

**OFFICE OF  
THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS**

**BREAKFAST IN HONOR OF CHAIRMAN IKE SKELTON**

**REMARKS BY  
GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS,  
COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS**

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2010**

Ladies and gentlemen, thanks for coming to the oldest post of the Marine Corps, the Marine Barracks of Washington, D.C. A little history on this hall – it is now called the Crawford Hall, named after that great band director that you see on the wall over there. But this was the original stomping grounds of John Philip Sousa.

And this was where John Philip Sousa, who was raised in Washington, D.C. a block-and-a-half from the Marine Barracks of Washington, wrote his many, many military marches. So this is sacred ground for the Marine Corps ... the grounds were actually discovered by the then-Commandant Lieutenant Colonel Burrows, and the President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson.

It's good to have you here. We're honored to have many distinguished guests with us today.

First, the chairman's lovely wife, Patty. Patty, thank you for braving the rainstorm. I was watching the weather – being a good pilot, I pay very close attention to the weather – and I managed to pick the one day that there was supposed to be heavy rain and a flood in Washington, so I'm glad you're here. And for everybody else that managed to gut it out, thank you for being here.

From the great state of Missouri, Representative Emanuel Cleaver is here; Representative Todd Akin, Representative Blaine Luetkemeyer, Representative Paul Broun of the United States Marine Corps, from the great state of Georgia. From the great state of Arkansas, Representative Vic Snyder, United States Marine Corps; and Representative Jane Harman from the great state of California.

The 32nd Commandant of the Marine Corps, and former National Security Advisor, General Jim Jones, and the former first lady of the Marine Corps, his lovely bride Diane. The Under Secretary of the Air Force, former chief of staff of the House Armed Services Committee, and a secret and latent admirer of the United States Marine Corps is with us, [the Honorable Erin Conaton].

A particularly warm welcome to the men and women who really do the heavy-lifting for the committee: Paul Arcangeli is here, the chief of staff of the House Armed Services Committee. Debra Wada is here, the deputy staff director for the House Armed Services Committee. Paul Lewis is here today, general counsel to the House Armed Services Committee, and Will Ebbs is here as a professional staff member and a close personal friend of the United States Marine Corps.

General Joe Dunford, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps and his bride Ellyn are with us. Sergeant Major Carlton Kent, sitting at the head table, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps; the current first lady of the Marine Corps, my lovely bride Bonnie, sitting next to the chairman and a host of fellow general officers from around the national capital region are all here.

Welcome on this radiant morning as we gather to pay tribute to a national hero, an all-around friend to men and women from all branches of service, but in particular, to the United States Marine Corps.

I'm keenly aware of the chairman's adherence to punctuality during committee hearings, having testified before him more than one or two times. So before he puts down the gavel on me, I'll call the chaplain up, we'll ask for grace and then we'll be on for breakfast, and I'll join you after breakfast. Bon appétit.

### **AFTER BREAKFAST REMARKS**

[Someone asked me], "How do you like your new job?" And I think I've been in it about six weeks. I said, "Oh, it's great. There's nothing going on here, just JSF, EFV, 'don't ask, don't tell' – among a few other things."

Speaking of "don't ask, don't tell," I talked to Admiral Willard yesterday, who is the PACOM commander out at Camp Smith in Hawaii, and we were talking about some joint matters and personnel matters and that kind of stuff.

And I said, "Hey, Bob, how's Korea going?" He said, "You know, this is – as you might imagine – consuming an awful lot of my time." And we talked about Korea for just a little bit. And I said, "Bob, I'll make a deal: I'll trade you 'don't ask, don't tell' for North Korea." And there was silence on the phone. For 40 seconds, you could sense that he was churning the idea – he says, "No, I'll take North Korea."

While we gather here, it's 9:00am, and it's about 5:30 in the evening in the Helmand province in southern Afghanistan. The sun has just gone down. The night is beginning to cool off rapidly, and Marines are finding their way in from patrols and convoys from all over those 10,000 square miles. And they're coming in, looking for some place to eat chow.

And I doubt seriously that the chow that they're going to find will be quite as good as we have here this morning. Contrary to popular belief, I did not fix this breakfast at 2:00 this morning. It was done by the great chefs that you see running around in here and taking such great care of us. But the 20,000 Marines and sailors will have just come in [to their Forward Operating Bases] all across Helmand Province. Some are getting ready to go out on their night patrols.

The [Marines there] have many things in common. They're tired and they're hungry. Some will have had a rougher day than others. We are in a particularly nasty part of Afghanistan. There is much good news in the Helmand province, but there are also some tough spots that the Marines and the sailors, and those coalition and allied forces are working their way through, up in the northeast corner [of the Helmand Province].

But they all have one thing in common. They may be tired; they may be scared. They may have just seen one of their brothers fall. They may be hungry. But all in all, all 20,000 are a happy lot. Chairman Skelton and I were out on the portico and watched Old Glory being raised

up over Marine Barracks Washington, and a lone bugler played. And I was standing there alongside the chairman and thinking, what is it about Marines that they find solace in something as heartwarming as raising the American flag?

I thought about it and I came to the conclusion that there really are about three things that live in the soul of every U.S. Marine. They're almost spiritual in nature. I'm not talking about Baptist or Catholic or Jewish. I'm talking about that sense of spirit that resides in a force such as the United States Marine Corps. These spiritual things define who we are and they define and help explain, to some measure, why we've been able to do the many things the Marine Corps has done over its 235 years of service to our nation.

First, all Marines have a love of country. It's at their core; it's at their very roots. They believe in the ideals of our nation and they feel it's their duty as a citizen to serve this country in some capacity. They chose the Marine Corps over other options. We didn't join them; they joined us.

Second, Marines are willing to sacrifice in service to our country and in service to their fellow Americans – through frequent deployments, through separation from family members and a willingness to give their life for their country and their fellow Marines. This is the life of a U.S. Marine.

Finally, a commitment to a higher calling – a calling that is larger than themselves, that binds them and all Marines together. This commitment to our Corps, to our country and all that it represents can be seen here at Marine Barracks Washington, onboard the mighty Navy vessels of the 15th, the 26th and the 31st Marine Expeditionary Units – which are at sea today as we have breakfast, and in the Helmand province, with the 20,000 Marines and sailors in southern Afghanistan.

Ladies and gentleman, Chairman Isaac Newton Skelton, IV, known to many as Ike, is a true patriot, an American statesman, and most notably, he has lived his life in service to our great nation. Like our Marines, Chairman Skelton has loved his country above all else, having served it faithfully as a U.S. Representative for over 33 years.

He has willingly sacrificed what most Americans hold dear, a private and personal life. He has sacrificed his family time, his time away from his wife, from his children, and now, from his grandchildren. And like many of his fellow Marines, he has grown old during a time of war. And lastly, no one can doubt his willingness to be part of something that's greater than himself, as he has served his fellow Americans for [these many] years.

Born and raised in the great state of Missouri – or as he would say, *Mi-zoor-uh* – he's a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Missouri. He was a Missouri state senator before he joined Congress. And since 1977, Chairman Skelton has represented the 4<sup>th</sup> district of the "Show-Me" state, an area where the chairman's hero president, Harry S. Truman, was born and raised. For 33 years, Chairman Skelton has kept his constituents and our nation's best interests at heart.

However, for all the countless things he has done in Congress, he is known best for his love and care of the U.S. military serviceman and woman. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Goldwater-Nichols Act. I'm told the only reason his name is not on that bill is because at the time he was too junior a U.S. congressman. But historians say that it was largely his commitment to the bill that helped carry it across the finish line.

Chairman Skelton is known throughout the military as the father of professional military education. Our own Marine Corps University exists down at Quantico in its current form almost singularly due to the support of Chairman Skelton. It exists with a robust staff, professorships, research capability, all because of your efforts, Chairman. You have always recognized the importance of a thinking officer corps.

His prescience is paying huge dividends throughout the world today, as we continue to fight a complex and adaptive enemy in some of the world's toughest spots, all with the keenly educated minds of our young men and women. He has been a leading voice in seeing the fight through in Afghanistan. Before it was popular, he recognized the importance of a stronger military presence in Afghanistan, knowing that failure would only strengthen the resolve of a vicious ideology.

Chairman Skelton is no stranger to the U.S. Marine Corps. Each year since 2001, when U.S. Marines from Task Force 58 – 5,000 strong – made their debut in Afghanistan, and throughout the many long years in Iraq, Chairman Skelton travelled to theater over and over again to speak and spend time with men and women from all services, but in particular to his Marines, always ready to provide help in any way possible.

He is equally comfortable talking to a lance corporal, a machine gunner, or a three-star general. And if you asked him this morning, he would probably tell you he'd rather talk to the lance corporal. And I can't say I blame him.

For those of you who don't know, Chairman Skelton is a military history buff. He is particularly fascinated with the World War II Pacific campaign, so much so that on a trip last year through the Pacific region – many of you that are here having breakfast with us this morning were on that trip – he made a point to schedule a stop on the island of Iwo Jima, where he laid a wreath at the memorial on Mount Suribachi.

He has been previously honored by the Marine Corps on three different occasions. He is the 1994 recipient of the Marine Corps University's Chapman Medallion, honoring his efforts to enhance professional military education in our Corps. He is a 2001 recipient of the Marine Corps Semper Fidelis Award, honoring his leadership and support of the United States Marine Corps. He is an honorary graduate of Marine Corps Command and Staff College.

I spoke earlier of the three almost spiritual things that embody a U.S. Marine: love of country, willingness to sacrifice, commitment to something larger than themselves. Ladies and gentlemen, Ike Skelton has all three of these characteristics in spades. Thus it is fitting and appropriate that we recognize him for his unyielding support and devotion to corps and country.

Chairman, today you join your father, who was a Navy man. You join your son Jim, who is an Army colonel, and your son Ike, who is a Navy captain. And as a proud member of the U.S. military, you join them today in the ranks. And now, sir, you have true family bragging rights on all of them because you're about to become a member of the world's finest fighting force.

In the 235-year history of the United States Marine Corps, only 73 other Americans have been awarded the title honorary Marine. It was established to reinforce the special bond between Marines and the American people. Finally, it was established in recognition of individuals who have distinguished themselves through noteworthy service to Corps and country.

Chairman, in honor of all that you stand for, in honor of all that you have accomplished, and in honor of all that you have done for the United States of America and its Marine Corps, you are, without question, deserving of the title of United States Marine. Chairman, will you please join me up front?

#### **Citation**

To all who shall see these presents greetings, know ye that reposing special trust and confidence in the patriotism, fidelity and abilities of the Honorable Ike Skelton, I do appoint him an honorary Marine of the United States Marine Corps for his unyielding support and devotion to Corps and country. In testimony thereof, I, General James F. Amos, Commandant of the Marine Corps, have hereunto inscribed my name. Done in the city of Washington, this first day of December, in the year of our Lord two thousand ten, and in the 235th year of the independence of the United States of America.

You have plenty of things hanging in your office, and I'd appreciate it if you'd take [one of] them down [to make room for this citation]. But this is your certificate of being a United States Marine. Chairman, you are loved by those 202,000 Marines that are on active duty and the hundreds of thousands that have had your fingerprints on them over the last many years that you've been not only a U.S. Congressman, but, in particular, the Chairman.

Sir, you have loved your Marines. You have loved our men and women. And we are very, very grateful for all that you have done for us. It is our pleasure and our honor to make you a United States Marine.