

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY
THE SENATE ARMED
SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**STATEMENT OF
GENERAL WILLIAM L. NYLAND
ASSISTANT COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
BEFORE THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
CONCERNING
“CARING FOR THE SEVERELY WOUNDED AND THE FAMILIES OF
DECEASED MILITARY PERSONNEL”
ON
FEBRUARY 1, 2005**

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY
THE SENATE ARMED
SERVICES COMMITTEE**

General

William L. Nyland

Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps

General William L. "Spider" Nyland is currently serving as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington D.C.

Gen. Nyland was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps under the NROTC program upon graduation from the University of New Mexico in 1968. In addition to attaining an M.S. degree from the University of Southern California, his formal military education includes The Basic School (1968), Naval Aviation Flight Training (NFO) (1969), Amphibious Warfare School (1975), Navy Fighter Weapons School (TopGun) (1977), College of Naval Command and Staff, Naval War College (1981), and Air War College (1988).

After being assigned to VMFA-531, General Nyland was ordered to Vietnam where he flew 122 combat missions with VMFA-314 and VMFA-115. General Nyland's other tours included Instructor RIO, VMFAT-101; Squadron Assistant Operations Officer and Operations Officer, VMFA-115; and Brigade FORSTAT and Electronic Warfare Officer, 1st Marine Brigade. He also served as Operations Officer and Director of Safety and Standardization, VMFA-212; Aviation Safety Officer and Congressional Liaison/Budget Officer, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.; and Operations Officer, Marine Aircraft Group-24, 1st Marine Amphibious Brigade. He commanded VMFA-232, the Marine Corps' oldest and most decorated fighter squadron, from July 1985 to July 1987.

General Nyland subsequently served as section chief for the Central Command section, European Command/Central Command Branch, Joint Operations Division, Directorate of Operations (J-3), Joint Staff, Washington, D.C. In July 1990, he assumed command of Marine Aviation Training Support Group, Pensacola. Following his command of MATSG he assumed duties as Chief of Staff, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing on July 5, 1992, and assumed additional duties as Assistant Wing Commander on November 10, 1992. He was promoted to Brigadier General on September 1, 1994 and was assigned as Assistant Wing Commander, 2nd MAW serving in that billet until December 1, 1995.

He served next on the Joint Staff, J-8, as the Deputy Director for Force Structure and Resources, completing that tour on June 30, 1997. He was advanced to Major General on July 2, 1997, and assumed duties as the Deputy Commanding General, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Lejeune, N.C. He served next as the Commanding General, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing, MCAS Cherry Point, North Carolina from July 1998 to June 2000. He was advanced to Lieutenant General on 30 June 2000 and assumed duties as the

Deputy Commandant for Programs and Resources, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps. He next assumed duties as the Deputy Commandant for Aviation on 3 August 2001. He was advanced to General on 4 September 2002 and assumed his current duties on 10 September 2002.

His personal decorations include: Defense Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, the Air Medal with eight Strike/Flight awards, and Joint Service Commendation Medal.

Chairman Warner, Senator Levin, distinguished members of the Committee; today, America is at war. The Marine Corps as an institution is fully committed to this life and death struggle, and in protecting the American people and our way of life. The over 35,000 Marines and Sailors serving today in Iraq and Afghanistan are performing superbly due to their training and extraordinary courage. They, more than any of us sitting protected in this great hall today, fully understand the danger to the Nation and what it takes to ensure its survival. We can never forget there is a terrible, but necessary, human cost that cannot be measured in dollars – it is their sacrifice that we can only stand in awe of particularly when they did not have to serve in the first place. Marines, and Sailors who serve with Marines, and their families, are fully aware that if you are wearing the precious Eagle Globe and Anchor today you are either in on the field of battle, just returning, or packing your seabag to go. Since our nation suffered the monstrous attack on 9-11, 414 Marines have been killed protecting everyone of us here today, and nearly 4,000 have been wounded. On behalf of every Marine, and the brave Sailors who serve with us, their spouses, children, mothers and fathers, I thank this Congress for your continued and indispensable support. I thank the Committee for the opportunity to participate in evolving efforts to insure that our protectors, regardless of uniform, and their families are provided for whether they are killed or maimed in the defense of this great Nation. I would like to begin by framing measures the Marine Corps is undertaking to reduce stress on the force and your Marines and their families.

REDUCING STRESS ON THE FORCE

Currently, the Corps is fully engaged across the spectrum of military operations in prosecuting the Global War on Terror. Since the watershed events of 9-11 the core competencies, capabilities, and our fifty-year nonnegotiable focus on readiness and our culture of deployment has served us well in this war. There is no operation, no trick, no new tactic or technique, regardless of how illegal or despicable, that our enemy has employed against us that we have not been able to adjust to. The high state of training and quality of our Marines along with their warrior ethos – highlighted by our creed that every Marine is a rifleman – allows Marines to thrive in the chaotic, unstable, and unpredictable environment that has always characterized warfare and that our very

adaptable enemies methodically attempt to exploit. We took advantage of the lessons we learned during our first ten months in Iraq - when Baghdad and Tikrit were liberated, and we administered the southern half of the country in Phase IV operations - about a growing insurgency, IEDs, and criminal acts against us in the name of extremism, to prepare for our return a year ago to the Al Anbar Province where we are locked in combat today.

Since March last year the I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) of over 30,000 has fought the insurgency to a stand still in unconventional operations across the zone, as well as in bitter street fighting in Fallujah and Ramadi. With one hand stretched out in friendship to the majority of the Iraqi people who are the true victims of the extremists, and the other with weapon firmly in hand, we have endeavored to bring stability and security to the Province.. Our expeditious and innovative pre-deployment combat skills training program, rapid modifications of our equipment to meet an evolving threat, and our emphasis on cultural appreciation and language capabilities, have all contributed to our considerable accomplishments in this complex region. Reinforced by three Marine Expeditionary Units, I MEF is executing any number of security, urban combat, nation building, counter-insurgency, aviation command and control, and force protection missions with great confidence and skill. The enemy is smart, adaptable, and plays by no rule that civilized men and women would recognize; we, however, are smarter, more adaptable, and will ultimately win because our efforts are in the interests of the precious liberties enshrined in our most revered national documents. Battles like those in Fallujah, Ramadi, and the Northern Babil Province link this generation of Marines to the rich legacy of selfless courage, and warfighting excellence, that has defined Marines of every generation.

In Afghanistan this past spring, we provided, on short-notice, a regimental headquarters, an infantry battalion and a combined arms Marine Expeditionary Unit. This Marine force was a major portion of the combined joint task force “Spring Offensive” to help set the conditions for the successful election that has advanced the process of establishing a secure and stable government in Afghanistan. We continue to provide both ground and aviation forces – currently an infantry battalion, elements of two helicopter squadrons, and training teams – to protect and foster this new democracy

In addition to these operations, our concurrent support to other regions including the Horn of Africa, the Pacific, South Asian Tsunami relief, evacuation of non-combatants from Liberia, and the peace operation in Haiti, all demonstrate the almost unlimited range of readiness and adaptability resident in the this Corps of Marines that typically come from the sea, and return with the mission accomplished.

As on many occasions in the past naval forces, led by Marines ashore, responded quickly and were deeply involved in the saving of lives and providing comfort to millions in the wake of the Sumatran earthquake and Indian Ocean tsunami. We should not underestimate the importance of these kinds of humanitarian missions as they are not only what decent people do, but is the purest and most giving form of engagement in a region critical to the war against extremism. As an aside, the Marine Expeditionary Unit involved in this relief operation has re-embarked on their amphibious shipping, and are back on their way to their original destination – Iraq.

Currently, we are conducting a major rotation of our units and headquarters in Iraq. Most of these units have previously deployed to the war, but we have matched their training and equipment to take advantage of the lessons learned by those on the ground today at such a high price. The Combatant Commander has requested a force of nearly 22,000 organized around six maneuver battalions 3,000 of whom are activated from our Reserve Component.

While our readiness remains acceptable in the short term, the demand on the force is straining our Marines, their families, and our equipment and materiel stocks. Operational tempo is high – the entire Marine Corps is supporting the Global War on Terror and no forces have been fenced. 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 and other high demand assets. This means that units in the Operating Forces are either deployed or are training to relieve deployed units. Since 9-11, we have activated in excess of 95% of our Selected Marine Corps Reserve units. The vast majority has served in either Iraq or Afghanistan. Despite this high operational tempo, the Marine Corps continues to meet its recruiting and retention goals in quantity and quality, but the effort required by individual recruiters and career retention specialists has increased exponentially.

End Strength. We truly appreciate the authorization to increase our end-strength by 3,000 in the Fiscal Year 2005 Bill. These additional Marines will assist in reducing stress on the individuals already shouldering such a heavy burden. We are looking hard as to whether a further increase will be necessary to meet long-term commitments in where we are fighting today, and for what might come tomorrow. We have also conducted a thorough review of internal Manpower policies and procedures, completely reexamined the force structure, and have made recommendations to the Commandant on unit activation and deactivation, “civilianization,” and a number of realignments. One immediate result of this effort has been the recommendation to create additional high demand units, and specialties to address pressures within the force. We are also enhancing the manning of our infantry units, creating a dedicated Foreign Military Training Unit, adding to the recruiting force, trainer base, and other support for the Operating Forces. These initiatives, coupled with those implemented as part of the overall force structure, will reduce somewhat the personnel tempo and consequently the stress on the individual Marine and their family.

Force Structure Review Group. As mentioned previously we recognized the need to continue transforming and the rebalancing of forces to meet the needs of the 21st Century. A comprehensive review of our total force structure, active and reserve, was conducted last summer. We are implementing the recommended force structure initiatives with the majority achieving operational capability in Fiscal Year 2006, and full operational capability by Fiscal Year 2008. These initiatives are end strength and structure neutral – offsets to balance these increases in capabilities are internal to the Marine Corps and come from military to civilian conversions and the disestablishment and reorganization of less critical capabilities. The Marine Corps will continue to evaluate our force structure to ensure that it provides the needed capabilities in a timely manner to support our national security requirements.

Major structure changes in the active component 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). We will also augment our existing

explosive ordnance disposal, intelligence, aviation support, civil affairs, command and control, and psychological operations assets.

In the reserve component these structure initiatives will increase the capability of Marine Forces Reserve Command as it takes an increasing active role in the war. We will establish an Intelligence Support Battalion, a Security/Anti-terrorism Battalion, and two additional light armored reconnaissance companies. We will also augment existing capabilities in the areas of civil affairs and command and control, and we are restructuring some reserve units to convert them to Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) Detachments – allowing the Nation more timely access to these Marine reservists to support contingency operations. In terms of military to civilian conversion we continue to pursue a sensible strategy to increase the number of Marines in the Operating Forces. Last year we converted 664 billets, and we are on course to achieve an additional 1,697 through September 2006.

Marine Corps Reserve. Thanks to strong Congressional support in the past, 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. These reduced duration deployments have helped us to sustain the Reserve Force, and avoid untimely extensions. Through this process, the Marine Corps has been able to maximize force management of the Reserve, maintain unit integrity, and lessen the burden on the families by maintaining generally shorter deployments .

Over 10,000 Marine Reserves are currently serving on active duty in support of the war. Well over 8,000 are serving in cohesive ground, aviation and combat support units, led by combat capable Reserve officers and non-commissioned officers. Another 1,500 are individual augmentees in both Marine and Joint commands and headquarter elements. A total of almost 30,000 of our Reserve Marines have served on active duty since that terrible day in September nearly four years ago, with 95% of the units in our Reserve Component having been activated.

REDUCING STRESS ON THE MARINE AND THEIR FAMILIES

The Marine Corps continues to answer the call because of our individual Marines, and the support they receive from their families and from the Nation. Morale and

commitment are high. Marines join the Corps to “fight and win battles” and we are certainly giving them the opportunity to do that. We are an expeditionary force accustomed to deployments, but as earlier stated; this fight is not without its costs to both Marines and their families.

Marine Corps Community Services. Taking care of Marines and their families is essential to the operational readiness of the Corps. The relevance of this mission is particularly evident when leaders at all levels assess preparedness of their command and unit functioning before, during, and after forward deployments. As an expeditionary force we are accustomed to frequent deployments - it is part of our culture and is one of the key reasons why young Americans join the Marine Corps - yet the current environment contains elements of personal danger and family risk that must be addressed with appropriate and timely support. To date in all our worldwide operations we have been careful to closely monitor our programs, adjusting as needed to ensure Marines and their families receive the necessary care to sustain them through every deployment cycle. In this regard, the Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) organizations’ combined structure of Family Services, Morale, Welfare and Recreation Programs, Voluntary Off Duty Education, and Exchange operations, allow us to efficiently and effectively help families meet the challenges associated with our lifestyle and current operational tempo.

Deployment Support. During the pre-deployment period, families attend to the administrative details of wills, powers of attorney, insurance, and family care plans, as they always have. Spouses then connect in both a formal and informal way through the commander’s Key Volunteer Network organized to provide accurate and timely information on the status of the deployment. This network also mobilizes to embrace those families who receive the dreaded knock on the door to notify them of the death, or serious injury, of their loved one serving overseas. This is in addition, of course, to the formal assist provided by the casualty officer assigned in every case. The spouses involved in this program are all volunteers, work day and night without respite, and shoulder their own burdens of stress and often grief, while helping others through theirs. They are the behind the scenes heroes of this war, and we love them for what they do.

We have developed a series of pre-deployment, in theater (Iraq and Afghanistan), return and reunion, and post-deployment awareness and support services to mitigate

potential problems shaped by traumatic combat experiences and associated stress. The assumption we make is that none of us are immune from the social tragedies of suicide, domestic violence, or sexual assault. We also assume that risk factors can be exacerbated by a wide range of factors associated with normal deployments and most especially war, and we have implemented a variety of active counseling services to address individual and unit concerns. Examples include: Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Program, designed to address the symptoms and risks of untreated combat stress, its signs, and the resources available for treatment; Operational Stress Control and Readiness Program (OSCAR), where we embed a mental health professional(s) in battalion aid stations and has resulted in a marked decrease in evacuations for mental health reasons. Prior to departing a combat zone, and immediately upon return to home station, we have instituted a rest and decompression period in which small unit commanders, NCOs, and chaplains, provide the Warrior Transition Brief. This series of discussions focuses on preparing returning Marines and Sailors to integrate with loved ones, and society. A wide array of services is also available at our installations through chaplains, medical treatment facilities, and MCCS, to support every member of the Marine community in the post deployment phase of their lives. For those in need residing a distance from our installations, face-to-face counseling services are available through the MCCS One Source Program.

We recognize that family readiness is integral to unit readiness. To help our families through the separation and stress of deployment Congress has through Supplemental Appropriations has provided extended childcare services, and we are grateful for this support. Information and referral services are offered via different access points to include the Key Volunteers, command websites and hotlines, and MCCS One Source, which offers round the clock information and referral services via toll-free telephone and Internet access. This program has also proven to be an especially valuable resource to assist Reserve Marines and their families who often experience special challenges as they attempt to acclimate to active duty life when called up.

Casualty Assistance. Every one of us, particularly the families, appreciate recent legislative actions that help in the event of a death of serious injury. In particular are those funds provided for expanded authorization for parents of our deceased to attend

funerals when they are not the primary next-of-kin, and also for paid travel to the bedside of the badly injured, and those facing extended hospital and rehabilitation stays. This is important to their morale, and critical in the recovery of these heroes. We have established internal support services, including an extensive network of Casualty Assistance Calls Officers throughout the country, that serve as the primary point of contact for the families of deceased and severely injured Marines. We have always done it this way, but it's better than it has ever been as we serve these families with a shoulder to lean on, and, when it is time and they are ready, for help and advice in navigating through the complexities of military benefit and entitlement programs, and even with offers from benevolent organizations who want to help. This support is managed through our Headquarters Casualty Affairs section, and has been enhanced by the development and implementation of an Office of the Secretary of Defense-funded Injured/Ill Patient Tracking website. Commanders now have nearly real time visibility of their injured through all stages in the medical and convalescence process.

In this vein, I would like to thank the Congress for the continued support of the programs and services so critical to the readiness of our Corps, to include provisions of supplemental appropriations, all of which directly contribute to quality of life enhancements. Also, for your kind and caring visits at hospitals and in homes across the country, visits that provide comfort and motivation to those wounded in the war that is protecting us here at home in our daily lives.

Marine For Life – Injured Support. Building on to the organizational network and strengths of the 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 never forget them or what they have done, 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, but certainly to cover the gap in entitlements that sometimes is many months long. Planned features of the program include advocacy within the Marine Corps and Navy for the disabled and their families, and help getting over the hurdles of any external agencies they might interact with. An extremely big part of this will be both pre and post service separation

case management, assistance in working with physical evaluation boards, 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 by the attachment of a liaison officer embedded within the VA headquarters. The program began operations in early January, and it will never stop evolving and improving its services. If there is any area that needs more interest, it is in the long term help and assistance for our disabled personnel and their families.

Death Benefits. The final topic I must address is perhaps the most difficult, the death of a serviceman or woman in the defense of our way of life. While their deaths, whether it is in combat or in a training accident here in the United States, are tragic, they are heroes...not victims. They stepped forward to a life of service when they did not have to, and even as young as they are they knew what they were getting into, what the dangers were, what the possibilities might be. There are those who might not believe this, but it is true. The only experience they cannot imagine, because it is unimaginable, is combat itself. They stood tall when the country needed them, came when they did not have to, and had they not no one would call them coward. Let me walk you through what happens when a family is notified of a death.

When they open the door a Marine officer is always standing there to give them the most dreaded news they will ever receive. Details are few and will typically only include the time and place of the death, and perhaps a little bit of the how. This officer then quite literally becomes part of the family for as long as they need him – forever if necessary. When appropriate, and it is always awkward, he provides them a death gratuity check for \$12,000, then helps them through the process of making funeral arrangements as the flag draped coffin with what was their son or daughter, brother or sister, husband or wife, is on the way home. Only when buried, and we help them with the expenses here as well, do the conversations turn to additional monies and benefits. This is often pressed by the officer, as the families seldom think in terms of what might be their entitlements, and are often surprised at what they hear. In addition to the already paid death gratuity, there is the Serviceman's Group Life Insurance (SGLI) policy payment of \$250,000, some of the premiums of which are paid for by the now dead Marine. If married at the time of death there are monthly stipends that come in from

Social Security, the VA and DoD, and these very frequently are more than what the deceased may have made while alive. Something to keep in mind, however, is the burden of combat deaths fall most often on the Privates First Class and Lance Corporals; whose average yearly wages are \$17,000. These benefits of course depend on how many children and other specific circumstances, and decrease over time due to age or a surviving child's student status.

I have queried the Marine Corps Legislative Liaison staff members who work so closely with your own staffs on a full range of issues, about inquiries related to deaths in an attempt to gain some insights on how all of these financial arrangements are received by the families of the fallen. We really have no trends other than perhaps the issue of post-death payments from VA and Social Security that we work to expedite. Anecdotally I can tell you that there are many spouses grieving over a death who make the point that it would be very helpful to have an increase in the SGLI option to two or even three times its current amount, with the cost of buying a home and college the most common rationale. They are not bitter, angry, or disappointed at what they receive, but in retrospect wish they had taken out more insurance.

In conclusion, on behalf of your Marines and their families, I thank this Committee for your continued and indispensable support during these demanding times as we attempt to defend America, and spread the freedoms we enjoy to everyone man, woman and child in Iraq and Afghanistan. I would also add that no recruit that raises his or hand and swears a solemn oath to serve and protect this Nation – even unto death - joins the Marine Corps for long-term financial benefit. They certainly never give a thought to programs that will assist them and their families in the event they are severely disabled or killed. It is all ultimately part of the recruiting and retention package, however, and in an increasingly difficult recruiting environment particularly for the two services shouldering the greatest burden of death and injury in this war, we must take a very hard look at anything that will set the minds of those in the war and their families at ease. Regardless of what uniform they wear, where they serve, or what their specialty is, if they move against our enemies in this global war they need to be supported in the way they deserve. We must also not forget the disabled who have unique financial and mental health difficulties those of us who are healthy can never fathom. Their obstacles are

great, their recovery forever, and we must not let them slip into the abyss that comes with being put aside and forgotten.

I again thank the Committee for your unwavering support for your Marine Corps and all our great Nation's service members.