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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**STATEMENT OF  
MAJOR GENERAL BURKE W. WHITMAN,  
DIRECTOR, MARINE AND FAMILY PROGRAMS DIVISION  
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
BEFORE THE  
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL  
CONCERNING  
TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM – A UNITY OF EFFORT  
ON  
28 OCTOBER 2015**

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## **Major General Burke W. Whitman**

Major General Burke W. Whitman was reared in Atlanta where he graduated with honors from Lovett High School. He played rugby and earned a BA with honors on a work scholarship from Dartmouth College, an MBA from Harvard University, and a commission as an officer of Marines after graduate school.



As a Marine, he has commanded infantry and reconnaissance units at the platoon, company, battalion, and regiment levels; served as an operations officer at the battalion, brigade, division, and geographic combatant command levels; conducted combat operations in Bosnia, Iraq, and Afghanistan; developed strategy at the Pentagon; and earned a Master of Strategic Studies degree from the Army War College.

A chronology of military assignments: Rifle Platoon Commander, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines; Aerial Observer; Mortar Platoon Commander; Company Executive Officer; Battalion Operations Officer; Task Force Eagle, Bosnia; Light Armored Company Commander; Civil Affairs Detachment Commander; Reconnaissance Company Commander; Division Operations Officer; Commanding Officer, 4th Reconnaissance Battalion, Iraq; Operations Officer, U.S. Central Command; Deputy Chief (Middle East), Joint Chiefs of Staff; Director, Afghan Forces, 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade, Afghanistan; Commanding Officer, 25th Marine Regiment, Africa; Member, Amphibious Capabilities Working Group & Ellis Group; Assistant Division Commander, 2d Marine Division; Deputy Commanding General (Mobilization), II Marine Expeditionary Force; Director, Ministry of Interior Advisory Group, Afghanistan, and currently serves as Director, Marine and Family Division, Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps.

As a civilian, he has served as CEO, CFO, and Board Member of multiple corporations, two traded on the New York Stock Exchange and listed in Fortune 500. He was named Best CEO and Best CFO in his Industry by Institutional Investor Magazine. He has served on the boards of the Federation of American Hospitals, Lovett School, Marine Corps University, and Toys for Tots Foundation; on the Founders Group of the National Museum of the Marine Corps; and on the Secretary of Defense Reserve Forces Policy Board.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Chairman Heck, Ranking Member Davis, and distinguished Members of the Committee, on behalf of the U.S. Marine Corps, thank you for holding this hearing and the opportunity to update you on our transition assistance efforts.

Each year approximately 30,000 Marines transition from your Marine Corps. It is our responsibility to ensure that all of our Marines and their families are prepared for success after leaving service. We begin providing Marines access to transition resources and programs shortly after entry into the Marine Corps and continue to do so throughout the duration of their service employing the Marine For Life Cycle (M4LC).

### **UPDATE ON MARINE CORPS TRANSITION READINESS PROGRAM**

The Marine Corps Transition Readiness Program (TRP) prepares Marines for their transition from military to civilian life by providing the essential tools and resources, including those required by the Department of Defense (DoD). The TRP provides transition, career, and employment assistance to the total Marine force, as well as eligible family members. This assistance is available through the installation career services centers and online.

The Marine Corps begins developing Transition Readiness in every Marine well before he or she reaches the end of her or his uniformed service. Transition Readiness is a process that occurs over a period of time throughout a Marine's life cycle. In Fiscal Year 2015, we incorporated TRP into our M4LC concept that provides every Marine an awareness of the readiness preparations throughout a Marine's life cycle, from the beginning of his or her military service and at other key moments in the Marine's career. This lifecycle adds a framework to our

transition process. It provides Marines the opportunity to meet many of DoD's Career Readiness Standards (CRS) well in advance of attending the Transition Readiness Seminar.

There are three "action points" in the M4LC. First, the Marine attends a mandatory four hour "Personal Readiness Seminar" upon arrival at the Marine's first permanent duty station. We implemented the Personal Readiness Seminar in October 2014. The first hour of the seminar consists of:

- an overview of the Personal and Professional Development services available to the Marine and the family including Library Services, Family Member Employment Assistance, Voluntary Education, Personal Financial Management, Transition Readiness, and Information Referral
- an overview of eBenefits premium access
- completion of standardized personal assessment
- introduction of Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) Crosswalk/Gap Analysis Curriculum
- introduction to United States Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP)
- overview of Credentialing Opportunities Online (COOL)
- concept of developing an Individual Development Plan/Individual Transition Plan (IDP/ITP).

The remaining three hours of the seminar develops practical skills in personal financial management. Personal financial management training topics include banking and financial services, spending plans, credit management, car buying, and the importance of financial planning prior to deployment. The objective is to ensure Marines are financially sound while they serve in the Corps and after they transition to civilian life.

The second “action point” is our “Your Readiness” MarineNet training course, a mandatory component of preparation for promotion to the rank of Corporal (E-4). It provides a refresher of Personal and Professional Development services, plus an introduction to the reenlistment process, development of an actual ITP, and an introduction to all the resources and support that a Marine can access and use throughout the M4LC.

The final major “action point” of the M4LC is the Transition Readiness Seminar (TRS). It provides the mandatory transition requirements of the interagency Transition Goals Plan Success (GPS) program to include Department of Labor Employment Workshop (DOLEW), Department of Veterans Affairs’ Benefits Briefs I and II, MOS Crosswalk, Resilient Transitions, Financial Planning, ITP and Capstone Review. Marines are encouraged to attend TRS 12-14 months prior to separation or within 24 months of retirement, but must attend no later than 180 days prior to separation or retirement.

We expect all Marines to meet Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) Act compliance requirements and CRS established by the Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI) taskforce. A Marine can complete CRS at any time during the M4LC, not only at the TRS. The Marine Corps will continue to focus on VOW compliance, with emphasis on the Reserve Component throughout Fiscal Year 2016. During Fiscal Year 2015, 31,566 Marines attended TRS.

In January 2014, all Marine Corps installations began providing Marines with two day “Track Options” which provide hands-on, in-depth information aligned with the Marine’s future personal and professional objectives. Marines can access these outside of and in addition to the TRS and throughout the M4LC.

In addition to meeting the CRS requirements, transitioning Marines seeking employment or entrepreneurial opportunities must complete and submit a minimum of two job applications.

Marines seeking higher education or career technical training opportunities must complete a comparison of academic or training institutions, confirm one-on-one counseling with an advisor or counselor, complete a college, university or technical training application, or receive an acceptance letter

## **RESERVE COMPONENT**

All transitioning Marines, including Reservists who serve for 180 continuous days or more on active duty, must meet VOW Act standards and complete transition readiness requirements. Reserve Component VOW compliance and Career Readiness Standard reporting significantly lags the Active Component. We are engaging with Commanders to reinforce the requirement and improve our statistics.

A Reserve Component Marine may be exempted from the DOLEW portion if the Marine can confirm employment, can provide documented acceptance into an accredited technical training or college degree program, or has previously attended the DOLEW. The Marine may have attended DOLEW while serving in the Active Component or while mobilized or activated as a Reservist.

Reserve Marines can access TRP at any military installation. The preferred method of delivery of transition services is face-to-face; however virtual training is also available. Commanding officers determine whether Marines are eligible for virtual delivery. Spouses of eligible Marines may also be eligible to take the virtual training.

## **CAPSTONE**

The Marine Corps implemented the DoD mandated Capstone in October 2013. Capstone occurs no later than 90 days prior to separation or retirement, or as soon as possible within remaining Active Duty for eligible Reservists. Each Marine meets individually with her or his Commanding Officer (CO) or designee for the Capstone review. The CO validates that the Marine has (or has not) met all CRS and ensures the Marine's readiness for transition to civilian life. The CO or designee also reviews and completes DD Form 2958, Service Member Career Readiness Standards/ITP Checklist. In the event a Marine has struggled to meet CRS, the CO provides a "warm handover" to DoL or VA so that those Federal agencies can provide assistance after transition.

## **PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

In addition to meeting the transition requirements mandated by DoD, the Marine Corps offers a myriad of Personal and Professional Development programs, workshops and classes to Marines and their families during their M4LC. Personal and Professional Development services include career development, resume writing, job search strategies, personal financial management classes, credentialing, and educational opportunities. These types of opportunities are available at all Marine Corps installations.

Since spouses and other family members are also involved in transitioning from the Marine Corps, we make them an integral part of the transition planning process. In September 2014, the Marine Corps launched the Spouse Transition and Readiness (STARS) initiative. We created STARS to provide spouses with knowledge, information, and resources for transition readiness.

In August 2014, the Marine Corps, in conjunction with the Department of the Navy, launched Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL). COOL is a resource for understanding which civilian certification and license requirements relate to certain MOSs. We use COOL to advise Marines and recruits, and to help employers determine the qualifications of potential Marines as employees.

The DoD SkillBridge initiative promotes civilian job training available for transitioning Marines. Marines who meet certain qualifications can participate in civilian job and employment training, including apprenticeships and internships. The Marine Corps offers the following SkillBridge programs: Veterans In Piping, Department of Energy, Onward to Opportunity, and Microsoft Software & Systems Academy.

### **MARINE FOR LIFE PROGRAM**

The Marine For Life Program is the embodiment of the Marine Corps' heritage of "Once a Marine, Always a Marine". It reinforces our tradition of "taking care of our own". The Marine For Life Program serves transitioning and transitioned Marines and their families by growing and sustaining a self-perpetuating, Marine-friendly network that informs recipients of available resources to include employment and educational opportunities. The objective of Marine For Life is to harness the collective skills, knowledge, experience, and personal and professional connections of the network to better assist transitioning Marines with the achievement of their life-long goals, while also offering employment organizations, educational institutions, and other human services resources the opportunity to network and build beneficial relationships with the Marines and their families.

## **CONCLUSION**

Three years following DoD's redesign of TRP, your Marine Corps remains in compliance with the VOW Act. Our TRP provides our Marines and families with all of the mandatory elements to assist with their transitions. We also sustain a number of programs that go beyond the requirements. As our Marine Corps Transition Assistance Program evolves, we will continue to collaborate with DoD, the other military services, and our interagency partners to collect and assess data on performance indicators, ensure robust reviews of our program, and conduct installation staff assist visits to ensure uniform quality across your Corps. We are committed to helping your Marines and families successfully transition to a life outside the Marine Corps.

Thank you.