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THE HOUSE ARMED
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STATEMENT OF
GENERAL ROBERT MAGNUS
ASSISTANT COMMANDANT
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

BEFORE THE
MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

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General Robert Magnus **Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps**

General Magnus assumed his duties as Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps on 8 September 2005.

Gen Magnus is a graduate of the University of Virginia (1969) and Strayer College (1993). His formal military education includes Naval Aviator Training, U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College, and the National War College.



Gen Magnus' operational assignments include:

Intelligence Officer, HMM-264; Operations Officer, H&MS-15 SAR Detachment, Task Force Delta, Nam Phong, Thailand; Training Officer, SOES, MCAS Quantico; Aviation Safety Officer, MAG-26 and HMM-263; Weapons and Tactics Instructor, MAG-26 and HMM-261; Operations Officer, MAG-29; Commanding Officer, HMM-365; Commander, Marine Corps Air Bases Western Area; and Deputy Commander, Marine Forces Pacific.

Gen Magnus' staff assignments include: Aviation Assault Medium Lift Requirements Officer; Chief, Logistics Readiness Center, Joint Staff; Executive Assistant to the Director of the Joint Staff; Head, Aviation Plans and Programs Branch; Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Aviation; Assistant Deputy Commandant for Plans, Policies, and Operations; and Deputy Commandant for Programs and Resources.

Chairwoman Davis, Congressman McHugh, distinguished Members of the Military Personnel Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today as you continue your inquiry into Marine Corps policies and procedures regarding next of kin notification. Based upon recent Marine Corps testimony, I want to ensure the record is set straight. I deeply regret to say that the information we provided at the hearing on June 27th of this year, and the subsequent briefing on July 17th was not entirely accurate. I greatly appreciate that the Subcommittee is allowing me the opportunity to provide updated, factual information.

Every Marine is precious and the families of our fallen and wounded Marines are entitled to accurate, timely information on the causes and circumstances of their loved one's death or injury. Despite the best of intentions of Marines during the casualty notification and assistance process, an internal review revealed that processing deficiencies directly and adversely affected timely, accurate notification, especially regarding the investigations into and final determinations of two Marines killed in action due to friendly fire. We are immediately acting on mistakes made to prevent further problems, documenting the lessons learned, and decisively moving to correct notification and command oversight procedures.

Investigations and Casualty Reporting Procedures

The Marine Corps investigation policy and procedures are bounded in the Department of the Navy's Manual of the Judge Advocate General. The Marine Corps conducts a preliminary investigation/inquiry into all deaths for the

purpose of documenting the incident and determining if a further investigation is warranted. Further investigation is required, if the preliminary inquiry reveals the circumstances of the death are unclear. Our casualty reporting policies and procedures are established in Marine Corps Order P3040.4E (27 February 2003), the Marine Corps Casualty Procedures Manual. Because the order mandates the timely reporting of all casualties, irrespective of their cause, special procedures are not indicated, specified or needed for reporting of known or suspected friendly fire incidents.

When a reportable casualty incident occurs, it is the responsibility of the casualty's command to telephonically notify Headquarters Marine Corps Casualty Section and the Marine Corps Operations Center within one hour after learning of the incident, followed by the submission of a Personnel Casualty Report (PCR). Commands must provide the Casualty Section with all available, accurate, and verified information pertaining to the casualty incident. When friendly fire is known, or suspected to be involved, that information must be provided in the PCR accompanied by pertinent details available at that time. Actions taken by any personnel to impede disclosure of this type of information are not tolerated. If available information is incomplete upon initial reporting, the command must state so in the PCR and further indicate that a supplemental PCR will follow. When the initial report was believed to be complete, but later discovered to have been incomplete or incorrect, a supplemental PCR is also required. These reporting procedures apply to any Service member, civilian, or contractor serving with deployed Marine units.

Therefore, there must be and is close coordination with the Casualty Assistance Offices of our Sister Services.

Upon receipt of the PCR involving a fatality or where a Marine's duty status or whereabouts is unknown, our Casualty Section locates and tasks the closest unit to the primary next of kin and secondary next of kin to provide official notification and casualty assistance via the assigned Casualty Assistance Calls Officer (CACO). Primary and secondary next of kin are designated by each Service member on his or her Record of Emergency Data. Marine Corps CACO selection is based upon rank (staff NCO or higher), professional maturity, and the ability to represent the Commandant. Marine Corps CACOs are trained and provided additional support and monitoring from the Casualty Section on each case. Primary and secondary next of kin of the deceased are notified in person, between the hours of 0500-2400 local time. The CACO provides the primary next of kin all known facts of the death and provides additional information as it becomes available from any supplemental PCRs that may follow. CACOs are not routinely assigned in wounded/injured cases. Information on wounded Marines is normally passed through command channels to the family and/or the Marine, not through a CACO.

Friendly Fire Incidents

From our review, we learned that the connection between PCRs and investigations is critical to the timely delivery of accurate information to the next of kin. It is also essential that a single repository of information be established at HQMC. Our review revealed that command

investigations were conducted on all suspected friendly fire cases. However, the review also revealed that investigation initiations or results were not routinely reported via a PCR as required. Because this is not acceptable, the Commandant has directed the Marine Corps Inspector General to investigate our procedures.

Remedies

Our duty is to ensure next of kin notification is conducted in accordance with existing casualty procedures. We fully acknowledge past process failures that negatively impacted the families of two Marines.

Marines and the Marine Corps expect that, while ensuring proper readiness for mission accomplishment, we will always take care of our Marines and their families. To reinforce this, the Marine Corps will renew emphasis on casualty reporting requirements. We are taking immediate remedial actions to ensure policy and statute is followed in all cases:

1. We must and will do the right thing for our Marines and their families.
2. We will ensure our training is rigorous and effective.
3. We will change higher headquarters reporting procedures to ensure effective reporting between HQMC and subordinate command elements.
4. We must and will ensure there are tight links between the investigation and reporting processes in order for our system to properly serve Marines and their families.
5. We are issuing a Marine Administrative message to all Marines, as well as a White Letter from the Commandant

to all Commanding Generals, Commanding Officers, and Officers in Charge, to reemphasize investigation and reporting requirements.

6. We will work with the Department of Defense to implement changes to the Defense Casualty Information Processing System (DCIPS) in order to facilitate data entry and reporting of initiated and completed investigations.

7. Finally, there will be proactive coordination between HQMC and our subordinate command elements to strengthen oversight of reporting compliance.

The Headquarters Marine Corps Casualty Section will be our single Marine Corps office responsible for representation of the Marine Corps and quality support of the families of our fallen and injured warriors.

Conclusion

Again, on behalf of the Marine Corps, I apologize for the mistakes we have made, and thank the Subcommittee for this opportunity to correct the record.