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### A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

If there were a watchword for 2020, the shortlist would certainly include ‘change,’ ‘uncertainty,’ and ‘adaptation.’ This new dynamic and uncertain environment has impacted how we recruit and train Marines, deploy aboard ship, and even how we honor our Corps’ hallowed traditions. But adapting to change and uncertainty is nothing new for Marines. It is what we have done for 245 years and what is expected of us as the Nation’s force-in-readiness. Where others see challenges, Marines see opportunities. We don’t take a knee. We will always be ready to answer the nation’s call, no matter the crisis.

In a world of seemingly relentless change and uncertainty, some things remain constant—our core values: Honor, Courage, and Commitment. These values are at the very heart of our ability to be, “most ready when the Nation is least ready.” It’s honor that gives us an uncompromising sense of personal integrity and accountability; courage that allows us to face any circumstance with an ironclad resolve to do what’s right; and commitment that binds us together as a family and drives us toward excellence. And while our core values might never change, the way we give life to them requires constant vigilance. This year’s national conversations about race remind us that we must all do better to embody our service’s values.

Commemorating the 245th birthday of our Corps offers us a chance to reflect on our history. We who serve today stand upon the shoulders of giants. While this year’s many challenges are significant and unique, they are not unprecedented, and it is important to remember that our Nation and Corps have endured difficult times in our past. This year, for example, marks the 75th anniversary of brutal battles in the Pacific; when soldiers of the sea defined the term “uncommon valor” on the black sands of Iwo Jima; the 70th anniversary of bitter fighting at Inchon and Chosin Reservoir; 55 years since Marines landed at Da Nang; and a decade since our struggle with the Taliban in the Helmand River Valley. We remember the service and sacrifice of all Marines, and honor the legacy passed down through generations. Our continuing obligation is to honor their legacy by making meaningful contributions to what they started.

From the past, we draw strength, pride, and a responsibility to carry on the warfighting heritage our predecessors built. We must also recognize our tradition of continuous adaptation—one that should inspire our current force modernization and innovation efforts. As has been the case in the past, today’s threats require us to fight as a cohesive team, and our ability to succeed will depend on the Honor, Courage, and Commitment of each individual Marine. From recruiting individuals of great intelligence, strength, spirit, and diversity, to evolving how we train, educate, and mentor Marines throughout their careers, we remain dedicated to developing the world’s finest warfighters, guided by our core values.

In a year of significant change and uncertainty, I am reminded of the words of American novelist, John Dos Passos, “In times of change and danger when there is a quicksand of fear under men’s reasoning, a sense of continuity with generations gone before can stretch like a lifeline across the scary present...” Never forget, what you do today becomes the foundation for the generations of Marines that will follow. There is no challenge we cannot overcome, together, by holding fast to our core values. Happy 245th Birthday Marines.

Semper Fidelis,



DAVID H. BERGER  
General, U.S. Marine Corps  
Commandant of the Marine Corps