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ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF
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SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE MARINE CORPS
BEFORE THE
PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
13 FEBRUARY 2002
CONCERNING
MILITARY PERSONNEL

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Chairman Cleland, Senator Hutchinson, and distinguished members of the Senate Armed Services Committee. I am Sergeant Major Alford L. McMichael, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps. Thank you for allowing me to appear before you today and comment on the personnel status of your Marine Corps.

On behalf of all Marines and their families, I want to thank the Committee for its continued support. Your efforts to increase the warfighting capabilities and crisis response of our nation's armed forces and improvement to the quality of life of our men and women in uniform have been central to the strength of your Marine Corps and are deeply appreciated.

I want to share a few thoughts with you about where, with your support, the Marine Corps is headed.

For the United States to provide its citizens with security and prosperity at home it must foster and bolster stability overseas. The Navy-Marine Corps team's sea-based power projection capabilities provide the means for America to cultivate its overseas relationships and are a cornerstone of our military's contribution to prolonged security. With this capability, the Marine Corps provides America with the capacity to forward deploy, and if required, project decisive and sustained, combined-arms combat power from the sea.

The Navy-Marine Corps team's sea-based capabilities have been validated over the past several months. In Afghanistan, the sea-based Navy and Marine Corps team has provided the

preponderance of air sorties and the initial deployment of major ground force presence, reaching over 700 miles inland from international waters. Important contributions were made through Marine integration with Special Operations Forces, Army ground forces, and Air Force assets from Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance capabilities to long range strike and close air support capabilities. The Marine Corps has demonstrated that America's medium weight, expeditionary force is not only responsive and flexible, but a full partner in Joint and Coalition operations.

Inasmuch as the war against terrorism has demonstrated the current capabilities of the Navy-Marine Corps team, transformation promises even greater possibilities for the Marine Corps. Drawing on our legacy of transformation, the Marine Corps is moving forward with innovation and experimentation. Our focus is on the creation of new capabilities, which provide leap-ahead operational advantages in future conflicts through the development of new operational concepts, the introduction of advanced technology, and the realignment of organizational structure.

Marine Corps Personnel

CMC's highest priority has always been his Marines, their families and our civilian workforce. People and leadership are the real foundations of the Marine Corps' capabilities.

The Marine Corps has the youngest mean age of all the services; two of three Marines are under the age of 25. Approximately 16 percent of Marines, 28,000, are teenagers. The Marine Corps is the only service with more active duty personnel than family members. Only 43.4 percent of Marines - approximately 40 percent of enlisted and 70 percent of officers - are married, the lowest of the Armed Services. The average age of a married enlisted Marine is 28.7 and 40 percent of Marine spouses are under the age of 25, once more the youngest in the Armed Services. Almost 46 percent of Marine Corps children are under five years of age; only 20 percent are over 13 years of age.

It is important to note that the Marine Corps operates as a Total Force, including elements of both active and reserve components. We continue to strengthen the exceptional bonds within our Total Force by further integrating the Marine Corps Reserve into ongoing operations and training. Detachments of both Marine Expeditionary Force Augmentation Command Elements, two infantry battalions, two heavy helicopter squadrons, two aerial refueler transport detachments, as well as other units have been mobilized. With Reserve personnel reporting daily on active duty orders, by the end of February we are projecting the number of Marine Reservists activated in support of the Global War on Terror at nearly 5000. Our Marine Reserves have contributed unprecedented support and inclusion into our daily

operations and exercise schedules, continuing to set the standard for interoperability within the Department of Defense. Individuals and Units have responded quickly when called to duty, providing seamless support from operational tempo relief at Guantanamo Bay to augmentation at Camp Pendleton and Lejeune.

As I speak to you today, there are 172,600 Marines authorized for active duty. Of that total, over 107,000 are in the operating forces and over 37,000 are forward deployed, forward based, forward stationed, or deployed for training around the world. These Marines have approximately 161,900 dependents -- 68,800 spouses, 92,800 children, and 300 other family members.

The youth of our Corps and our unique force structure requires us to annually recruit 41,000 men and women into our enlisted ranks. To fill this tremendous demand, our recruiters have met our accession goals in both quantity and quality for over six and one half years of dedicated effort. Our training establishment is similarly charged with the enormous task of training the many skills we need to accomplish our missions. Recruiting and training remain among our highest priorities; we must continue to provide the necessary resources to attract America's finest youth into our Corps and to train them with the most cutting edge technologies available.

Retention is as important as recruiting. The Marine Corps continues to excel in retaining our best and brightest. Since

1998, we have experienced a 23% decline in Non-Expiration of Active Service (NEAS) attrition. In FY01, this means that 981 less Marines attrited for NEAS reasons than in FY00. This equates to more than a battalion of Marines that we no longer need to train and recruit in FY02. In the area of career retention, we continue to be challenged to retain certain high tech MOSs (Military Occupational Specialties) and MOSs that are in high demand in the civilian sector. For the past six years, we have been successful in meeting the goals contained in our First Term Alignment Plan (FTAP). In FY02, we have initiated the Subsequent Term Alignment Plan (STAP) designed to further refine career retention process. The STAP will take 40% of our Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB) allocation and target the short and critical MOSs between 6 and 14 years of service. The SRB program has been an additional, powerful tool to meet our retention goals and needs to continue to receive your full support. SRB and the targeted pay raise initiative found in last year's budget will go a long way in meeting our retention goals and helping to take care of our Marines and their families. Finally, we have created an Enlisted Retention Task Force under the Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. This task force has been chartered to establish a process to systematically reinforce and synchronize actions among key organizations in the retention of enlisted Marines.

Taking care of Marines and families is instinctive to our Marine Corps way of life. We have established five major Quality of Life priorities that are vital to the sustainment of our single Marines and Marine families including pay and compensation, health care, bachelor and family housing, infrastructure/workplace environment, and community services.

Pay must be competitive with the private sector and offer the flexibility for shaping and addressing manpower management challenges. Special pay and concerned leadership are key elements in retaining Marines with critical skills. Coupled with the current BAH buy down strategy this will eliminate the extra out-of-pocket expenses that our service members now experience.

The availability of quality, accessible health care is a key QOL issue for Marines and their families, and is therefore critical to recruitment and retention. The Marine Corps is committed to support initiatives that improve military health care so Marines can be confident that their families will receive prompt, hassle-free care, whether for routine or emergency services. The goal is for the administration of health care to be transparent to the patient, and not a source of stress or hardship.

Providing adequate bachelor and family housing has a significant impact on the QOL of our Marines, as does the quality of the workspace. Safe, comfortable, well-maintained housing and working conditions provides an atmosphere that helps us to recruit, develop, and retain the quality Marines that we need to lead the future Marine Corps. When our Marines are performing their mission essential tasks in World War II vintage buildings with faulty wiring -- the mission suffers, as does overall QOL.

Bases and stations are the platforms where the Marine Corps develops, trains, and maintains the force needed to win the Nation's battles. Bases and stations also support the QOL of Marines and families through the delivery of essential community services that are like those provided in hometowns throughout the Nation. To retain the best Marines, the Marine Corps must provide them a quality environment in which to work and live. The Marine Corps is committed to a long-range infrastructure management plan that assures quality base and station infrastructure for the future.

Inasmuch as Congress has provided considerable support to our Marines and their families, the Marine Corps is also striving to enhance their QOL. We have established the Marine Corps Community Services aboard our installations to better provide for both our Marine families as well as our single Marines, who constitute nearly sixty percent of our total active force. The Single Marine Program (SMP) provides needed recreational and stress outlets that are both wholesome and support development of social skills. Many of our base SMPs are involved in community support efforts through Habitat for Humanity, Special Olympics, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, food banks and other volunteer organizations that teach the rewards that come from service to others. This is a concrete way that the program works to return quality citizens to our Nation. Just as important, the SMP program stresses the responsibility of young single Marines to identify solutions to their QOL issues and resolve them through working with the chain of command.

Military life can be demanding, difficult, and hard on families. Our Marine Corps Family Building Team (MCFTB) Programs help equip our families with the knowledge and skills to meet the challenges of the military lifestyle. MCFTB offers

a wide variety of programs including introductory training for new spouses, a communication network managed by key volunteers that allows commanders to keep families informed during deployments and day-to-day operations, and development opportunities for our volunteers.

Finally, the Marine Corps is sponsoring a comprehensive assessment of Marine Corps QOL in 2002. The assessment will document how Marines and family members feel about their lives as a whole, as well as their subjective evaluation of specific aspects of their lives. From the information they provide through completion of a survey, conclusions may be drawn about some of the situational characteristics that enhance life quality and facilitate well being in a military environment. The survey was previously administered in 1993 and 1998. With the third administration planned for early 2002, we will also be able to determine how Marines' perceptions of and satisfaction with QOL have changed over the last 10 years, particularly in light of increased DoD and USMC QOL funding. In the 2002 QOL assessment, spouses of active duty Marines will be surveyed for the first time. The intent of this initiative is to establish a baseline measure of family member QOL and to compare relevant findings to those of active duty Marines.

We are also striving to invest in our Marines by improving how we train and educate them. We believe in the adage, "you fight the way you train." All training conducted within the Marine Corps is part of a training and education continuum that begins the first day of recruit training and continues until the Marine's last day in the Corps.

Recruit training infuses our Marines with the core values of honor, courage, and commitment, as well as the skills to make them Basic Marines. The "Crucible" is the defining exercise when our recruits earn the title of "Marine." All Marines attend the School of Infantry where we imbue them with the ethos

of, "Every Marine is a Rifleman." MOS schooling rounds out this initial training phase.

As Marines progress in rank, leadership development becomes more prevalent in the education process. In 1999, the Marine Corps University completed a thorough evaluation of enlisted professional military education (PME). They developed a cradle to grave, interconnected, building block approach to enlisted PME concentrating on the areas of warfighting and leadership. This program has been integrated between our Distance Education Program (DEP) and our resident courses.

To provide a further incentive to pursue PME, the Marine Corps has launched a pilot program with the Lifelong Learning Center at MCB Quantico that encourages all Marines who attend the Staff Academies, or complete a DEP, to obtain an Associate degree from a civilian college or university. The Service Member's Opportunity Colleges (SOC) is a consortium of more than 1,400 colleges and universities who have agreed to accept college credit based on a Marine's military experience.

The Commandant has recently directed the establishment of a Marine Corps Martial Arts Program. The program is designed to improve the warfighting capabilities of individual Marines and units, enhance Marines' self-confidence and esprit de corps, and further instill the warrior ethos. This training will continue throughout the career of the Marine. What is unique is that the Marine must display an equal mastery of the mental and character disciplines at each level to advance.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the Committee for its continued strong support of your Marines and improving their quality of life has provided and will continue to provide dividends in the areas of readiness and retention. There is no question that our active duty, reserve and civilian Marines remain our most precious warfighting effort. Your Marine Corps is ready and it's an exciting time to be a Marine!

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.