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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF  
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COMMANDING GENERAL, MARINE CORPS RECRUITING COMMAND  
BEFORE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL  
OF THE  
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
ON  
MARINE CORPS' FUTURE RECRUITING CHALLENGES IN THE FISCALLY  
CONSTRAINED ENVIRONMENT

16 JAN 2014

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## **Recruiting**

Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Davis, and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee; I am pleased to report that Marine Corps recruiting continues to be successful in an ever more challenging fiscal environment.

Recruiting continues to be our lifeblood – the individual Marine is the Corps, and his or her commitment, capability, and devotion remains critical to our success in battle. Recruiting high quality people also plays a key role in maintaining the Marine Corps' high state of readiness. To that end, effectively operating in an ever more competitive and challenging recruiting environment, especially for quality applicants, requires a continued commitment to ensuring that the recruiting force maintains both the adequate tools and resources necessary to enlist a high quality force. Accessing quality youth ultimately translates into higher performance, reduced attrition, and a reduced cost. We believe that detailed planning, adequate resourcing, precision execution and unwavering commitment to quality by our recruiting force will continue this trajectory. This commitment is required to make Marines and win our Nation's battles during and beyond the current budgetary challenges and the service's end strength reductions.

To meet our needs in the current recruiting environment it is imperative that we maintain high standards for both our recruiters and those who volunteer to serve in our Corps. Today's youth, now more than ever, must exhibit the leadership potential, moral character, native intelligence, and physical attributes to succeed in the Marine Corps, and we will continue to seek out superb American youth. We must also remain mindful of the Marine Corps' need to reflect and be representative of those we serve.

**Accomplishing the Mission.** The Marine Corps understands that the ‘All Volunteer Force’ is in fact an “All Recruited Force” and that the Marine Corps Recruiting Command is on the front lines engaged in a mission vital to the long term health of our Corps. In order to meet end strength goals, continue to maintain the high Marine Corps and DoD quality standards, and attain a diverse entry level population representative of national demographics, we must be ever vigilant in our focused approach of enlisting highly qualified and eligible youth from the American population.

All recruiting efforts (officer, enlisted, regular, reserve and prior service) fall under the direction of Marine Corps Recruiting Command. Operationally, this provides us with flexibility and unity of command in order to annually meet our objectives. In Fiscal Year 2013, the Marine Corps achieved 100.5 percent (37,929) of the enlisted (regular and reserve) ship mission (accessions). Over 99 percent of our accessions were Tier I high school diploma graduates and over 73 percent were in the I-III A upper mental group testing categories. Additionally, we achieved our contracting goals in FY2013 and continue to achieve our contracting goals for Fiscal Year 2014, which ensures we have a population of qualified individuals ready to ship to recruit training in Fiscal Year 2014. In Prior Service Recruiting in direct support of the reserve establishment we achieved 100 percent (3,558) in Fiscal Year 2013. Our Officer Selection Teams were also successful in Fiscal Year 2013 accessing 1,403 Second Lieutenants for 100 percent of the mission. Additionally, Marine Corps Recruiting Command exceeded diversity goals for officer and enlisted accessions, making the FY13 officer class the most diverse the Corps has ever accessed. In short, we accomplished our recruiting mission and achieved the Commandant’s quality standards, exceeded those of the Department of Defense (DoD), and continued to support efforts to build a more diverse Marine Corps.

We continue to stress to all applicants the importance of being a Marine first and foremost. Our image of a smart, tough, elite warrior continues to resonate with young people wanting to join our Corps. Our ethos that every Marine is a rifleman is inherent in our recruiting themes. Therefore, it is no surprise that our Marine Recruiters continue to receive more requests for combat arms programs from applicants than any other field in our inventory. In addition, it remains difficult to recruit applicants in the Linguist, Intelligence and other highly technical occupations due to those programs having a very strict enlistment criterion which narrows the field of prospective qualified candidates. To ensure we fill all essential skill requirements in low density specialties, we continue to employ targeted incentives. The Enlisted Bonus Program (EBP) offers qualified applicants a monetary reward for enlistment into designated Military Occupational Specialties (MOSs), specific occupational fields, or for shipping to recruit training at certain times of the year. This has allowed us to achieve a 99% fill rate in 2013 for all essential skill requirements in low density specialties. In an effort to ensure efficient use of our resources, an annual review is conducted to align and tailor to only those specialties requiring attention. We continue to appreciate Congress' authorization to utilize these incentives for those purposes.

As part of our efforts to recruit a fully capable force we continue to find qualified and propensed applicants. In order to meet this capability we adhere to policies which conform to public law. The Marine Corps is fully supporting the Department's review of applicants that have undocumented dependents and related issues.

In Fiscal Year 2012, we right-sized our recruiting force and funding to support a steady state accession mission for an active duty force of 174,000 or higher. As such, we intend to maintain approximately 5,300 personnel, which includes 3,760 recruiters operating out of more

than 1,500 facilities across all 50 states and U.S. territories through and beyond the draw down. Within the funding available, we are conducting oversight and supporting recruiters, to reduce the negative impact on command training and presence and ensure effectiveness and morale of the force.

The success achieved during the past fiscal year is attributed to the investments made to maintain a quality recruiting force; one that is screened, well-trained, and properly resourced to meet mission requirements. Every Marine assigned to recruiting duty is evaluated based on his or her fitness to perform the demanding duties of a Marine recruiter. The Headquarters Screening Team (HST) conducts annual visits to bases, stations and installations to interview prospective recruiters. Additionally, Commanding Officers must certify a Marine's fitness for independent duty. Moreover, all Marines are screened to prevent any sexual predator from assignment to recruiting duty. Once screened, Marines attend a seven week Basic Recruiter's Course before reporting to their Recruiting Station. In addition to sales and public speaking training, all Marines are provided in depth instruction throughout their time at Recruiter School in Ethics and Sexual Assault Prevention. Upon arrival at the Recruiting Station training continues in the form of Proficiency and Review (PAR) training during the first six months on recruiting duty as a canvassing recruiter and subsequent Ethics reinforcement training provided by the Commanding Officer of the Recruiting Station and assigned leadership.

Resourcing the Marine Corps Recruiting Command also has been a priority of senior Marine leadership. An effective recruiting force must be maintained with the necessary tools in the form of offices, vehicles, computers, telephones, etc., in an effort to set the conditions for success. However, there has been an impact based on overall DoD budget reductions. The

Recruiting Operations and Advertising budgets have been diminished by these reductions, causing the command to prioritize recruiting activities to sustain success.

Our recruiters currently carry a heavy load. Over 71% of Marine Corps recruiters work more than 60 hours per week to recruit quality applicants. While the Marine Corps is currently making its accession goals, several recruiting challenges exist that include demographic data that indicate decreasing numbers of qualified youth; decreasing number of influencers with military experience and youth attitude shifts away from military service. These statistics just reinforce the need for continued support for recruiters to help mitigate the stress that exists in the current environment.

We thank Congress for their continued support of legislation that provides recruiters access to high schools and student directory lists. This access remains critical to recruiting quality applicants. Without it, our Marine Recruiters would lose one of their most efficient and productive means of conveying the opportunities of military service. This would have an immediate, adverse impact on our ability to accomplish our mission. Maintaining access to high schools and student directories remains a top priority for ensuring continued success. Further, Congress' continued support in funding for enlistment bonuses and advertising is appreciated. The ability to advertise is essential in the era of the All Volunteer Force. Raising public awareness and extolling the virtues and benefits of serving one's country is important in today's society.

Advertising dollars currently generate approximately 25% of the non-prior service applicants that contract into the Marine Corps. Due to FY14 budget reductions, we anticipate a drop in contracting attributed to advertising that causes us concern. We appreciate the long standing support of Congress in recognizing the importance of advertising. The target market

(17-24 year olds) has become increasingly dependent on technology and less receptive to traditional forms of advertising such as; print and radio commercials, and more attuned to television commercials, branded sports partnerships, social media outlets, and local advertising venues. This change increases the need for sustained investment in marketing related research and training for recruiters. Any erosion of advertising funding from the established level necessary to support the current size of the recruiting force will result in a decrease in measurable public awareness.

A key factor in our mission management is ensuring clear and direct responsibility and oversight. The Commanding General of Marine Corps Recruiting Command reports directly to the Commandant of the Marine Corps. The Commanding Generals of our two Marine Corps Recruit Training Depots also serve as the Commanding Generals of our Eastern and Western Recruiting Regions. Having the same individual responsible for quality recruiting and entry-level basic training is crucial to successfully recruiting and making Marines. Consistent with this, our recruiters' commitment to recruiting a quality Corps is further reinforced by the fact that they are held accountable for their recruits' performance throughout the entire process as they earn the title Marine, from the time they enlist in the delayed entry program until they complete "boot camp."

In closing, recruiting is the strategic first step in making Marines just as it is the first step in sustaining the Corps. The uniqueness of the Corps being a young force inherently places greater burdens and responsibilities on the recruiting force. As such, the Marine Recruiter operating alone as the Corps main representative to the US public and interacting with its youth, continues to remain the most important asset in that process.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.