps’ first instinct is to care for their welfare, they can concentrate on mission accomplishment. When our families share this confidence, they will contribute to mission accomplishment by being supportive of our Marines’ career.

The Commandant has said: “When a Marine asks for something, and it is a sensible request, we should do everything in our power to provide it.” Saying “yes” to our Marines is

particularly important in the day to day garrison environment in which Marines and their families interact with the support structure.

This emphasis on saying “yes” is well placed. In 1993, when we first administered the *Quality of Life in the U.S. Marine Corps* study, we learned that our QoL programs directly impact military outcomes, such as retention, personal and unit readiness, and mission accomplishment. With much appreciated assistance from the Congress, the Administration, and the DoD, the Marine Corps has made a substantial investment to improve our QoL programs, services, and facilities. The good news is, these investments are beginning to pay off. We re-administered the survey in 1998 and the results show improvement in 10 of the 11 life areas measured, with the greatest satisfaction improvement in the areas of Job and Leisure and Recreation. The only dissatisfier was the area of Income and Standard of Living, with 53 percent indicating mild to strong dissatisfaction with their financial situation. Thanks to your and the Administration’s strong support, the recent pay increases and changes to the retirement system are important steps to begin alleviating these concerns.

To say yes to our Marines and families, we have to listen to them. We listen through our Quality of Life Studies and other research instruments regarding the Marine’s program concerns. In addition, we listen to their indirect feedback. When they told us that our support structure was too complicated, differed from base to base, and did not provide needed support, we took immediate action. Over the past year we have established a new QoL organization, Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS), to better support our Marines and their families. We believe MCCS will become a benchmark military QoL delivery organization for the new century. MCCS retains the strong capabilities of former programs such as Family Services, MWR, Child Care, and Voluntary Education in a manner that eliminates bureaucratic

“stovepipes,” but also enables the Marine Corps to advance these programs into the 21st Century.

Many of the former programs were developed in the early 1950’s and have continued to the present with little or no change. We have changed how and where we recruit Marines over time, and now MCCS is adapting community services to remain relevant, meet the new world of their needs – from Baby Boomers to Echo Boomers – and ultimately remain a good investment for the Corps.

We have created four program capabilities: Marine Corps Family Team Building (MCFTB), Personal Services, Semper Fit, and Business Operations. MCFTB openly acknowledges the value of the family unit and seeks ways to improve and strengthen family life. Personal Services activities see to the general welfare and sustainment of Marines and families through either self-directed or intervention services. These services help develop responsible citizenship traits such as financial/money management, responsible and caring parenting, and help grow knowledgeable and confident individuals, be they Marines or family members. The Semper Fit program’s objective is to team fun, fitness, and health. The benefits of health management are well known. Semper Fit pushes health to a new level by providing programs that holistically contribute to health, such as fitness, nutrition, injury rehabilitation, and competitive events. Finally, Business Programs provide high value goods and services that Marines and families need to live aboard our installations and provide needed savings that contribute to their financial well being and lifestyle that are comparable to their civilian counterparts.

A major quality of life issue for our Marines is the health care of our families. We all realize that implementing the very large TRICARE system has involved wrenching changes, and TRICARE has undergone serious growing pains. There remain a number of shortcomings and

systemic problems that must be addressed. Problems with access and claims processing persist. Retirees and the families of our Independent Duty Marines are not served. There are currently a number of corrective initiatives developed by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff through the work of the Defense Medical Oversight Committee (DMOC). We expect this will generate substantive proposals that will lead to a more economically feasible and qualitative health care benefit for all active duty members, their families, and retirees. In the Marine Corps, we have established a TRICARE Liaison Office to work with TRICARE at the DoD level and provide information and assistance to Marines needing help understanding the system. Ninety-eight percent of our spouses are the health care managers for their families. We are working to make their job easier. At the most basic level, high quality health care should equate to doing the right thing, at the right time, in the right way, for our Marines, their families, and our retirees. Modernization and health care cannot be balanced nor properly resourced within the confines of existing budgets, nor should one program be considered at the expense of the other. Equipping our Marines and providing a responsive quality of life for our Marines is a sustainment *battle* that we cannot afford to lose. Quality health care is intrinsic to both. We need your support to ensure that the quality of our health care system keeps pace with the needs of the Marine

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Finally, I would like to address the future of the Marine Corps. We continue our force structure analysis to examine how the Marine Corps of the 21st Century should be organized to carry out Operational Maneuver From The Sea (OMFTS). 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. Regardless of the future size or scope of the Marine Corps, I assure you we will meet our statutory obligation; we will continue to be the most ready when the Nation is least ready.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared comments. I look forward to your comments and any questions.