

JOINT STATEMENT OF
LIEUTENANT GENERAL JACK W. KLIMP
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS
AND
MAJOR GENERAL GARRY L. PARKS
COMMANDING GENERAL,
MARINE CORPS RECRUITING COMMAND
BEFORE THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL
ON
24 FEBRUARY 2000
CONCERNING
RECRUITING AND RETENTION

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee:

We are pleased to appear before you today to discuss recruiting and retention in the United States Marine Corps. These issues are of critical importance in the shaping of your primary expeditionary fighting force. As always, we will supercede the recruiting and retention challenges by the determination of our recruiters and small unit leaders.

MARINE CORPS RECRUITING

Recruiting sustains the “lifeblood of the Marine Corps.” However, today’s recruiting environment is the toughest it has been since the creation of the All-Volunteer Force. As such, Marine Corps recruiting continues to lean forward into the 21st Century to beat what some consider nearly insurmountable odds.

Maintaining the Momentum

In 1999, the Marine Corps Recruiting Command sustained momentum established over four years ago by exceeding the net new contracting and shipping mission. We attained 100.2% of our total force accession requirement with 95.8% of our enlistments being Tier 1 high school diploma graduates. This exceeded DOD’s requirement of 90% in this significant category. Of these accessions, 65.7% were Mental Group I-III A, which again exceeded DOD’s benchmark of 60%. Marine recruiters continue to achieve the mission without lowering quality standards.

Today’s Outlook

Through the first quarter of FY00, we have achieved 101.5% of our total force accession mission. Currently, when combined, shipped and pooled Marine aspirants constitute 74% of our FY00 accession mission. Moreover, 98.5% are Tier I high school graduates and 66.8% are in Mental Groups I-III A. While a strong economy serves the Nation well, it detracts from the perception of some of the Nation’s school leaders that military service can meet the needs of the

upcoming graduates. The surest source of high-caliber recruits is from among the ranks of the graduates of America's high schools and colleges. Accordingly, the Marine Corps recruiting program relies on access to these institutions to educate the largest range of young Americans on the advantages of enlistment in the Armed Forces. Our recruiters are not only experiencing a decline in access to directory information, but in many cases are being forced out of schools by local educational policy. While a certain school district may have an overt "support the military" policy, the districts themselves often allow their individual high school administrators to be more restrictive, and it is they who deny the access and lists, school by school. Some allow access, but will not provide directory information; others provide lists but not access to students on campus. Beyond that, the prosperous economy, combined with the aforementioned institutional bias against the military in some schools, exacerbates the challenges of recruiting and requires us to redouble our efforts to achieve our goals. Accordingly, the Marine Corps Recruiting Command is positioning our recruiting force to view these obstacles as an opportunity to seek out new and innovative ways to capture the attention of the Millennial Generation, as we did with Generation-Xers before them.

At the heart of these efforts is leadership. Marine recruiters must excel at leadership in its most basic, person-to-person sense. Our use of the phrase "quality begets quality" should not be construed to imply a sense of institutional elitism. Rather, we use it to reinforce our firm belief that assigning our best Marines to this demanding duty is well worth the effort and cost to sustain the Marine Corps of tomorrow. Our recruiters must exert the full extent of their leadership, personality, and character to inspire the people they come into contact with--educators, potential applicants, parents, the community at large, and especially the members of

the delayed entry program. The staff noncommissioned officer of 2010 is going to recruit training today. He or she has to be the best we can find, enlisted by the best we can field.

Accordingly, we have initiated a nationwide structure analysis that will realign our recruiting structure by the year 2002, putting that quality Marine in the right location. While the district and regional boundaries may look considerably different by the time we complete the restructuring process, based on current demographic trends, we will accomplish our goal without undue disruption. Simultaneously, efforts continue to round out the officer corps with the minority role models that our enlisted Marines deserve.

Into the Future

The remainder of FY00 and FY01 will be a critical test for Marine Corps recruiting. With continued 40K-plus shipping missions, we must sustain our efforts to give our recruiters the wherewithal to do the job we ask of them. They require continuous training in the special skills they use. The Marine Corps Recruiting Command is exploring opportunities to employ a distance learning training system designed to provide self-paced refresher sales and sales management training via CD-ROM, while simultaneously exploring other developments in our marketing program. Although advertising does not create contracts--that is the role of the Marine recruiter--it can implant images that brand us as tough, smart, and elite warriors. This brand image creates opportunities upon which our recruiters capitalize. Currently, we are examining initiatives designed to aid in our direct mail efforts and developing a new television advertisement that will provide the type of impact necessary to attract the attention of today's young men and women of character. The Marine Corps Recruiting Command is also exploring more cost efficient ways of utilizing Enhanced Marketing Vehicles to assist in our advertising

campaign. These eye-catching vehicles have proven to be outstanding awareness and lead-generating tools.

Recruiter's Quality of Life

Success in today's recruiting environment comes neither cheap nor easy. Our recruiters are predominantly not volunteers, but are screened and selected for this difficult and demanding assignment. We work our recruiters hard! Not surprisingly, quality of life surveys consistently find lower satisfaction on quality of life indicators among recruiters than in the rest of the Marine Corps. It is a lifestyle that is especially hard on families, who are isolated on independent duty from the kinds of support structures common on posts and stations throughout the Marine Corps.

This unique situation demands that we pay particular attention to quality of life issues in the areas of TRICARE Prime Remote for family members, affordable housing, and quality childcare. In many cases, the strongest recruiting support, the most compelling motivation, comes from Marine families. Anything we can do to assist these families is crucial to making mission. We cannot expect to increase productivity by working our Marines harder and longer than they are doing now. They simply have expended available working hours. Thus, if we seek to sustain our success and look ahead to improvement, it will be by institutionalizing quality of life initiatives that support Marines and Marine families on independent duty. This is warfare of the mind, a motivational battle in which attitudes and perceptions are everything.

Conclusion

Based on today's mission, the Marine Corps Recruiting Command is properly manned, has adequate resources for current requirements, and is capably trained to accomplish our goals. As we look to the challenging future, we continue to believe in a philosophy that, with supportive leadership and resources commensurate with emergent requirements, our recruiters

will accomplish whatever mission is assigned with the diligence and forbearance that has been passed down from generations of Marines that embodied our motto “Semper Fidelis.”

RETENTION

It is on the backs of our recruiters that the Marine Corps has consistently achieved manpower objectives. A successful recruiting effort is just the beginning of getting a properly trained Marine in the right place at the right time. The dynamics of our manpower system then match a Marines’ occupational specialties and grades to our individual Commanders’ needs throughout the operating forces. The Marine Corps endeavors to manage stable, predictable retention patterns. However, as the case with recruiting, civilian opportunities abound for our Marines as private employers are actively soliciting our young Marines for lucrative private sector employment. To validate this position, initial results from our 1999 Exit Census conclude that pay and civilian employment opportunities are the top two reasons why Marines leave the service. To offset these detractors, the Marine Corps has several cultural and compensation mechanisms in place.

Enlisted

We are very mindful of our enlisted retention issues. Our enlisted force is the backbone of the Corps, and we must make every effort to retain the best people. Even though the current enlisted retention situation is stable, we are experiencing turbulence in some specialties. Accordingly, there are some shortages in a number of high tech MOSs that represent a significant part of our warfighting capability, and these young Marines are in high demand in the civilian sector.

We are a young force, making accessions a chief concern for manpower readiness. Of the 154,000 active duty enlisted force, over 28,000 are still teenagers - 106,000 are still on their first enlistment. In FY99, we reenlisted approximately 23% of our first term eligible population. These 5,480 Marines represented 100% of the Marines we needed in the career force. In each of the last six years, we have achieved this same objective. In FY00, we will increase our requirement to 5,791 Marines in order maintain the balance between youth and experience. The good news is that the Marine Corps has reduced first term non-EAS attrition by 22%. If we can maintain this effort, we believe we will be able to significantly reduce our accessions in the years to come.

Shortages persist in some highly technical specialties such as intelligence, data communications experts, and air command and control technicians. We have recently introduced a number of improvements to our first-term accession process that promises to eliminate systemic challenges for filling short occupational specialties. The Marine Corps also attacks these critical shortages with the Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB) program. Currently, the Marine Corps has allotted \$23M in SRB new payments to assist our reenlistment efforts in FY01. We are currently requesting legislative approval for lump sum payments of this highly effective retention tool. Lump sum payments could dramatically increase the present value of the incentive and positively influence numerous highly qualified personnel that are currently "sitting on the fence." As it is now, payments are spread throughout four yearly checks. It would be an powerful incentive for these "fence sitters" to see their unit commander present a hard check in the amount of the total bonus on the very day another Marine reenlists.

Our intermediate and career force levels are slightly lower than historical norms. According to initial results of our Retention Survey, we have determined that pride of service,

pay, medical, and retirement benefits are top determinants in why Marines stay. We would like to thank you, Congress, for approving the compensation triad initiatives from last year. This is a positive step for influencing career retention. Despite overall attainment of retention objectives, we are experiencing minor unanticipated decreases in the continuation patterns of some career Marines, particularly at their second reenlistment. These decreases have resulted in shortages within certain specific MOSs with skills that are easily transferable to the civilian sector. Once again, the Selective Reenlistment Bonus is used to attack these disparities. More frequently, we are offering the SRB to intermediate and career reenlistees. We also target certain skills with other types of special incentive pays. While we believe these provide a short-term solution, in the long-term we would like to reduce the emphasis on bonuses and special pays and continue to focus on across the board increases in basic pays. The disparity of pay among Marines who enter the Corps together is becoming more apparent and the cultural outcome of major pay differences can only be divisive within our Corps. We value all Marines equally, and do not want those who do the bulk of the fighting to receive the least compensation.

Officers

Officer retention appears to be experiencing modest improvements over last year. Results from the first quarter of FY00 reflect that the overall officer attrition rate is decreasing slightly. Again, this may be attributed to the approved compensation triad and strategic use of specialty pays. However, as with the enlisted force, we have skill imbalances within our officer corps. These shortages are the result of higher attrition in fixed-wing aviation MOSs and some ground MOSs.

Fixed wing pilot retention is still a concern. Prior to FY96, the annual historic average for fixed wing pilot resignations was 35. The average between FY96 and FY98 was 94 per year.

There were 68 pilot resignations in FY99. The trend points to a FY00 projection of 60. We attack aviator attrition by using the Aviation Continuation Pay coupled with longer contracts. Currently, the Marine Corps has allotted \$14.9M for the Aviation Continuation Pay in FY01 up nearly \$4M from FY99.

QUALITY OF LIFE

We are reviewing our manning and staffing practices in an attempt to narrow the gap between our Operating Force structure and the manpower available to fill that structure. We have identified almost 2,100 Marines who, beginning in FY01, will be returning to the Operating Forces through privatization or consolidation. We are actively reviewing more billets for similar consideration. However, even with this great effort, we might not be able to narrow the manning gap sufficiently, and as we carefully review our force structure we may yet determine the need for more Marines.

The Commandant has said: “When a Marine asks for something, and it is a sensible request, we should do everything in our power to provide it. Saying *yes* to our Marines is particularly important in the day to day garrison environment in which Marines and their families interact with the support structure.”

This emphasis on saying *yes* is well placed. In 1993, our *Quality of Life in the U.S. Marine Corps* study showed that quality of life programs directly impact military outcomes - retention, personal and unit readiness, and mission accomplishment. Marines must be confident that their families are adequately taken care of, in terms of pay, health care, housing, and schools. With much appreciated help from Congress, DoD and DoN, the Marine Corps has invested heavily in improved programs, services, and facilities. Our investments are paying off. Our 1998 quality of life study showed improvement in 10 of the 11 life areas measured.

We can say yes to Marines because we listen to them, through a number of research instruments and by listening to their direct feedback, too. When they told us our support structure was too complicated, changed from base to base, and did not provide needed support, we took immediate action. We stood up a new QoL organization, Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS), which we believe will become the benchmark military QoL delivery system. MCCS retains the strong capabilities of former Family Services, MWR, Child Care, and Voluntary Education in an environment that eliminates bureaucratic “stovepipes” and advances these programs into the 21st Century. MCCS program capabilities - Marine Corps Family Team Building (MCFTB), Semper Fit, Personal Services, and Business Operations, sustain and support Marines and families. MCFTB openly affirms the value of the family unit and seeks ways to improve and strengthen family life. Personal Services groups activities that see to the general welfare and sustainment of Marines through either self-directed or intervention services that develop responsible citizenship traits, such as financial/money management, responsible and caring parenting, and help grow knowledgeable and confident individuals, be they Marines or family members. Semper Fit teams fun, fitness, and health, taking health management to a new level by providing programs that holistically contribute to health and wellness - fitness, nutrition, injury rehabilitation, and competitive sports. Business programs provide both high value goods and services needed by Marines and needed savings that contribute to financial well being.

A major quality of life issue for Marines and families is health care. Implementing the TRICARE system has involved wrenching changes, with serious growing pains. A number of shortcomings and systemic problems, such as with access and claims processing, and that our retirees and families of recruiters and Independent Duty Marines are not served, must be addressed. We expect a number of corrective initiatives under development by the Defense

Medical Oversight Board (DMOC) will lead to a more economically feasible and qualitative health care benefit for all active duty members, their families, and retirees. The Marine Corps has established a TRICARE Liaison Office to interface with DoD and provide information and help to Marines, especially the 98 percent of our spouses who are health care managers for their families. We also believe that cost increases to expand the TRICARE benefit should not be borne by the Marine Corps. Modernization and health care cannot be balanced nor properly resourced within existing budgets. Equipping Marines and providing responsive quality of life is a sustainment battle we cannot lose. We need your interest and support to ensure quality of health care keeps pace with the needs of our Marine family. We must get this one right.

Today, as always, Marines remain excited and proud of what they are doing. They are proud of the Eagle, Globe and Anchor and what it represents for our Country. It is our job to provide for them the leadership, resources, and moral guidance to carry our proud Corps forward throughout this new millennium.