

**Office of the Commandant of the Marine Corps**

**CMC Remarks Commissioning OCC Class 211  
at the National Museum of the Marine Corps**

**General James F. Amos  
Commandant of the Marine Corps**

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COL STILLINGS: So without further ado, I would like to introduce and bring up General Amos, the Commandant of the Marine Corps. (Applause)

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Thanks, Kris. I'm sitting down looking at all of these soon-to-be lieutenants sitting in front of me and they're all pretty sober and pretty serious. I suspect that here in about another couple of minutes, you'll have smiles on your faces. I got to tell you - I get to view a lot of parades. We live at 8th & I -- my wife and I -- and on any Friday night between May and August, we have 4,000 of our closest friends in our backyard, and we get to watch the Marines of 8th & I, we get to watch the President's Own, the Marine Corps Drum and Bugle Corps march up and down our backyard on Friday nights. Today's parade was of every bit of quality as we see every Friday night and every Tuesday night at the Marine War Memorial.

Candidates, you look like a million bucks out there today, and for Charlie Company and the staff and the CO, thank you for producing such fine young men and women. And we're going to commission them here in just a second, and it's going to be an exciting day for the Marine Corps.

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome. We've already had several guests that were recognized. I'm going to make just a couple of comments here. First of all, our Reviewing Officer for this morning's graduation, Mark Welch, and the First Lady of the United States Air Force, his ever lovely bride, Ms. Betty. Thank you for being here. Thanks for producing such a fine young man. I don't know how he became a Marine, but somewhere along the line he saw the light. (Laughter) You need to know probably a year-and-a-half ago when Mark and Betty were living in Stuttgart -- excuse me -- Ramstein, Germany, he was the commander of all the US Air Forces in Europe, among a few other titles.

I had just come out of Afghanistan and was visiting our Marines, and we stopped in Landstuhl there at Ramstein to visit our wounded. And Mark and Betty were gracious enough to have us over for dinner, and during that night, he took us around the house and showed us pictures of all the children, and he said see this guy right here, Matt, he wants to be a Marine Officer. Now he's out in the crowd out here somewhere, and I'm about to commission him. But I remember looking at Mark thinking how did this happen? (Laughter) And I said well, where is he in life? How's he doing? And he said well, he's working with a recruiter, and he's going to be okay. We're going to get him a few more Pull-ups and, (Laughter) you know, knock off a minute or two off his run, but he's going to be great. And I said do you need any help, and he said oh, no, no, don't you touch this boy. (Laughter) He'll do it on his own.

So, Matt, you're out in the crowd, and you have truly done this on your own. You've done this along with the 118 fellow candidates here. So, Mark and Betty, thanks for loaning us your son. I promise you we'll take very good care of him. General Butch Neal, I got to talk to Butch here just a second ago, the Former Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps. I spent 27 blissful months as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, so there's a great affinity when you've been in that job because you're the executive officer for the entire United States Marine Corps.

And what you need to know is on any given day, the Marine Corps has a little over 35,000 young men and women that are teenagers, so can you imagine waking up every single day of your life and there are 30,000 teenagers trying to screw with you every single day. (Laughter) And when you're the Executive Officer of the Marine Corps, you're responsible for them, so, Butch, it's good to have you here. Tomorrow at 8th & I, we we'll promote J. Paxton to four-stars and post him in your old job. He will be the 33rd Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps. Rusty Blackman, the keeper -- my old boss, the keeper of this wonderful museum that we are a part of today, thank you, Rusty, for all that you do every single day. And I was told that Leo Williams was going to be here. I don't -- I didn't see him.

But let me breakout another group of folks that work so hard, and are the keepers of the spirit of our Corps, the ever-present guardians of discipline, certainly important in the development in the advising and mentoring of our young officers and our young officers to be. This group of great Marines are called our Sergeants Major, and in this room, there are probably 20 or 30 of them. I'd like to just bring out -- call out the names of just a few that are here today whose fingerprints have been on many Marines throughout their career: Sergeant Major Eric Stockton, the Sergeant Major of Marine Barracks Washington; Sergeant Major Brown, the Sergeant Major of Marine Corps Base Quantico; Sergeant Major Whittington of the 4th Marine Logistics Group; Sergeant Major Hammerschmidt of Marine Aircraft Group 29; Sergeant Major Rubio of 2nd Light Armor Reconnaissance Battalion; as well as our very own, here at OCS, Sergeant Major Jason Ruff.

Sergeant Majors I want to thank you. The job I have I get to see Marines all across the globe both officer enlisted young and old, and I find as I've gotten older, not because I've become melancholy, but because I've come to understand where the rubber meets the road and where that skilled mentorship and leadership comes from our Sergeants Major. I want to thank you for what you do for us every single day. And, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to recognize -- and I always try to do this publically because she does so much for our Marine Corps, and she's been a part of my life for 42 years since the day I was commissioned, the First Lady of the Marine Corps, Bonnie Amos. (Applause)

Folks, let me now direct my comments to the reason we're here today. And to those in the audience sitting in front of me who are soon to become Marines, I want to talk to you about our Marine heritage, our pride of service and a little bit about our character. I'm reminded of these qualities every time -- every single time -- I visit Marines whether they're completing a formal school or whether they're conducting patrols in and around Afghanistan. I see it when I visit the wounded at Bethesda. I see it in their eyes. All who wear our Eagle, Globe and Anchor understand what it means to live up to our proud heritage. Our 7,000 young men and women still in Afghanistan today live like modern Spartans, with few creature comforts, they bathe each day with baby wipes and shave, if needed, in cold water. They may smell a little bit ripe to any new arrival or visitor, but they are a happy and fearless lot. Despite all hardships, these young Marines remain confident, vigilant and ready.

Sergeant Major Barrett and I visit our Marines in Afghanistan as often as we possibly can. In fact, we leave this coming Friday to spend Christmas with the 6800 Marines in the Helmand Province. I promise you that among those almost 7,000 Marines on the ground, there are several 2nd Lieutenants who graduated from Officer Candidate School sometime within the last 12 months. I want to share with you a citation that reflects the character of the young

Marines we build here at Officer Candidate School. This is the story of a young lieutenant's courage. His name is Lieutenant James Carter. He is being awarded the Bronze Star with combat decoration. The citation reads as the following:

“For heroic service in connection with combat operations against the enemy, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Lieutenant Carter successfully planned, coordinated and directed the execution of over 600 combat patrols in two of the most kinetic areas in the Helmand Province. Through his expert analysis and attention to detail, his platoon discovered 19 improvised explosive devices leading to one of the highest find-to-strike ratios in the regimental area of operations. His actions resulted in the elimination of 22 insurgents, the detention of two confirmed improvised explosive device emplacements and the defeat of insurgents in eight direct fire engagements. His tactical prowess severely disrupted insurgent activity throughout the company's area of operation. This drove a wedge between the insurgents and the local population. During Operation Eastern Storm, he placed himself in the line of intense, effective enemy fire on numerous occasions to maneuver his forces to positions of advantage, disregarding his own well-being, for that, a mission accomplishment and the safety of the Marines and sailors in his charge. Throughout the deployment, he directed his Marines with poise, with precision and with courage, and by his extraordinary guidance, zealous initiative and total dedication to duty, Lieutenant Carter reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval service.”

I can't begin to tell you how many of these types of citations I've read in the last decade. It's this kind of character that defines our storied heritage and over time has been shaped by Marines like Dan Dailey, John Basilone, John Ripley, Dakota Meyer. Candidates, as you sit here in this storied and wonderful Leatherneck Gallery, in a center of a building that tells our 237-year history, you should feel the weight of our legacy on your shoulders. At the same time, you should also feel a tremendous sense of pride because each of you have earned the right to wear the Eagle, Globe and Anchor. After today, you will represent all that it symbolizes; after this morning, you will be one of us.

The Marine Corps needs you. It's not so much a matter of the fact that I need you, rather it's the lance corporal, it's the 18-year-old PFC and our young NCOs. They need you. Their well-being and at times, their very lives will rest in your hands. Their mothers and fathers, their families, they have high expectations about your ability to lead their sons and their daughters, high expectations about your faithfulness and when it counts most, high expectations about your courage. You must determine now, today, to never fail them. It's not lost on me that every one of you stepped forward to serve in the toughest service during a time of war.

I realize that on September the 11th, most of you were finishing grade school or were just starting middle school. Yet, in spite of the great tragedy of that fateful day, years later you came; you came to join us, to wear our cloth. In the wake of those attacks, we saw the best of America's character. It resonated all across our country. Who can forget the flags draped along every bridge and every overpass in our nation, the flags attached to every car and every pickup truck, the sincere patriotism and solemn gatherings of remembrance across our land? At that moment, strangers became neighbors, partisan politics disappeared. We set aside our personal differences, and we were defined by only one word, we were Americans. The tragedies of September the 11th galvanized Americans and gave us a resolve that many of us had never

known before. It gave to us a commitment to something greater than ourselves. It showed us our true character as Americans.

As you join our ranks and become Lieutenants of Marines, I want to emphasize the importance of character. Character is more than your attitude. It's more than your words and it's more than your deeds. It's what shapes and defines you as a lieutenant. Your thoughts, your choices and your actions are determined by your character. It signals to the world who you are and what you stand for. Teddy Roosevelt captured it best when he said, "Character is shown in peace no less than in war. ... as the greatest perfection of armament, will not make soldiers out of cowards, so no mental training and no bodily vigor will maintain a nation great if it lacks the fundamental principles of honesty and moral cleanliness." Today, as you enter the greatest military the world has ever known, I challenge you to be leaders of character, men and women of honesty and moral cleanliness. Our young Marines and their families expect and deserve nothing less.

Ladies and gentlemen, before I administer the oath to these young candidates, I want to take a minute to recognize, again, and thank the Commanding Officer and the staff of Officer Candidate School, Colonel Kris Stillings and his wonderful team. Thank you. Thank all of you. Thanks, Chris, Sergeant Major, for all that you've done to train, to evaluate and to screen these 119 officer candidates. The quality of these future lieutenants is a direct result of your hard work. They leave here today as champions. They have overcome. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in a round of applause for the Marines and sailors of Officer Candidate School.  
(Applause)

In this audience, there are family members, our balconies all throughout this entire building. To you, I want to say congratulations. Thank you for loaning us your sons and your daughters, and thank you for raising young men and women of character and determination. You have my word that we will care for them well.

Candidates rise and stand at attention. It's my honor to commission you as a Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps. Welcome to my Corps. Wear my cloth well.

(END)