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Interview with Commandant of the Marine Corps General James Amos

As the Marine Corps works to further diversify its ranks, General James Amos, Commandant of the Marine Corps, spoke with FRA about the importance of diversity.

FRA: Why does it matter that the Marine Corps is diverse?

Commandant of the Marine Corps Amos: The Marine Corps is a product of the American experience and a defender of our 235-year-old experiment in democracy. It is important that the Marine Corps' composition include the many facets of our great society and remain connected to the American people.

History has shown us that inclusive societies are more stable, democratic and equitable — societies in which leadership and responsibility are shared amongst the various groups that comprise it.

The objective of diversity is achieving an organizational composition reflective of contemporary American society and raising the total capability of the Corps by leveraging all the strengths of all our Marines.

FRA: The military as a whole has been a leader in racial and gender integration for decades and the Marine Corps is obviously an equal-opportunity employer. Are there reasons that the Corps' demographics aren't more representative of the U.S. population?

CMC Amos: Across the entire Marine Corps, our demographics are fairly representative. We are focused on a comprehensive approach to ensuring our Corps reflects the composition of the American public.

We are not where we want to be with our officer corps. We are especially emphasizing our recruitment, mentoring and retention of minority

officers since this is the area in which we want to improve most. We are also improving our mentorship of all officers so that we increase opportunities for minorities to serve at higher levels of leadership within our Corps.

FRA: What steps are being employed to support this diversity strategy?

CMC Amos: The Marine Corps Leadership and Mentoring Program is being reviewed and updated to ensure a proper level of diversity training, education and supervision. The key focus is communication, proper development and early identification and assistance for all Marines.

Initiatives such as The Marine Corps Leadership Seminar (MCLS) were established to develop a dialogue with university/institutional leadership to attract top talent for Marine Corps officer and enlisted programs. The MCLS is being implemented to engage the nation's diverse communities and to promote increased connectedness. The MCLS will provide a forum to showcase Marine Corps leadership and to attract potential Marine military candidates; ensure event participants gain positive impressions of the Marine Corps; and build relationships among influencers within selected urban communities.

We are reviewing our officer recruiting procedures to ensure we are maximizing our opportunities to recruit and select the very best of American youth to join our Corps.

FRA: You've recently spoken about the contributions of the Montford



U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Ben Flores

Point Marines to Marine Corps and American history. As the first African-Americans to serve in the Marine Corps since 1798, they opened the door for racial integration. Why is their legacy important to today's Marines?

CMC Amos: The Marines who served at Montford Point are a part of the rich legacy of our Corps. They answered our nation's call at a time when our society was deeply divided along racial lines. As such, many of their contributions went unrecognized and many times they were not given the recognition they deserved as Marines, as Americans, and as patriots.

It is important to all Marines, past and present, that we honor their selfless service and sacrifice and fully embrace their storied contribution to the history of our Corps. It is our intent to anchor our Montford Point Marines firmly in our Corps' 235-year history, and to anchor it in such a way that every young man or woman joining our Corps today clearly understands the significance of the contribution of these great American patriots.

Note from FRA: FRA supports efforts to recognize the Montford Point Marines' contributions in the same way the Tuskegee Airmen and Buffalo Soldiers have been acknowledged. To that end, FRA supports legislation (H.R. 2447) that seeks to confer the Congressional Gold Medal on the original Montford Point Marines.