

9 October 2013

General,

I've had a week now to reflect on our General Officers' Symposium and our discussions regarding the way-ahead for our Corps. For more than a decade, our Marines have endured, overcome, and thrived in the morally bruising arena of human combat. **No Commandant could be prouder of our Marines' accomplishments – they have fought spectacularly in our nation's longest war. Leadership throughout the entire chain of command has been courageous, decisive, compassionate, and honorable.** Under your leadership, our Marines exceeded every expectation.

Thank you.

And as we prepare for future conflicts, we face a confluence of challenges: mission completion and subsequent withdrawal from Afghanistan, the reality of sequestration and resultant tough fiscal choices, post OEF force structure redesign and its necessary force drawdown, and more than a few behavioral problems. As we reset from 12 years of war, we cannot settle in to a garrison lifestyle...this is not what we do! The world remains a dangerous place and the United States of America needs its Marines to be ready! The actions we take over the next 6 to 12 months will determine our state of readiness, and reconfirm *who we are* as an institution and *what we do* in the defense of our nation. There needs to be a sense of urgency among all General Officers, as I am convinced we will have to fight this force again within the next 5 to 10 years. We have to "get it right."

At the GOS, we spoke about our need to intellectually, physically and morally "reawaken the soul of our Corps" to those timeless attributes and habits that have defined our Corps for 238 years: persistent discipline, faithful obedience to orders and instructions, concerned and engaged leadership (24/7), and strict adherence to standards from fire team leader to General Officer. These habits, these attributes, our undeniable belief in "who we are and what we do" form the foundation of our Corps.

"Marine human material was not one whit better than that of the human society from which it came. But it had been hammered into form in a different forge, hardened with a different fire. The Marines were the closest thing to legions the nation had. They would follow their colors from the shores of home to the seacoast of Bohemia, and fight well at either place." T.R. Fehrenbach

We will not invent new programs or write new Marine Corps Orders, rather, we will do a better job of understanding and enforcing existing orders and regulations. Every Marine leader needs to know our standards, why they exist, and what we expect of them; we need to hold ourselves accountable to these standards. This includes the basics of maintaining a high state of good order and discipline, and a positive command climate. It means that all of our Corps' leaders show the same level of interest and involvement in their Marines in garrison as they did while on combat deployments.

Our Corps is experiencing behavioral problems with a small, but not insignificant number of Marines – both officer and enlisted – who are not living up to our ethos and core values. Many of the problems that rise to my level are in fact the result of local circumstances at the Battalion/Regiment and Squadron/Group level. I expect you to empower your Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel Commanders to address leadership issues in their units – and if they cannot, or are unwilling, to find other leaders who can. Left unchecked, a continuation of unacceptable conduct will erode our character and the faith the American people place in their Marine Corps.

Our end state is a Corps that is reset, balanced, and ready to fight our nation's battles.

This Corps will be stronger than ever because of its strict adherence to our legendary high standards of discipline, obedience to orders, a strong sense of accountability, and persistently engaged leadership. My intent is that each of you will shoulder these responsibilities with a sense of urgency. I am confident you *know* what needs to be done and *why*. I leave the *how* to you.

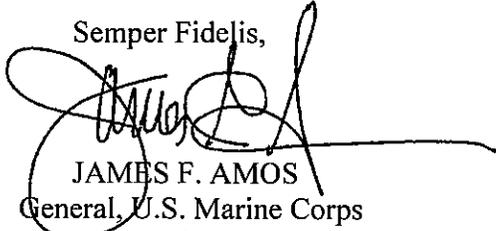
As discussed at the GOS, here is what I want you to accomplish immediately:

- **Direct leadership attention to our barracks.** Increase officer/SNCO interest and presence in our barracks, at all hours. As soon as practical, restore unit integrity to our barracks. Our barracks need to be safe-havens for our Marines; we need a secure environment established immediately. Units fight like they live. Well-disciplined units are always a terror to the enemy while sloppy units tarnish our reputation. I expect your feedback on the actions you will take so that we may share best practices across the force.
- **Expand the authority of our NCOs;** entrust them with the same level of responsibility at home as we did in combat. Strong leadership is the key to our success, and thus our Non-Commissioned Officers are our main effort. Of the 174,415 enlisted Marines on active duty today, 145,114 are Sergeants and below. Fully 83.2% of our enlisted force is led by NCOs. Our Sergeants and Corporals proved over the past decade of war that they are the backbone of our Corps. As such, we will publically increase the stature of our NCOs commensurate with our high regard for them. Commanding Officers and Sergeants Major need to improve the quality of our promotion ceremonies for Corporals and Sergeants. Establish more stringent criteria for promotion to the NCO ranks. Cutting scores will become initial qualifiers for promotion, not determinants of promotion.
- **Our leaders need to be in front of their Marines,** not tied down by often unnecessary 'administrivia' and computer work. HQMC staff is reviewing 100% of all Marine Corps Orders/requirements and recommending those that can be cancelled, abbreviated, or combined. I expect each of you to recommend three orders/requirements that can be cancelled today.
- **We will enforce all established standards.** This will include behavior, physical conditioning, personal appearance, and weight standards.

- **We will stop accepting bad behavior or substandard performance as a natural consequence of being a “combat hardened” Marine Corps.** We have counseling methods and tools for performance evaluation, developmental counseling, and mentoring. We need to use them consistently. A Marine should routinely hear from their leaders what is expected and how they are performing.
- **Every Marine Corporal and above will read *Leading Marines (MCWP 6-11)* and *Sustaining the Transformation (MCRP 6-11D)* by 10 November 2013,** and leaders will discuss the wisdom contained within these texts with their Marines...that includes my Generals.
- Leaders, at every level of the chain of command, need to increase their attention to personal and unit accountability. We have no room for those who fail to adhere to our core values and ethos.

By returning our Marines’ focus to excellence in the basics, accountability and discipline, we will also get after some of the tougher behavior issues we face like sexual assault, hazing and fraternization.

When we all pull in the same direction, the Corps will follow...it’s always been that way. Thank you for your leadership.

Semper Fidelis,

JAMES F. AMOS
General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps