

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY
THE SENATE ARMED
SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF
LIEUTENANT GENERAL H. P. OSMAN
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS
BEFORE THE
PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
CONCERNING
RECRUITING, RETENTION AND MILITARY PERSONNEL POLICY,
BENEFITS AND COMPENSATION OVERVIEW
ON
APRIL 5, 2005

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Chairman Graham, Senator Nelson, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, it is my privilege to appear before you today to provide an overview of your Marine Corps from a personnel perspective. The continued commitment of the Congress to increase the warfighting and crisis response capabilities of our Nation's armed forces, and to improve the quality of life of Marines, is central to the strength that your Marine Corps enjoys today. Marines remain committed to war fighting excellence, and the support of the Congress and the American people is indispensable to our success in the Global War on Terror. Supporting the Global War on Terror and sustaining our readiness, while ensuring our forces are prepared to respond to future challenges, is the core of our readiness strategy. Thank you for your efforts to ensure that Marines and their families are poised to continue to respond to the nation's call in the manner Americans expect of their Corps.

Recent Operations and Current Status of Forces

The emphasis on readiness enables your Marines to be fully engaged across the spectrum of military capabilities in prosecuting the Global War on Terror. Our core competencies coupled with the integration of our own organic capabilities produces an agile force capable of fighting the prolonged fight against an adaptive enemy. Our scalable combined arms teams integrate ground and aviation forces with adaptive logistics to create speed, flexibility, and agility in response to emerging crises. We must sustain our readiness and maintain the ability to project our forces close to home, as in last spring in Haiti, and in remote austere environments half way around the world, as we do today in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Marine Corps' role as the Nation's premier expeditionary force-in-readiness, combined with our forward deployed posture, enable us to fulfill a prominent role in joint operations. The readiness of our forces and the

quality of our training enabled our Marines to perform in the chaotic, unstable, and unpredictable environments exploited by our adversaries.

Last year, we redeployed 25,000 Marines to the Al Anbar province in Iraq. Their focus on readiness, the quality of their training, and their commitment to warfighting excellence enabled them to lead the Multi-National Force West, which was responsible for providing stability and security throughout the Province. Last spring, we responded to an unplanned CentCom requirement in Afghanistan where we provided a reinforced infantry battalion, and Aviation Combat Element, a regimental headquarters, and a Marine Expeditionary Unit. The success of this force greatly assisted in setting the conditions for the Afghan national elections later in the year and the in establishment of a secure and stable government. We continue to provide both ground and aviation forces to provide stability for this new democracy.

Over the last year, we also provided concurrent support several other regions including the operations in Horn of Africa, the Pacific, peace operations in Haiti, and Tsunami relief in South Asia.

Today we are rotating our forces in Iraq. We expect to reduce our commitment in Iraq to about 23,000 Marines and Sailors, with Marine Corps reserve forces providing about 3,000 of these personnel. Your support ensures their near-term readiness remains strong and our training and equipment is matched to the evolving threat. The entire Marine Corps is supporting the Global War on Terror, and the demand on our force is high. In the past two years, we have gone from a deployment rotation of one-to-three (6 months out / 18 months back) to our current one-to-one ratio (7 months out / 7 months back) for our infantry battalions, aviation squadrons, and other high demand capabilities. Our operating forces are either deployed or training to deploy. Despite this high operational tempo, the Marine Corps continues to meet its aggregate recruiting

and retention goals in quantity and quality. The Fiscal Year 2005 National Defense Authorization Act providing a 3,000 Marine increase to our end-strength will assist in reducing demands on Marines as we increase manning of our infantry battalions.

Personnel Readiness

The Marine Corps continues to answer the call because of our individual Marines and the support they receive from their families, the Nation, and Congress. The individual Marine is the most effective weapon system in our arsenal. Our ranks are comprised of intelligent men and women representing a cross section of our society. Our Marines must think critically and stay one step ahead of the enemy despite an uncertain operating environment; their lives and the lives of their fellow Marines depend upon it. Morale and commitment remain high. Marines join the Corps to “fight and win battles” and we are giving them the opportunity to do that.

Force Structure Review. Last year, the Marine Corps completed a review of our active and reserve force structure. We are implementing those recommended force structure initiatives with the majority achieving initial operational capability in Fiscal Year 2006 and full operational capability by Fiscal Year 2008. These initiatives are end strength and structure neutral, but will require additional equipment, facilities, and operations and maintenance resources to implement.

Structure changes include the establishment of two additional infantry battalions, three light armored reconnaissance companies, three reconnaissance companies, two force reconnaissance platoons, and an additional Air-Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO) for the active component. Our existing explosive ordnance disposal, intelligence, aviation support, civil affairs, command and control, and psychological operations assets will receive additional augmentation.

The reserve component's structure initiatives will further increase the Marine Corps' capability to respond to the Global War on Terror by establishing an intelligence support battalion, a security/anti-terrorism battalion, and two additional light armored reconnaissance companies. Civil affairs and command and control units will receive additional augmentation, and some reserve units structure will be converted into Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) Detachments – allowing more timely access to these Marine reservists in support of contingency operations. These increased capabilities were “brought” at the expense of a like number of “lesser” required capabilities where we believed risk could be taken.

End Strength. The Marine Corps appreciates the congressional end strength increase to 178,000. A top priority will be to increase the manning in our infantry units. We will also create a dedicated military training unit to assist in the training of the armed forces of other nations. We will also add to our recruiting force, our trainers, and other support for the operating forces in order to reduce the tempo of operations on Marines and their families. The added end strength will complement the force structure review initiatives.

Military to Civilian Conversions. The Marine Corps continues to pursue sensible military to civilian conversions to increase the number of Marines in the operating force. We are on course to achieve 2,397 conversions in Fiscal Years 2005 and 2006.

Funding. The Fiscal Year 2006 budget provides for a total force of 175,000 active duty Marines, 39,600 reserve Marines, and 13,200 appropriated fund civilian Marines. Approximately 60 percent of our Military Personnel funding is targeted toward military pay and retired pay accrual. Essentially all of the remaining funds are committed to regulated and directed items such as Basic Allowance for Housing, Defense Health Care, Basic Allowance for Subsistence, Permanent Change of Station relocations, and Special and Incentive pays. Only one

percent of our Military Personnel budget is available to pay for discretionary items such as our Selective Reenlistment Bonus, Marine Corps College Fund recruitment program, and Aviation Continuation Pay. Of the few discretionary pays that we utilize, the Selective Reenlistment Bonus is crucial. We take pride in our prudent stewardship of these critical resources. For Fiscal Year 2006, we are seeking an increase in funding to \$53.6 million, from \$51.8 million in Fiscal Year 2005. This remains just one-half of one percent of our Military Personnel budget, and it is critical to effectively target our retention efforts. In Fiscal Year 2005, the Marine Corps has derived great results from our SRB efforts in the infantry MOSs. This proven application of SRB monies is a sound investment. The Marine Corps prudent utilization of the SRB reduces recruiting costs and retains experienced Marines in the force. Congresses continued support of our SRB program is critical to the continued health of your Marine Corps. Military Personnel funding, as a whole, represents 61 percent of the U. S. Marine Corps' Total Obligation Authority; 39 percent remains for all infrastructure, investment, and operations and maintenance requirements.

Compensation. The Marine Corps appreciates the efforts by this committee to raise the standard of living for our Marines. Being a Marine is challenging and rewarding. America's youth continue to join the Marine Corps, and remain, in a large part because of our institutional culture and core values. However, it is important that the environment – the other factors in the accession and retention decision – remain supportive, to include compensation. Compensation is a double-edged sword in that it is a principle factor for Marines both when they decide to reenlist and when they decide not to reenlist. Private sector competition will always seek to capitalize on the military training and education provided to our Marines – Marines are a highly desirable labor resource for private sector organizations. The support of the Congress to continue

increases in basic pay, and ensuring a sound comprehensive compensation and entitlements structure greatly assists efforts to recruit and retain the quality Americans you expect in your Corps. We look forward to the comprehensive reviews of both the Defense Advisory Committee on Military Compensation as well as the Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation.

Recruiting

Active Component. In Fiscal Year 2004, the Marine Corps achieved 103.6 percent of enlisted contracting and 100.1 percent of enlisted shipping objectives. Nearly 98 percent of those shipped to recruit training were Tier 1 high school diploma graduates, well above the Department of Defense and Marine Corps standards of 90 percent and 95 percent, respectively. In addition, 71.6 percent were in the I-III A upper mental testing categories; again well above the Department of Defense and Marine Corps standards of 60 percent and 63 percent, respectively. Thus far in Fiscal Year 2005, we have assessed (shipped) 14,170 Marines which represents 100 percent of our accession mission to date. We fully anticipate meeting our annual accession mission. We did fall 84 short in Jan and 192 short in Feb, 277 short of our self-imposed contract mission, but overall we are at 99.2% percent of contract mission for the year. As concerns officers, we accessed 1,447 in Fiscal Year 2004, 100 percent of mission, and we are on course to make our officer accession mission in Fiscal Year 2005.

Reserve Component. Recruiting for our reserves, the Marine Corps similarly achieved its Fiscal Year 2004 enlisted recruiting goals with the accession of 6,165 non-prior service Marines and 2,941 prior service Marines. Through February of Fiscal Year 2005 we have accessed 2,190 non-prior service and 1,221 prior service, which reflects 36 percent and 54 percent of our year to date mission, respectively. Again, we project to meet our recruiting goals this year. For our reserve component, officer recruiting and retention for our Selected Marine

Corps Reserve units is traditionally our challenge, and remains the same this year. This challenge exists primarily due to the low attrition rate for company grade officers from the active force. The Marine Corps recruits reserve officers exclusively from the ranks of those who have first served a tour as an active duty Marine officer. We are exploring methods to increase the reserve participation of company grade officers in the Selected Marine Corps Reserve through increased command focus on reserve participation upon leaving active duty, and reserve officer programs for qualified enlisted Marines. The legislation to authorize the payment of the affiliation bonus will help in this effort.

Accomplishing the Mission. The Marine Corps' recruiting environment is dynamic and challenging, particularly with regards to market propensity. Part of the challenge is due to an increased active duty accession mission to meet the additional authorized end-strength in the Marine Corps. Our success in the future will hinge on our ability to overcome our target market's low propensity to enlist and the increased cost of advertising, while maintaining innovation in our marketing campaign. Marketing by its very nature requires constant change to remain relevant. While our brand message of "Tough, Smart, Elite Warrior" has not changed, the Corps continues to explore the most efficient manner to communicate and appeal to the most qualified young men and women of the millennial generation. Currently, we are looking to expand methods to influence the parents of potential applicants. Parents are the primary influencers of the high school student population and it is important that we educate them on the benefits of serving in the Marine Corps.

Ensuring young men and women and their parents hear and understand the recruiting message requires continual reinforcement through marketing and advertising programs. To do this we continue to emphasize paid media, generating leads for recruiters, and providing the

recruiters with effective sales support materials. Quality advertising aimed at our target market provides the foundation for establishing awareness about Marine Corps opportunities among young men and women.

Paid advertising continues to be the most effective means to communicate our message and, as a result, remains the focus of our marketing efforts. As advertising costs continue to increase it is imperative that our advertising budgets remain competitive in order to ensure that our recruiting message reaches the right audience. Marine Corps recruiting successes over the past years are a direct reflection of a quality recruiting force and an effective and efficient marketing and advertising program.

Recruiter Access. The Marine Corps continues to benefit from the legislation enabling recruiter access to high school student directory information, the same as afforded other prospective employers. America's youth can learn about career opportunities in both the public and private sectors now that our recruiters are afforded equal access. We look forward to your continued support as we strive to meet the increasing challenges of a dynamic recruiting environment.

Retention

A successful recruiting effort is but one part of placing a properly trained Marine in the right place at the right time. The dynamics of our manpower system must match skills and grades to our Commanders' needs throughout the operating forces. The Marine Corps endeavors to attain and maintain stable, predictable retention patterns. However, as is the case with recruiting, civilian opportunities abound for Marines as employers actively solicit our young Marine leaders for private sector employment. Leadership opportunities, our core values, and other similar intangibles are a large part of the reason we retain dedicated men and women to be

active duty Marines after their initial commitment. Of course retention success is also a consequence of the investments made in tangible forms of compensation and in supporting our operating forces – giving our Marines what they need to do their jobs in the field, as well as the funds required to educate and train these phenomenal men and women.

Enlisted Retention. We are a young force. Achieving a continued flow of quality new accessions is of foundational importance to well-balanced readiness. Within our 154,600 Marine active duty enlisted force, over 27,000 are still teenagers and 104,000 are on their first enlistment. In Fiscal Year 2004, we reenlisted 6,019 First Term Marines with a 97.7 percent MOS match. In Fiscal Year 2005, our career force requirement requires that we reenlist approximately 25 percent of our first-term Marine population. To better manage the career force, we introduced the Subsequent Term Alignment Plan in Fiscal Year 2002 to track reenlistments in our active career force. In Fiscal Year 2004, we again met our career reenlistment goals and achieved a 96.6 percent skill match. For our reserve force, we satisfied our requirements as we retained 73.8 percent in Fiscal Year 2004 slightly above our historical norm of 70.7 percent.

For Fiscal Year 2005, we are off to a strong start. The Selective Reenlistment Bonus program greatly complements our reenlistment efforts and clearly improves retention within our critical skill shortages. In Fiscal Year 2005, the Corps is continuing to pay lump sum bonuses, thus increasing the net present value of the incentive and positively influencing highly qualified, yet previously undecided, personnel. It is a powerful influence for the undecided to witness another Marine's reenlistment and receipt of his or her Selective Reenlistment Bonus in the total amount. And, with the added benefit of the Thrift Savings Program, our Marines can now confidently invest these funds toward their future financial security. The Marine Corps takes

great pride in prudent stewardship of the resources allocated to the critical Selective Reenlistment Bonus program.

A positive trend continues concerning our first term non-expiration of active service attrition – those Marines who depart before their enlistment is completed. As with Fiscal Years 2003 and 2004, we continue to see these numbers decrease. The implementation of the Crucible and the Unit Cohesion programs continues to contribute to improved retention among our young Marines who assimilate the cultural values of the Corps earlier in their career.

Officer Retention. Overall, we continue to achieve our goals for officer retention. We are retaining experienced and high quality officers. Our aggregate officer retention rate was 91.0 percent for Fiscal Year 2004, which is our historical average. Current officer retention forecasts indicate healthy continuation rates for the officer force as a whole. Reserve officer retention in Fiscal Year 2004 was 75 percent, slightly below the historical average of 77 percent. For the current year, reserve officer retention is back above the historical norms. It is important to note that high retention in the active component reduces the number of officers transitioning (thus accessions) into the Selected Marine Corps Reserve.

Marine Corps Reserve

Our reserve component continues to do an exceptional job augmenting and reinforcing our active component in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Ready, rapidly responsive Marine Reserve forces provide the depth, flexibility, and sustainment vital to the success of our Marine Air Ground Task Forces. To date, over 36,000 Reserve Marines have served on active duty since 9/11. The Marine Corps Reserve continues to recruit and retain the men and women willing to effectively manage their commitment to help in winning the Global War on Terror

while maintaining their commitments to their families, their communities and their civilian careers.

Thanks to strong Congressional support, the Marine Corps has trained and equipped its Reserve to be capable of rapid activation and deployment. This capability allows Reserve combat deployments to mirror those of the active component in duration

More than 13,000 reserve Marines are currently on active duty with over 11,500 in cohesive reserve ground, aviation and combat support units and nearly 1,600 serving as individual augments in both Marine and Joint commands. Sixty-six percent of all mobilized Reservists deploy to the CENTCOM area of operations. To support ongoing mission requirements for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, the Marine Corps will activate, reactivate or extend 67 Combat, Combat Support and Combat Service Support units or detachments. The progression of the current mobilization has reinforced the point that our Reserve force is a limited resource that must be carefully managed to ensure optimum employment over a protracted conflict.

As mentioned, recruiting and retention remain a significant interest as the Marine Corps Reserve continues its support for the GWOT. Incentives are an integral tool that aides the proper manning of our Reserve force. The funding increases and flexibility inherent in the Reserve incentives you provided in the Fiscal Year 2005 National Defense Authorization Act are an invaluable asset to assist in our continued recruitment and retention mission. The approved legislation allowing payment of an affiliation bonus for officers to serve in the Selected Marine Corps Reserve will greatly assist in increasing officer participation and meeting our current junior officer requirements

Healthcare remains an essential part of mobilization readiness for our reserve component. The assistance provided by Congress in this area since 9/11 has been invaluable to reserve Marines and their families who are making significant adjustments in lifestyle to effect successful mobilizations. Increased flexibility and portability of healthcare for these families assists in alleviating one of the most burdensome challenges facing families of deploying reserve Marines.

In an effort to ensure a well-balanced total force and address any potential challenges that may arise, we are constantly monitoring current processes and policies, as well as implementing adjustments to the structure and support of our reserve forces. The Marine Corps made a conscious investment through our Inspector-Instructor Program, which provides a strong cadre of active Marines to support our Selected Marine Corps Reserve units. This ensures Selected Marine Corps units are trained and properly equipped prior to activation, allowing the Marine Corps to effectively train, mobilize, and deploy its reserve forces.

In order to meet the operational needs of the Global War on Terror, the Marine Corps is in the process of making adjustments to the force structure of both the reserve and active component. Two efforts currently underway to rebalance the force for current and future missions are the Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) study and the previously discussed force structure review. Implementation of the IMA study results will increase the number of high demand/low density specialties available for deployment.

Present policy is to only activate Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) members who have volunteered for duty. The population of activated IRR volunteers to date is 323 officers and 634 enlisted. The two primary means of recruiting IRR volunteers for Individual Augmentee billets

is through the use of Reserve Duty On-Line and the Mobilization Command Call Center. Currently there are 1,629 Individual Augment billets being filled by Individual Mobilization Augmentees, Individual Ready Reserves, and retired recall or retired retained Marines. These Marines have been critical to filling these requirements.

Civilian Marines

Civilian Marines are integral to the Marine Corps Total Force concept. We have approximately 24,000 Civilian Marines, of which approximately 13,000 are appropriated fund employees, and about 11,000 are non-appropriated fund employees. Our appropriated fund Civilian Marines, comprise just two percent of the total Department of Defense civilian workforce, the leanest ratio of civilians to military in the Department. Our non-appropriated fund personnel are primarily resourced by revenue-generating activities and services such as exchanges, clubs, golf courses, bowling centers, and gas stations. Our Civilian Marines fill key billets aboard Marine Corps bases and stations, thus freeing active duty Marines to perform their war fighting requirements in the operating forces.

Marine Corps Civilian Workforce Campaign Plan. Marines, more than ever before, recognize the importance of our civilian teammates and the invaluable service they provide to our Corps as an integral component of the Total Force. To that end we continue to mature and execute our Civilian Workforce Campaign Plan, a strategic road map to achieve a civilian workforce capable of meeting the challenges of the future. We are committed to building leadership skills at all levels, providing interesting and challenging training and career opportunities, and improving the quality of work life for all appropriated and non-appropriated Civilian Marines. As part of our effort to meet our goal of accessing and retaining a select group of civilians imbued with our Core Values, we have developed a program to provide our Civilian

Marines an opportunity to learn about the Marine Corps ethos, history, and Core Values – to properly acculturate them to this special institution. All this supports our value proposition, why a civilian chooses to pursue a job with the Marine Corps: to “Support Our Marines. Be Part of the Team.”

National Security Personnel System. The Marine Corps is actively participating with the Department of Defense in the development and implementation of this new personnel system. Following an intensive training program for supervisors, managers, human resources specialists, employees, commanders and senior management, we will join with the Department in the first phase of implementation, tentatively scheduled for July of 2005. In the Marine Corps, we will lead from the top and have our Headquarters Marine Corps civilian personnel included in the first phase of implementation, known as ‘Spiral One.’

Information Technology

We remain committed to transforming our manpower processes by leveraging the unique capabilities resident in the Marine Corps Total Force System (MCTFS), our fully integrated personnel, pay, and manpower system that serves active, reserve and retired members. The integrated nature of MCTFS allowed us to develop our Total Force Administration System (TFAS); a web based and virtually paperless administration system that provides Marines and commanders 24-hour access to administrative processes via Marine On Line. Our TFAS allows administrative personnel to refocus their efforts from routine tasks to more complex analytical duties, and ultimately will enable greater efficiencies. Additionally, MCTFS facilitates our single source of manpower data, directly feeding our Operational Data Store Enterprise and Total Force Data Warehouse. This distinctive capability provides a reliable source of data to accurately forecast manpower trends, and fuels our Manpower Performance Indicators, which

provide near real time graphical representation of the Corps manpower status such as our deployment tempo. Properly managing our manpower requirements and processes requires continued investment in modern technologies and we are committed to these prudent investments.

Taking Care of Marines and Their Families

Your Marines have an inherent ability to perform well in the most difficult environments, and the current state of combat is no exception. Though we are an expeditionary force, the demands we are now experiencing lends new significance to the term “expeditionary.” Still, our Marines and their families’ bravery, courage, and dedication to mission are unyielding.

QOL Investment. The Marine Corps is actively attuned to quality of life. It is important to note the potential long-term mission of the Global War on Terrorism and the challenge to support our community services infrastructure – both human and material, such as facilities and equipment. The spirit of service on our human side will never diminish, but the current rotation cycle and heightened tempo impacts the resources and time to reconstitute or recapitalize our infrastructure. As previously stated, our long-standing expeditionary nature and manner of operation have enabled our success to date. As this tempo continues, however, our goal will be to ensure no required support is diminished. To the degree possible, we will adapt and reorient existing support capabilities, but we will also need to determine if our support infrastructure requires additional resources for our long-term mission. This assessment will be done in conjunction with our installation commanders.

Funding. In terms of resourcing for quality of life community services programs, I am pleased to note that the Marine Corps achieved the DoD MWR funding standard of 85 percent for Category A Programs and 65 percent for Category B programs this past year. Our actual

Fiscal Year 2004 percentages were 88 percent and 65 percent, respectively. To achieve this goal, MWR program annual direct Operations and Maintenance Marine Corps and Operations and Maintenance Reserve (O&MMC/R) support budget-based funding has been steadily increased by a total of \$15 million from Fiscal Year 2002 to Fiscal Year 2005. Our Fiscal Year 2005 Marine and Family Services direct O&MMC/R support is at \$47.5 million, including Child Development, counseling, transition assistance, relocation assistance, etc.; and Voluntary Education is at \$46.7 million, including tuition assistance.

Housing. It is important to mention that proper housing goes hand-in-hand with our support programs to keep morale high and enhance quality of life. We are providing for our young single Marines by focusing on housing our junior enlisted bachelor personnel in pay grades of E1 through E5 in our barracks, with a goal of providing a room standard that allows two junior enlisted Marines (E1-E3) to share a room with a private bath. By assigning two junior Marines to a room, we believe we are providing the correct balance between their need for privacy and the Marine Corps' goals to provide companionship, camaraderie, and unit cohesion. Noncommissioned officers in the pay grades of E4 and E5 are provided a private room and bath. We have over 170,000 Marine Family Members and we are mindful that the military lifestyle can be unsettling in some respects as it calls for frequent relocations and deployments. To show our families that we appreciate their fortitude in enduring these disruptions, we remain committed to improving family housing. We have, and will continue to, increase our quality-housing inventory through public private ventures and military construction where necessary. Moreover, we are on track to have contracts in place to eliminate inadequate family housing by the end of Fiscal Year 2007.

Deployment Support. The Global War on Terrorism mission poses dangers, risks, and periods of separation that test the fortitude and stamina of our Marines and their families. In keeping with our ethos that Marines are Marines for life, our commitment to a continuum of care has never been stronger or more effective. Our installation and operational commanders are working diligently to ensure that both the deploying Marine and the Marines and families who stay behind are provided support services to enhance their quality of life. In this capacity, installation commanders are continuously evaluating on base and deployed support. They utilize all available resources, agencies, and methods of service to broadly plan and deliver seamless support. Our installation commanders reach out to local and national community service partners to expand program access and availability, offer on-line and telephonic assistance programs such as Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS)/ Military One Source, and flex programs as necessary to decrease low utilization services and increase additional demand programs. Finally, as they are closest to the need, they monitor and pulse the community as needed.

Five years ago we renovated and revitalized our community services infrastructure and philosophical approach to support services. We removed program stovepipes that precluded maximum capabilities and focused the “united team” to pull together for the good of the Marines and their families. This renovated organization; Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) is now five years old has matured and not only have they pulled together, they know the cadence and direction required. I can personally attest to the wisdom of MCCS, as I was both an installation commander responsible for pushing support and an operational commander pulling support. Beginning with Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and continuing through Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, MCCS listened, learned, and continues to respond to the needs of Marines

and their families. I would like to highlight some specific examples of MCCA and other military personnel support.

Throughout all phases of the deployment cycle: during pre-deployment, in-theater, and in post-deployment, the needs of Marines and their families are addressed. Additionally, home-station support, which I will discuss below, is a central element of this multi-phased dynamic that sustains all members of the Marine Corps family.

While in a pre-deployment phase, Marines and their families are briefed on a variety of issues ranging from deployment coping skills, including the potential of traumatic combat experiences and associated stress, to financial matters, where they take care of wills, powers of attorney, and family care plans. At this stage, Marine spouses receive important assistance through Marine Corps Family Team Building Programs such as the Key Volunteer Network (KVN) and the Lifestyle, Insights, Networking, Knowledge, and Skills (L.I.N.K.S.) programs. The KVN is the primary communication link between the commanding officer and unit families. This spouse-to-spouse connection is used by commanders to pass important, factual, and timely information on the status and welfare of the operational unit. L.I.N.K.S. helps our Marine spouses acclimate to our military lifestyle and learn how to survive the challenges associated with frequent deployments and separations. When spouses participate in L.I.N.K.S. prior to deployments, this training is recognized as a readiness multiplier. This means those spouses who took advantage of L.I.N.K.S. are more prepared for the experience of separation and rigors of deployment. Both KVN and L.I.N.K.S training programs are now available online and have CD-ROM versions for families away from a base or station, or if they are too busy to attend classes.

To maintain our high level of morale and commitment and help ease mission-related anxieties during deployment, MCCA and other agencies provide support to deployed Marines in

many different forms, and we adjust these support mechanisms as the intensity of the mission changes. We have Tactical Field Exchanges, phone service, free Internet service and expedited mail service. At the camps in Iraq there is a variety of morale, welfare and recreation equipment.

As I have discussed, the Marine Corps Exchange supports deployed Marines but it is also an important center of activity aboard our installations. As part of the non-pay benefits system, we rely upon the exchange to provide value through the sale of goods and services, but to also contribute dividends to support morale, welfare and recreation programs that help to make installations home for our Marines and their families.

It is well recognized that mail, voice or other communication, is the most significant morale enhancer for anyone separated from loved ones. Beyond quality phone and mail service to keep our deployed Marines in touch with their loved ones back at home, we have a new communication alternative that we call "MotoMail," for motivational mail. MotoMail allows family and friends to rapidly communicate with deployed Marines who do not have Internet access readily available. To connect, friends and family go to an established website and send an email to the deployed Marine, where it is downloaded and automatically printed, folded and sealed by our Postal Marines for complete privacy. The messages are usually delivered within 24 hours or less. As of February 22, more than 59,000 MotoMail letters have been delivered.

Reducing Stress. To deal with individual and readiness concerns in theater, the Marine Corps has a range of proactive counseling services. We are ever watchful for symptoms and risks of untreated combat stress and its signs, and advise Marines of the resources available for treatment. We also provide in-theater counseling through the Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) program, which embeds mental health professionals within the Marine Division, where they offer counseling in close a proximity to the combat operations as possible.

OSCAR keeps Marines with low-level problems at their assigned duties and allows those with more severe conditions to immediately receive appropriate treatment. Reports indicate that units implementing the OSCAR program have a marked decrease in MEDEVACs for mental health reasons. Before Marines depart theater, we have a decompression period when military chaplains provide our Warrior Transition Brief. The brief consists of sessions designed to help Marines realize that they have been in combat, that they are preparing to rejoin their families at home, and where they want to go with relationships in their personal lives.

In the post-deployment phase, when Marines are back at their home station, there is a decompression period before they are permitted to go on leave. Supportive services are available on installations through Chaplains, Medical Treatment facilities, and MCCS for combat stress related issues, relationship enrichment, drug or alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and financial management. Additionally, Marine families are supported by MCCS counseling and advocacy programs and a Spouse Return and Reunion Briefing, which is provided on a voluntary basis to interested spouses.

As I referenced earlier in this testimony, deployment support includes important home-station support. We have a wide array of services to strengthen family readiness. The Marine and Family Services Program provides counseling as needed, child development programs and respite child care services, support for Marines with exceptional family members, personal financial management guidance, and information hotlines to provide accurate information, useful resources, and helpful referrals pertaining to our deployments. We also provide recreational and stress alleviating opportunities to help them through the separation and provide a sense of normalcy as they carry on until their Marine returns.

Child Care. With regard to child development, we fully realize that when a parent deploys, the remaining parent can experience stress and burnout. Parenting issues can add to the stress placed on families during these times. We thank you for the supplemental funds you provided last year. We are using them to provide respite care, extended childcare hours, childcare during deployment briefs, and deployment training materials geared for children. We also sponsored the Enhanced Extended Child Care Initiative, which reduces stress on Marine Corps families by providing care during non-traditional hours (i.e., evenings, weekends and holidays). It is also designed to lower costs for military families during periods of training, deployments, family emergencies or illness. To help our families that reside in remote and isolated areas, we are developing a partnership with the National Association of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies to provide comprehensive childcare consumer education and referrals.

Beyond addressing parental burnout, we are also mindful that wartime deployments take their toll on the very youngest members of our Marine families. We work to help these youngsters cope with what can be very confusing and frightening situations. For example, we have a new deployment video, “Nothing to Worry About,” for Marine Corps families, especially children ages four to ten. It will help families to understand the impact of deployment on children and help children better understand what their parents may be doing and experiencing while deployed. It also discusses means for communication between the children and the deployed parent. In addition, Marine and Family Services at Camp Pendleton has partnered with the National Child Traumatic Stress Network and the Naval Hospital Department of Psychiatry at San Diego to develop appropriate protocols to assess the impact of a parent’s combat-related traumatic exposure on their children and family functioning.

Military One Source. I am now pleased to comment on the continued success of Military One Source, another powerful resource for our Marines and their families. The Marine Corps began One Source as MCCS One Source, now expanded to all the Services. Everyday, we find ways to use this service, which provides round-the-clock information and referral assistance service and is available via toll-free telephone and Internet access. As recently added support, separating service members and their family members are eligible for 180 days and our seriously injured and the survivors of those who have died while on active duty are eligible indefinitely. Where necessary, referrals for face-to-face counseling sessions are available to help Marines or their families cope with deployments. This program is especially important for our Reserve Marine families not located near military installations.

Suicide Prevention. For all our efforts to take care of Marines and their families, we are not immune to societal risk factors, such as suicide, domestic violence, and drug and alcohol abuse. The Marine Corps is a youthful and vigorous force. Our expeditionary nature and current operational tempo brings stress, and for some, heightened anxiety. The mission is intense. Knowing that negative behaviors may exist or manifest to uncontrolled levels is of utmost concern to us. As such, we aggressively work to prevent these behaviors or if necessary intervene. As I'm sure this committee would agree, one suicide is too many. While our suicide rates for 2004 were up compared with previous years, the total remains below the national average for the demographic group. Moreover, there are no clear trends among any specific groups. Interestingly, the rate is higher among those who have not deployed. Though the suicide rate remains within normal limits, we continue to closely monitor this issue and have taken preemptive preventative actions. Last December, the Commandant provided guidance to commanders on watch signs for stress that could escalate to self-harm. Additionally, in the near

future, we will issue “A Leader’s Guide for Managing Marines in Distress.” We have also taken steps to ensure that the command climate is conducive to seeking help.

Domestic Violence. With regard to domestic violence, I am proud to report that our prevention and intervention measures continue to be successful. Domestic violence in the Marine Corps has been steadily declining since Fiscal Year 2001. Over the past year, both child and spouse abuse have declined 27% and 18%, respectively.

Substance Abuse. Drug and alcohol abuse remains a negative throughout society and we at the Marine Corps know that we must be mindful of such influences on our young population who continue to endure the challenges associated with our current deployment climate. Our leadership monitors risk areas and works to prevent substance abuse incidents, thereby decreasing the need for intervention. Our aggressive testing, commander’s commitment against drug use, and targeted education allows us to sustain a low drug positive rate. I am pleased to report that the positive drug-testing rate for the Marine Corps is less than 1 percent.

Sexual Assault. It is the Marine Corps’ unequivocal position that sexual assaults are a criminal act and will not be tolerated in any capacity. We, along with DoD and our Sister Services, continue to be proactively engaged in this matter, issuing new policy and guidance, focusing and coordinating procedures to address alleged offenders and the specific needs of sexual assault victims. We formally established the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office to serve as the integrating entity (i.e. health services, legal, law enforcement, training and education, etc.) for all sexual assault efforts. This cross-discipline effort allows us to fully address the issues relating to the victim, alleged offender, prevention and response. As for caring for victims, the Marine Corps currently has 31 federally employed or contracted victim advocates and 125 highly trained volunteers at 17 installations. These advocates provide

information, guidance, and support to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. With regard to deployed Marines, a Uniformed Victim Advocate (UVA) program has been established to assist deployed unit commanders in supporting victims of sexual assault in the theater of operations. To date, 172 commander-appointed UVAs have been trained. Some of these UVAs have deployed to Iraq and some will remain to perform training for other UVAs at home station. It is our intent to have a minimum of two UVAs each per squadron and battalion throughout the Marine Corps. Also, on this important topic, I am pleased to report that the Marine Corps began developing and improving sexual assault policies prior to the requirements of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005. Of course, we will continue to adjust policies, where and if necessary, to meet the standards set forth by the Congress and DoD.

Casualty Assistance. As this testimony reflects, we do our very best to support Marines and their families. As of February 22, 2005, there have been 467 (365 hostile and 102 non-hostile) Marines killed in Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM. There have been 4010 very serious and serious injuries or illnesses (3711 hostile and 299 non-hostile). Of these casualties, 48 of those killed, and 350 of those wounded, were from the reserve component. Support in the wake of a casualty must be beyond reproach, and the Marine Corps relies upon our expansive network of approximately 5,000 trained Casualty Assistance Calls Officers (CACOs) who offer support to Marine families when they need it most. CACOs are the prime point of contact for surviving families and we see to it that their training matches the sensitivity of their mission. The training provided by the Casualty Section at Headquarters Marine Corps is a highly detailed “train the trainer” program. The actual training of CACOs is a command responsibility but Casualty Section representatives conduct training on a regular basis at all the bases and stations. Additionally, the Marine Corps CACO Training Information Brief

and CACO Guide to Benefits and Entitlements are available on the web to all assigned CACOs and provide expansive information on the duties of the CACO. We immediately update our training documents as information changes to continue effective support for assigned CACOs. We also continuously review our CACO program for potential improvements. Most recently, we incorporated into the CACO Guide a list of reputable benevolent and philanthropic agencies to help our survivors in alleviating financial burdens and support gaps associated with existing benefits and entitlements. In the event a Marine is assigned to perform CACO duties and has not had the opportunity to attend a training session, he or she is walked through every phase of the process by our Casualty Section utilizing the CACO Training Guide. Furthermore, our Casualty Section personnel are available around-the-clock to ensure the CACO receives the necessary assistance to provide the right support to our surviving family members.

We diligently work to stay in touch with our Marine families after the death of their loved one. Our Casualty Section engages next of kin, via casualty assistance correspondence, on several occasions following the death of a Marine. General information on the circumstances of the casualty, survivors guides, veterans benefits information, and information regarding benevolent and philanthropic agencies are provided immediately to assist Marine families as they make the difficult transition to life without their Marine. Follow-up reports on the circumstances of the casualty are mailed when casualty information changes. A 60-day follow-up letter to the next of kin is also sent to survivors. All of this correspondence includes a reminder to notify the Casualty Section if there are any questions or concerns related to the Marine's death or the assistance they are receiving.

We understand that life for Marine families following the death of their Marine can be tumultuous. Even the simplest tasks can become arduous and confusing. To ease this confusion

and help surviving families take care of themselves and their affairs, our Personal and Family Readiness Division at Headquarters Marine Corps stands ready to help navigate various benefits and programs, such as the TRICARE system. An additional resource is Military One Source, which I previously mentioned. This service provides a wealth of helpful information and referrals on many subjects, including parenting, education, finances, legal issues, elder care, health and wellness, deployment, combat stress, crisis support, and relocation. As I stated, survivors are eligible for Military One Source indefinitely; and we believe it will continue to provide help and some measure of comfort to our families.

We are very appreciative of the many benevolent organizations that support our Marines. Such organizations include: the Navy/Marine Corps Relief Society, the Marine Corps Law Enforcement Foundation, the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation, the Fisher Foundation, the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund, and the Intrepid Foundation. We look forward to productive and lasting coordination with the various groups who do so much for our brave troops and their families.

As for our Marines who sustain injuries in combat, we have a new web-based Injured/Ill Patient Tracking system. The system is linked to the Corps' Casualty Databases and contains information on all injured/ill reported via a casualty report. The system allows Patient Administration Teams (PAT) to enter the most up-to-date general treatment information and travel plans and now commanders at all levels have visibility of their Marines during all stages in the medical pipeline. The Marine Corps uses PATs throughout the entire medical pipeline, from Iraq through Bethesda and points beyond. Our PATs provide tremendous support to the families of our Marines brought to the bedside of an injured Marine by the Marine Corps on invitational travel orders. For example, they meet arriving families at the airports, arrange hotels, provide

transportation to and from the hospital on a daily basis, and provide any other assistance the family may need. PATs also coordinate the “warm handoff” to other hospitals that will provide additional care and support to our Marines.

Marine For Life – Injured Support.

Building on and leveraging the organizational network and strengths of our previously established Marine for Life Program, we are currently implementing an Injured Support Program to assist the disabled after they are discharged. The goal is to ensure that these Marines know that the Corps will always be there for them, and to bridge the often difficult and lengthy gap between the care we in the Marine Corps and Navy provide, and that which the Department of Veterans Affairs assumes. The key is to ensure continuity of support through transition and assistance for however long it might take, to include providing assistance during the gap in entitlements. Planned features of the program include advocacy within the Marine Corps and the Department of the Navy for the disabled and their families, and helping them in dealing with external agencies from which they may receive support. An extremely important part of this will be both pre and post service separation case management, assistance in working with physical evaluation boards, creation of an interactive web site for disability/benefit information, assistance with federal hiring preferences and law, and improved Department of Veterans Affairs handling of Marine cases. The latter is being effected by the attachment of a liaison officer embedded within the VA headquarters. The Marine for Life Injured Support Program began operations in early January, and it will continually evolve and improve its services. If there is any area that needs continued effort and interest, it is in the long-term help and assistance for our disabled personnel and their families.

The Marine Corps looks forward to our continued partnership with the Congress to enhance support services for Marines and Marine families when they are dealing with the injury or loss of a loved one. In this regard, I thank you for the new authorities provided in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 to include the parents of deceased service members for burial travel and up to three family members to travel to the bedside of an injured Service member. These new authorities go a long way toward helping our Marine families through difficult times.

We appreciate the heightened Congressional interest in caring for our war casualties and their families. There are no words, deeds or compensatory measures that can take the place of our fallen Marines. That said, we must do our very best to support those families who are forced to live without their loved one. We must take every feasible step to make the survivors of our fallen heroes whole monetarily, so that they are not unduly burdened with financial worry. Such support includes appropriate death gratuities, life insurance, ending unfair pension offsets, and ensuring that dependents are cared for with regard to healthcare and education. There are various legislative remedies currently under discussion. However, we should make certain that the final remedy treats all Service members equitably. We simply cannot distinguish between types of service to this great nation

CONCLUSION

Through the remainder of Fiscal Year 2005, and into Fiscal Year 2006, our Nation will remain challenged on many fronts as we prosecute the Global War on Terrorism. Services will be required to meet commitments, both at home and abroad. Marines, sailors, airmen, and soldiers are the heart of our Services – they are our most precious assets – and we must continue to attract and retain the best and brightest into our ranks. Transformation will require that we

blend together the “right” people and the “right” equipment as we design our “ideal” force. Personnel costs are a major portion of the Department of Defense and Service budgets, and our challenge is to effectively and properly balance personnel, readiness, and modernization costs to provide mission capable forces. We are involved in numerous studies regarding human resources strategy to support our military, which requires we must balance the uniqueness of the individual services. In some cases a one-size fits all approach may be best, in others flexibility to support service unique requirements may be paramount. Regardless, we look forward to working with the Congress to maintain readiness and take care of your Marines.

The Marine Corps continues to be a significant force provider and major participant in joint operations. Our successes have been achieved by following the same core values today that gave us victory on yesterday’s battlefields. Our active, reserve, and civilian Marines remain our most important assets and, with your support, we can continue to achieve our goals and provide what is required to accomplish the requirements of the nation. Marines are proud of what they do! They are proud of the “Eagle, Globe, and Anchor” and what it represents to our country. It is our job to provide for them the leadership, resources, quality of life, and moral guidance to carry our proud Corps forward. With your support, a vibrant Marine Corps will continue to meet our nation’s call as we have for the past 230 years! Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.