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STATEMENT OF
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COMMANDING GENERAL, MARINE CORPS RECRUITING COMMAND

BEFORE

PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE

OF THE

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

ON

THE POSTURE OF THE MARINE CORPS RECRUITING SERVICE

31 JAN 2008

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Recruiting

Chairman Nelson, Senator Graham, and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee; I am pleased to report that despite the current challenges in the recruiting environment, our Recruiters continue to make their recruiting goals in all areas in support of our total force recruiting mission. This past year, our recruiting mission was increased as part of a series of milestones to “grow the force” and build an active component 21st century Marine Corps with an end-strength of 202,000. Fiscal Year 2007 was a year of change for the Marine Corps Recruiting Command. Our focus in Fiscal Year 2008 is to continue to recruit quality men and women into our Corps as we expand our ranks.

Recruiting is the lifeblood of our Corps. The recruiting environment remains competitive and challenging as we recruit during sustained combat operations and compete with our sister services and the private sector for the best eligible men and women our country has to offer. We believe that detailed planning, precision execution, and unwavering commitment to quality by our recruiting force will yield results. The professional character of our recruiters, exhibiting our core values of honor, courage, and commitment, must continue to earn the trust and respect of the public. Leadership and accountability define our Corps and are essential to preserving the relationship we have with the American people.

To meet the challenges of the current recruiting environment it is imperative that we maintain our high standards both for our recruiters and those who volunteer to serve in our Corps. The Corps must continue to be comprised of the best and brightest of America's youth. We must also remain mindful that the Marine Corps needs to reflect the face of the nation and be representative of those we serve. Today's youth, now more than ever, must exhibit the leadership potential, moral character, native intelligence, and physical attributes in order to

succeed in the Corps. Our image of a smart, tough, elite warrior continues to resonate with young people seeking to join our Corps. Our ethos that every Marine is a rifleman is inherent in our recruiting themes. Therefore, it is no surprise that our Marine Recruiters receive more requests for infantry programs from applicants than any other program in our inventory. Clearly, our enlistees know and fully understand the magnitude of their decision and that in all likelihood, they will be called upon to serve on front lines in the war against terrorism.

As alluded to earlier, enlisting quality men and women only strengthens our Corps as we expand our ranks. Equally important, it helps to preserve our unique character. There is a direct correlation between enlisting quality youth today and the long-term effects it has on reducing attrition at the recruit depots, increasing retention, and improving readiness in the operating forces. These factors contribute to ensuring that the Marine Corps remains the nation's premiere force in readiness.

Total Force. The Marine Corps is unique in that all recruiting efforts (officer, enlisted, regular, reserve, and prior-service) fall under the direction of the Marine Corps Recruiting Command. Operationally, this provides us with flexibility and unity of command in order to annually meet our objectives. In Fiscal Year 2007, the Marine Corps achieved 100.1 percent of the enlisted (regular and reserve) ship mission (accessions). Over 95 percent of our accessions were Tier 1 high school diploma graduates and over 66 percent were in the I-III A upper mental group testing categories. In short, we accomplished our recruiting mission achieving the Commandant's standards and exceeding those of the Department of Defense (DoD). To meet the Marine Corps' proposed end strength increase, annual total force accessions missions will steadily grow from 40,863 in Fiscal Year 2007 to over 46,000 in Fiscal Year 2010. Fiscal Year 2008 total force accessions mission is 42,202. As of 1 Jan 2008, we shipped (accessed) 8,117

applicants. This represents 103.3 percent of our total force mission fiscal year to date. Although recruiting is fraught with uncertainties, we expect to meet our annual recruiting mission to include our quality goals. Additionally, we continue to achieve our contracting goals for this fiscal year which ensures we have a population of qualified individuals ready to ship to recruit training as we enter Fiscal Year 2009. Our Officer Selection Teams were also successful in Fiscal Year 2007, accessing 1,844 Second Lieutenants for 101 percent of their assigned mission. In Fiscal Year 2008, we are continuing efforts to increase the population of Officer Candidates and commission second lieutenants commensurate with our force structure and the growth in end strength. To assist our Officer Selection Officers in meeting their Officer accession missions, we have implemented new programs such as the College Loan Repayment program in order to attract prospective candidates and remain competitive in this difficult recruiting environment.

Reserve Component. For the Reserve Component, the Marine Corps achieved its Fiscal Year 2007 reserve enlisted recruiting goals with the accession of 5,287 non-prior service Marines and 1,591 prior service Marines. As of 1 Jan 2008, we accessed 893 non-prior service and 1,308 prior service Marines, which reflects 21 percent and 29 percent of our annual mission respectively. Again, we expect to meet our reserve recruiting and quality goals this year.

Officer recruiting for our Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) units is traditionally one of our greatest challenges. To help address this issue, we initiated a reserve officer commissioning program. Under this program, individuals complete all their initial training and return to a reserve unit to serve as a drilling reservist. This past year the program showed promise by commissioning 48 second lieutenants directly into the SMCR. To date this fiscal year, we commissioned 27 reserve Officers and anticipate positive growth in this new initiative through Fiscal Year 2008 and beyond.

Accomplishing the Mission. The Marine Corps understands that the ‘All Volunteer Force’ is in fact an “All Recruited Force” and that the Marine Corps Recruiting Command is on the front lines engaged in a mission vital to the long term health of our Corps. In order to meet end strength goals, continue to maintain the high Marine Corps and DoD quality standards, and attain a diverse entry level population representative of national demographics, we must be ever vigilant in our focused approach of enlisting only the best America has to offer.

The success achieved during the past fiscal year is attributed to a quality recruiting force; one that is screened, well-trained, and properly resourced to meet mission requirements. Every Marine assigned to recruiting duty is evaluated based on his or her fitness to perform the demanding duties of a Marine recruiter. The Headquarters Marine Corps Recruiter Screening Team (HRST) conducts annual visits to bases, stations and installations to interview prospective recruiters. Additionally, Commanding Officers must certify a Marine’s fitness for independent duty. Once screened, Marines attend a seven week Basic Recruiter’s Course before reporting to their Recruiting Station. Training continues in the form of Proficiency and Review (PAR) training during the first six months on recruiting duty as a canvassing recruiter and subsequently as directed by the Commanding Officer of the Recruiting Station. Resourcing the Marine Corps Recruiting Command also has been a priority of senior Marine leadership. During Fiscal Year 2007, 200 additional recruiters were assigned to recruiting duty. Another 200 recruiters have been added in Fiscal Year 2008. The recruiting force has received the necessary tools in the form of additional offices, vehicles, computers, telephones, etc., in an effort to set the conditions for success. These increases have come with proper funding, increased marketing and advertisement initiatives, and recruiter performance recognition programs. Collectively, these efforts produce a

quality recruiting force designed to support the projected increase in the Marine Corps end strength.

A key factor in our mission management is ensuring clear and direct responsibility and oversight. The Commanding General of Marine Corps Recruiting Command reports directly to the Commandant of the Marine Corps. The Commanding Generals of our two Marine Corps Recruit Training Depots also serve as the Commanding Generals of our Eastern and Western Recruiting Regions. Having the same individual responsible for quality recruiting and entry-level basic training is crucial to successfully recruiting and making Marines. Consistent with this, our recruiters' commitment to recruiting a quality Corps is further reinforced by the fact that they are held accountable for their recruits' performance throughout the entire process as they earn the title Marine, from the time they enlist in the delayed entry program until they complete "boot camp."

Although Marine Recruiters need and use tangible incentives (e.g. bonuses, college funds, etc.), we primarily achieve our success by emphasizing the Marine Corps first and foremost. We strongly believe that our core values distinguish us as an elite force and that once you earn the title Marine, you are a Marine for life.

We thank Congress for their continued support of legislation that provides recruiters access to high schools and student directory lists. This access remains critical to recruiting quality applicants. Without it, our Marine Recruiters would lose one of their most efficient and productive means of conveying the opportunities of military service. This would have an immediate, adverse impact on our ability to accomplish our mission. Maintaining access to high schools and student directories remains a top priority for ensuring continued success. Further, Congress' continued support in funding for enlistment bonuses and advertising is appreciated.

The ability to advertise is essential in the era of the All Volunteer Force. Raising public awareness and extolling the virtues and benefits of serving one's country is important in today's society.

In closing, recruiting is the strategic first step in making Marines just as it is the first step in growing the Corps. As we expand our ranks and increase our officer and enlisted populations, we must never lose sight that our most effective weapon is the Marine Recruiter. In all that we do, we must remain faithful to our promise to make Marines, win our country's battles and return quality citizens back home: citizens who --- once transformed --- will be Marines for life.