

➤ End Strength Increase

DISCUSSION

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2002 authorized the Marine Corps to complete FY 2002 with an end strength of 17,888 officers and 154,712 enlisted, for a total of 172,600 Marines. However, after the attacks on 11 September 2001, the Commandant ordered the establishment of the 4th MEB (AT) to enhance the Corps' effectiveness in the global war on terrorism. The increased strength requirement for 4th MEB of 2,400 Marines raised the Corps' FY 2002 end strength target to 175,000.

In October and November 2001, the Department of the Navy recommended that the FY 2003 President's Budget reflect funding for 175,000 Marines.

That recommendation was approved by the Department of Defense and is part of the President's FY 2003 budget. Both the House and Senate Armed Services Committees have supported the President's budget request for end strength of 175,000. Anticipating the Appropriations Committees will provide similar support and in concert with our FY 2002 end strength attainment, we have structured our FY 2003 manpower and accession plans to ensure achievement of 175,000.

MARINE CORPS POSITION

The Marine Corps needs to maintain a 175,000 end strength to meet critical mission requirements.