

NOT PUBLIC UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT
OF
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COMMANDING GENERAL
MARINE CORPS RECRUITING COMMAND
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL
OF THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
CONCERNING
MILITARY RECRUITING EFFORTS
ON
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INTRODUCTION

Chair Warren, Ranking Member Scott, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, it is a privilege to appear before you today to provide an overview of your Marine Corps' recruiting efforts. We continue to be fortunate to serve in a Marine Corps comprised of tough, smart, elite, and ethical warriors who have volunteered to serve their country as the world's premiere crisis response force – your United States Marine Corps. Our screened, selected, and well-trained Recruiters cover every zip code of America, and in the hallways of our High Schools. We are in a constant search to attract and inspire the most talented individuals within our Nation who can live up to the high standards that your Marine Corps demands. We refuse to lower our standards, because ultimately, we understand the price of long-term success in both peace and war.

We are making mission, sustaining our high standards, and, in fact, increasing quality.

Your Marines achieved their Fiscal Year 2023 mission despite significant headwinds. Our success can largely be attributed to the individual Marine Recruiter, and their unrelenting drive to accomplish the mission – we select our best to find the next generation of Marines. Marine Corps Recruiting Command's focus on training, manning, structure, and resources have served to enable and reinforce their success. Today, I hope to provide a deeper understanding of the recruiting environment and its challenges.

HISTORY OF MARINE CORPS RECRUITING

As we celebrated the 50-year anniversary of the All-Volunteer Force, or more accurately the All-Recruited Force, the United States Marine Corps continues to evolve and prepare to meet the requirements of its Nation. Marine Corps Recruiting has evolved for mission success over the past 50 years and continues to adapt to ensure mission accomplishment.

To fully understand Marine Corps Recruiting, you must first realize that it was born on the battlefield. When General Wilson was appointed as the 26th Commandant of the Marine Corps in 1975, we were facing enormous challenges both internally and externally – including the critical requirements of recruiting, recruit training, and discipline. Led by General Wilson and his Manpower Chief, Lieutenant General Robert Barrow, the Marines attacked the bureaucratic status-quo in a “quality war” with the same gusto that they took to the enemy on the battlefields of World War II and Korea, and implemented rapid change to recruiting. Recruiting commanders would now report directly to the Commanding Generals of the recruit depots, three out of four Marines would have high school diplomas, and they would aggressively remove Marines from the ranks those who demonstrated an inability or unwillingness to

meet the standards of the Marine Corps. Under General Wilson's leadership, Marines developed and installed "systematic recruiting" across the recruiting force to standardize actions and results, which Marine Recruiters still practice to this day.

With continued emphasis on systematic recruiting and quality within Marine Corps Recruiting, the demographic challenges of the nineties were still another hill that needed to be taken. An overall decrease in the population between 18 and 22 years old, coupled with declining education and propensity rates proved challenging for Marine Corps Recruiting. The 30th Commandant, General Carl Mundy, recognized the need to improve the organizational approach to recruiting; Recruit Depot Commanders, the Personnel Procurement Director, and the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower and Reserve Affairs reported in a variety of lines regarding recruiting matters. This dilution of command was the antithesis to the unity the Marine Corps strives to achieve. General Mundy would facilitate a "*one Corps' approach to recruiting*" through the creation of Marine Corps Recruiting Command; which he would say is "the only regiment in the Corps that is in constant contact with its objective 30 days a month, without let up." The 31st Commandant, General Charles Krulak, would reinforce recruiting success through competitive screening and selection of Recruiting Station Commanders (Majors in command of our Recruiting Stations), and incentivize the successful accomplishment of a recruiting tour with choice follow-on assignments.

In the years since, Marines have always risen to the recruiting mission each year through strict adherence to systematic recruiting, upholding high standards, and an unrelenting dedication to mission accomplishment. The Marine Corps continues to put our best Marines onto recruiting duty to emphasize the intangibles of service in the Corps; our comradery, teamwork, ethos, and core values. Holding true to these intangible benefits of being a United States Marine, the individual Marine has and always will be our greatest weapon against a changing recruiting environment.

In summary: We continue to achieve success by:

- Assigning our best to recruiting, and rewarding them for success;
- Structuring our Recruiting Command directly underneath the Commandant;
- Applying a Systematic Approach to recruiting; and
- Keeping our standards high.

THE RECRUITING ENVIRONMENT

Despite our success in Fiscal Year 2023, the Marine Corps continues to face the same enlisted recruiting challenges as the other services. Historic lows in qualification rates, propensity to serve, public

perception of the military, labor market challenges, a fragmented advertising environment, and policy changes with second- and third-order effects have all compounded to make this the most challenging recruiting environment since the inception of the All-Volunteer-Force.

Numerically, our Recruiters are simply at a disadvantage. Generation “Z” is not only over five million people smaller than the previous “Millennial” generation, but we also continue to see a decline in Qualified Military Available (QMA) populations within the same group. The most recent statistics show that only 23% of current 17–24 year olds are qualified for military service without a waiver (down from 29% in 2013). We have also observed a reduction in male propensity to serve, down from 23% in 2001, to 10% based on 2022 data.

Our Commandant remains committed to providing adequate resources and the highest quality Marines to make the accession mission while sustaining quality standards, but bottom-line, our Recruiters must work harder while prospecting out of a smaller, less qualified, and less-propensed population. We continue to work with the Department of Defense on policies and resourcing of our United States Military Entrance Processing Command (USMEPCOM) to achieve the goals within the Military Health System GENESIS and the Health Information Exchange.

The headwinds ahead of us are strong. We began Fiscal Year 2024 with a historically low start pool of 22.5%, when our average is normally above 50%. Our pool is where our recruiters prepare candidates for the rigors of recruit training. This reduced start pool means our Marine Recruiters must focus on finding individuals to ship in the near-term, thus reducing their time to physically and mentally prepare them for the rigors of Recruit Training and the transformation process from civilian to Marine.

MARINE CORPS RECRUITING EFFORTS

Marine Corps Recruiting Command continues to address the challenges of recruiting head on. We remain laser focused on my priorities of training, manning, resources, and structure.

Training. Over the last year, we have reinvigorated pre-COVID training that lapsed over the past years. As part of our Systematic Approach to Recruiting, we updated multiple training courses and increased emphasis within the high school and community college programs, which represent the lifeblood and bedrock of recruiting success. We fundamentally believe that a well-trained recruiting force breeds confidence, which ultimately leads to victory.

Support for our Recruiting Force. We have further incentivized the career enhancing benefits of recruiting duty – and, despite the rigorous nature of the assignment, we have dramatically increased the number of volunteers seeking this challenging assignment. Additionally, we have been able to retain some of our

most well-trained and dedicated recruiters through short term voluntary extensions, while sustaining the scheduled new joins to the force, thus increasing our overall number. We continue to reward those who undertake the challenge of recruiting. The Corps recognizes recruiting as a challenging and career enhancing assignment.

Advertising and IT Support. We have resourced near-term increases to our advertising / modernization budgets, executed a technical refresh to our IT system and computers, and are coordinating budgetary increases for facility improvements and upgrades with OSD.

Results and Quality. The quality of your enlisted Marines remains exceptionally high. The Department of Defense (DOD) requires 90% of enlistees to have a high school diploma or equivalent (Education Tier 1), and 60% of enlistees to score in the Mental Groups I-III A (mental aptitude). In fiscal year 2023, the Marine Corps achieved 99% for Education Tier 1 and over 65% for Mental Group I-III A – with no Mental Group IV.

Recruiting is one of our Commandant's top priorities and Recruiting Command is getting the Corps' full support. We aim to achieve mission success in FY24 through shared trust, accountability to one another, and a fierce competitive desire to win.

WAYS TO IMPROVE RECRUITING

Aggressive Resourcing. For future recruiting success, we must continue to adequately fund recruiting operations and advertising. Our Marine Corps advertising program is vital to building awareness among high-quality, diverse populations that are increasingly disconnected from military service. A strong advertising program enables our recruiting command to attract and recruit the highest quality accession cohorts. Advertising funds repay many times over, as they produce lower first-term attrition, higher quality Marines, and increased readiness. However, an increasingly fragmented media environment and media inflation rates approaching 20% in many cases have made maintaining success significantly more difficult.

Modernization of our Advertising Tools. We thank Congress for provisions in the FY23 National Defense Authorization Act that enable the DoD to develop a 3-year pilot program for the collection of Prospective Recruit Information (PRI). We are working with the DoD and our advertising agency to test and pilot a platform that capitalizes on this authority granted by the Congress and enables the ability to segment and reach prospects. These efforts could help identify prospective recruits, tailor marketing efforts, and better measure return on investment, while putting the Department on a level-playing field with the rest of the labor market who routinely use this capability.

Access to High Schools. We also thank Congress for its 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 the most efficient and productive means of conveying the opportunities military service provides to young Americans. Maintaining access to high schools and student directories remains a top priority for ensuring continued success.

National Call to Service. In order to ensure recruiting success, we need your help. We need to continue to fund recruiting advertising and facilities, appropriately support Military Entrance Processing Stations, ensure school access, and bolster a whole-of-Government national dialogue on military and public service. Our veterans serve ably in industries, commercial sectors, and government across our Nation, bringing enhanced leadership and an exceptional work ethos back to their communities. We must converge at the highest levels to inform young men and women, and their parents and influencers, about the value of honorable service in uniform.

CONCLUSION

The United States Marine Corps' highest priority and objective remains the recruitment, development, and retention of elite warriors in the highest state of combat readiness to support and defend our great Nation, now and into the future. We currently find ourselves in the most challenging recruiting environment since the inception of the All-Volunteer-Force. We cannot wish this away, but must instead innovate, adapt, and take deliberate action across the Joint Force to win. Within Marine Corps Recruiting, we will continue to ensure our team of professionals is well-trained, well-led, manned, resourced, and structured to recruit the next generation of Marines. We know that if we don't "Make Marines," our Nation will not have a Marine Corps – and that is not acceptable. We will continue to recruit the very best of our Nation to ensure the future health and success of your Marine Corps.

Semper Fidelis!