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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT
OF
LIEUTENANT GENERAL MARK A. BRILAKIS
DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR MANPOWER & RESERVE AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL
OF THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
CONCERNING
MILITARY PERSONNEL POSTURE
ON
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Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs

Lieutenant General Mark Andrew Brilakis is currently assigned as the Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

He graduated from Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and was commissioned through the Platoon Leaders Class in May 1981.

Assignments in the Operating Forces include: Battery Officer, 1st Battalion, 10th Marines; Battery Commander, Battalion FDO, and S-3, 5th Battalion, 10th Marines; Naval Gunfire Control Officer and Assistant Supporting Arms Coordinator, Amphibious Group Two; Future Operations and MAGTF Planner, G-3, II MEF; Executive Officer, 10th Marine Regiment; Commanding Officer 1st Battalion, 10th Marines; Commanding General, 3d Marine Expeditionary Brigade, Deputy Commanding General, III Marine Expeditionary Force, and Commanding General, 3d Marine Division.

Assignments in the Supporting Establishment include: Company Officer and Commanding Officer, Company A, and Course Developer, MCI Company, Marine Barracks, Washington DC; Commanding Officer, Weapons Training Battalion, Training Command; and the Commanding General, Marine Corps Recruiting Command.

Headquarters and Staff assignments include: Status of Forces Officer, Plans, Policies, and Operations Department, HQMC; Head, Program Development Branch, Programs and Resources Department, HQMC; Director, European Liaison Office, Headquarters, U.S. European Command, Deputy J-3, United States European Command, and Assistant Deputy Commandant (Programs), Programs & Resources Department, HQMC.

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INTRODUCTION

Chairman Coffman, Ranking Member Speier, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, it is my privilege to appear before you today to provide an overview on Marine Corps personnel.

Since our founding in 1775, Marines have answered our Nation's call, faithfully serving the American people and maintaining a standard of military excellence. Your Marine Corps is, and will continue to be, our Nation's expeditionary force in readiness. We are ready to rapidly respond to crises around the Globe to ensure the continued security of the American people and to protect the interests that underpin our Nation. Marines will be *always faithful* to the trust which the American people have vested in them.

OUR PEOPLE

Marines are the foundation of the Marine Corps. They are the Corps' most critical resource, and always have been. Your Marines are recruited, educated, trained, and retained to win our Nation's battles. They are smart, resilient, fit, disciplined, and able to overcome adversity. Recruiting high quality youth and retaining those whose past service and future potential continues to make the Corps stronger are our highest priorities. Today, through the hard work and diligence of our recruiting force we continue to identify high quality men and women of character who desire to take up our challenge to serve this great nation as United States Marines.

End Strength

The Marine Corps operating forces are currently averaging, in the aggregate, deployment to dwell ratio below 1:2. This tempo is not sustainable as it does not provide options to train to our full mission sets and puts unreasonable strain on our Marines and families.

We thank you for the increased end strength authorization to 185,000 in the FY17 National Defense Authorization Act. This increase will allow us to strengthen our capabilities to meet warfighting requirements. Our Marines want to deploy, serve our Nation, and protect our country from threats overseas. We owe our Marines and their families the appropriate deployment-to-dwell time to allow them to re-focus, learn from their most recent deployment, and train for the next deployment or contingency.

Fiscal instability impacts our ability to plan and challenges our current and future readiness. Operating under continuing resolutions (CR) increases risk and interferes with our ability to accurately plan and execute critical programs, to include paying for military personnel pay raises and the higher end strength goal mandated in the FY17 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Passing the Appropriations Bill early in the fiscal year allows us to better manage our military personnel entitlements to include discretionary funding for recruiting and retention.

Recruiting

All recruiting efforts for the Marine Corps (officer, enlisted, regular, reserve, and prior-service) fall under the purview of the Marine Corps Recruiting Command. Operationally, this provides us with tremendous flexibility and unity of command, facilitating efforts to meet accession requirements. The Marine Corps applies, evaluates, and refines proven, time-tested officer and enlisted recruiting policies and procedures that are reflected in the high mental, moral, and physical standards of our applicants, such as SAT, ACT, and ASVAB testing; pre-enlistment physical screening and fitness tests; and security background checks and pre-enlistment screening.

Last fiscal year, we successfully achieved all enlisted and officer recruiting goals for both the Active and Reserve Components. Our FY17 enlisted mission is 32,500 regulars (active component) and 5,302 reservists. We expect to achieve our annual recruiting ‘shipping’ mission (i.e. new accessions sent to recruit training) and quality goals. The Department of Defense requires

90 percent of enlistees to have a high school diploma or equivalent. Last year, the Marine Corps achieved 99.9 percent and expects to be at or near this level for FY17.

Our officer accession mission for FY17 is 1,600 active duty and 105 Reserve officers. We are well on our way toward these goals and foresee no issues meeting them.

Incentives, such as our enlistment bonuses, allow us to ship new recruits at critical times to balance recruit loads at the recruit depots and meet school seat requirements. It is important to note that only eight percent of new Marine Corps recruits receive an enlistment bonus. We appreciate Congress' support for these priority programs that assist our contracting high quality Marines.

To meet future challenges in the current recruiting environment, it is imperative that we maintain our high standards both for our recruiters and those who volunteer to serve in our Corps. Recruiting quality young individuals ultimately translates into higher performance, reduced attrition, increased retention, and improved readiness for the operating forces. Our actions, commitment, and investments in recruiting today ensure a high state of readiness in our Corps tomorrow.

Retention

As the Marine Corps manages its 185,000 force, the challenge to keep high-quality Marines in the service in a competitive civilian job market continues. We will retain the very best Marines capable of fulfilling our leadership and operational needs. This is accomplished through a competitive career designation process for officers and a thorough evaluation process for enlisted Marines, both of which are designed to measure, analyze, and compare our Marines' performance and accomplishments.

Marine Corps retention models, systems, policies, and processes emphasize consistency of leadership, personnel stability, and sustained readiness across the force. Officer career designation incorporates a board system that enables leaders to examine officer records and accomplishments.

After designation, the promotion process continues the evaluation of Marine officers. It is a primary tool by which we retain only the best and most qualified Marines.

A tiered rating system for enlisted Marines takes into account a number of quantifiable performance factors and includes both immediate and higher leaders' input. It helps to set achievable goals for Marines as they compete for retention. After initial reenlistment, the evaluation and continued retention of high quality enlisted Marines is supported by a detailed and continual performance evaluation system which is fully integrated with the promotion process. Those Marines with the best proven records are promoted and retained.

Incentive pays remain critical to our retention effort, allowing the Marine Corps to fill hard to recruit positions, such as cyber security technicians and counter intelligence specialists. Similarly, Selective Reenlistment Bonuses (SRBs) allow us to shape our career force. SRBs target critical MOSs and support lateral movement of Marines to these MOSs. We appreciate the committee's continued support to ensure we have the resources required to meet our retention goals.

Marine Corps Reserves

Your Marine Corps Reserve will be at its authorized end strength of 38,500 Marines by the end of FY17. We foresee no challenges in meeting this goal. Our reserve unit personnel readiness stands at its highest level in a generation. Unit personnel readiness has increased from 71 percent in June 2013 to over 85 percent in April 2017. Higher enlisted retention rates have also improved significantly. For example, our Staff NCO manning has increased 12 percentage points from September 2013 to the present.

While these are welcome and positive trends, we are always looking for ways to improve personnel readiness. We have implemented a comprehensive manpower management plan to provide full service support to our Reserve officers and Staff NCOs for their career management. Beginning in FY18, we will expand this plan to provide full-service manpower management

support for the entire Selected Reserve. This is a talent management initiative that will help our NCOs, Staff NCOs, and officers move between commands to enhance their development and military career goals. This initiative will enhance our active and reserve units with the “right Marine, at the right place, at the right time.”

Our reserve officer manning has vastly improved as well. In fact, officer manning reached a record high of 94 percent in March 2017. This increase has been driven by two major sources: officers transitioning from the Active Component, and the Reserve Officer Commissioning Program. Bonuses and incentives have been effective in attracting more Marines from the Active Component. Additionally, the Reserve Officer Commissioning Program (ROCP) has produced a total of 1,171 lieutenants for the Marine Corps reserves since its creation in 2006. As a result, our ground company grade officer manning has increased from 21 percent in 2013, to 90 percent today. In FY17, we ensured that all ROCP lieutenants were offered the chance to complete an active duty experience tour, the opportunity to serve on active duty for one year with counterparts in the Active Component. This tour professionalizes the force by developing these officers’ occupational and leadership skills, through practical operational experience in the active component, and by facilitating the integration of the Total Force.

Beginning in FY16, your Marine Corps Reserves has increased the number of Reserve Marines activating under the 12304b mobilization authority for pre-planned training missions supporting Combatant Commander requirements. Several provisions addressing reservists benefits under 12304b were included in the initial draft FY17 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), but were not in the final bill. We look forward to working with Congress on this important issue.

Blended Retirement System

The Marine Corps is diligently preparing for the new Blended Retirement System (BRS) that goes into effect on January 1, 2018. As you are well aware, the new system is a significant

change from the legacy retirement system and, while it confers a monetary benefit on the large majority of Marines who do not reach retirement eligibility, we remain concerned on the potential impact on retention behavior of the force. With over 184,000 Marines – both active and reserve - having to make an “opt-in” decision during CY18, will be closely monitoring the BRS for any these and other impacts.

In 2017, the Marine Corps is focused on training those current Marines who may elect to enroll in the BRS during calendar year 2018. Headquarters Marine Corps subject matter experts recently concluded visits to major bases and installations, briefing over 2,000 officer and enlisted leaders on the tools available to educate their Marines. The Marine Corps has implemented an integrated communications plan employing administrative messages and a website with training links, videos, and robust reference material. We have utilized the Marine Corps' social media platforms to increase awareness and knowledge regarding the BRS and the associated training requirements. We will continue to closely track BRS training progress throughout 2017 and work to ensure that all Marines who are eligible to enroll in BRS are properly trained and postured to make an educated decision on their futures.

Marine Corps Integration

As our Commandant testified to last year, executing a successful gender integration plan is key to sustaining readiness, as well as ensuring we afford all Marines the greatest opportunity to succeed as valued members of the Corps. The Marine Corps is fully committed to sustaining the most combat effective force by capitalizing on the knowledge, skills, abilities, demonstrated performance, and potential of every Marine.

The Marine Corps Integration Implementation Plan (MCIIP) addresses both short-term and long-term tasks intended to ensure the efficient and effective integration of female Marines into newly-opened Military Occupational Specialties (MOSs) and units. These tasks are either complete

or in place as enduring efforts, to include a comprehensive, longitudinal assessment. Female Marines are now represented in all previously-restricted occupational fields. Because the MCIIP is still early in execution, the number of female Marines working in newly-opened MOSs and units remains relatively small thus far. Implementation is proceeding and the Marine Corps is committed to its long-term success. As we evaluate progress and success of our integration efforts, we will focus on three underlining priorities: (1) combat effectiveness; (2) health and welfare of individual Marines; and (3) talent management.

Civilian Marines

Our Civilian Marines support the mission and daily functions of the Marine Corps and are an integral part of our Total Force. They exemplify our core values; they embrace esprit de corps, teamwork, and pride in belonging to our Nation's Corps of Marines. Serving alongside our Marines throughout the world, in every occupation and at every level, our civilian appropriated-funded workforce remains by far the leanest of all services, with a ratio of one civilian to every ten active duty Marines.

Approximately 95 percent of our appropriated funded civilians work outside the Washington, DC, beltway; they work at fifty-seven bases, stations, depots, and installations around the world. Sixty-nine percent are veterans who have chosen to continue to serve our Nation; of those, eighteen percent are disabled veterans. Our civilian non-appropriated funded workforce steadfastly continues to provide vital support to our Marines, reserve Marines, their families, and our wounded, ill and injured.

Already lean, we are in the midst of reducing our 17,500 Civilian Marine appropriated fund workforce to 15,800 by the end of FY17, and are working to implement the Management Headquarters Activities provision in the FY16 NDAA. We are actively seeking ways to achieve

these goals through attrition and various voluntary workforce-shaping flexibilities; our intent is not to implement any service-wide reduction in force (RIF).

The last few years have not been easy on our Civilian Marines, with limited pay raises, furloughs or threat of furloughs, and the recent hiring freeze. Throughout all of this uncertainty, our civilians have truly showed themselves as Semper Fidelis as they kept our Marines and their families in the forefront. For that, they have my personal admiration. During these challenging times, it is imperative that we continue to keep faith with our workforce, else we risk losing enormously talented and dedicated professionals.

TAKING CARE OF MARINES AND THEIR FAMILIES

Taking care of Marines and their families is a key element of overall readiness and combat effectiveness. The adage “we recruit Marines, we retain families” remains as true today as ever. Our comprehensive package of services seeks the holistic fitness and readiness of our Marines and families – body, mind, spirit, and social.

Behavioral Health

The Marine Corps Behavioral Health Program is an integrated community-based service model focused on family advocacy as well as the prevention and intervention of suicide, substance abuse, and combat operational stress. When addressing behavioral health care, we typically see Marines, family members, and attached Sailors, with multiple stressors or conditions. Because behavioral health issues are complex and involve common stressors and factors, the Marine Corps operates with a holistic view of prevention.

The Corps introduced a number of initiatives over the past 5 years designed to support Marines in the prevention of behavioral health issues. For example, PWYE (“*Protect What You’ve Earned*”) is a simple decision-making framework for Marines and Sailors to consider consequences

of their personal behavior and actions, including but not limited to impacts on prestige, respect, admiration, rank, compensation, benefits, and veteran status. The focus of PWYE is the individual Marine or Sailor and what he or she values most. The intent of PWYE is to reinforce the Marine's inherent desire to safeguard those life-long investments and hard-earned achievements, specifically upholding the title "Marine."

To support our Marines, attached Sailors, and families, the Marine Corps offers world-class prevention and counseling services at each installation. All behavioral health programs provide free confidential services offered by licensed, credentialed professionals. Professionals conduct comprehensive assessments and individually tailor counseling sessions to address substance abuse, relationship difficulties, domestic violence, child neglect, and other stress related concerns before more serious conditions develop. These services are available to individuals, couples, families and children. During FY16, Behavioral Health programs at Marine Corps installations provided nearly 15,000 assessments and more than 101,000 counseling hours to Marines and their families.

Suicide Prevention

One of the highest priorities of our behavioral health program is suicide prevention. Preventing suicide has proven to be a very challenging task given the complex nature of the problem. We are constantly evolving and assessing our programs to leverage best practices.

A focus of our suicide prevention efforts is the Marine Intercept Program (MIP). It is a combined effort between service members, commanders, installation Community Counseling Programs, and Headquarters Marine Corps. MIP provides care coordination, regular telephone check-ins, and suicide assessment for Marines and attached Sailors with a reported suicidal ideation or suicide attempt. MIP is a targeted intervention for Marines identified at increased risk for suicide. Services include risk assessment safety planning and care coordination. Caring contacts are made after an event for a minimum of 90 days. In 2016, the Marine Corps had 1,329 reports of

suicide ideations or attempts that were referred to MIP; 81 percent of Marines who were offered MIP accepted the services. Based on a preliminary review of early MIP data, Marines receiving MIP services accessed care 2.5 times sooner, missed fewer appointments, and engaged in specialty care at higher rates.

The Marine Corps DSTRESS line provides anonymous, 24/7/365 phone, chat and Skype support with a duty to warn if danger is imminent. Since its inception in 2010, DSTRESS has helped save 39 lives. It also helps increase the total fitness of our Marine Corps families by providing them with live support to effectively cope with the wide spectrum of challenges of life in the Corps. Marines contact DSTRESS for many reasons including relationship issues, stress management, post-traumatic stress, depression-suicidal ideation, and sexual assault.

The Marine Corps utilizes suicide prevention social media campaigns. The message is a "Call to Action" - asking Marines to take steps and pay attention to individuals experiencing emotional distress or may be expressing suicidal thoughts on social media. The social media posts highlight the DSTRESS Line, and instruct individuals to use social media suicide prevention tools to report concerns. To date, over 700,000 individuals viewed and shared these social media posts and Armed Forces Network (AFN) Public Services Announcements worldwide.

Sexual Assault Prevention & Response

The fight to prevent sexual assault is an ongoing effort. We are encouraged by FY16 survey data indicating a 30 percent decrease in the prevalence of sexual assault since FY14, continuing a steady decrease in prevalence since 2012. While we are making progress, we recognize that there is still more to be done. To fully support all who are impacted by sexual assault, the Marine Corps provides advocacy and support resources to dependents and eligible civilians, in addition to service members. Any Marine who comes forward to report a sexual assault will receive support, no matter when the sexual assault occurred. For those service members who experienced a sexual assault

prior to their military service, the Marine Corps often provides the first opportunity to seek professional support and care. We track and report these incidents as we do those incidents in service so that we account for the full scope of our response effort.

Fiscal Year 2016 data show that we have sustained levels of reporting. This level of reporting suggests continued confidence in our response system. Reporting is the catalyst for victim care and offender accountability. In FY16, the Marine Corps also saw an increase in the number of reports from male Marines, a population traditionally reluctant to report. This coincided with a concerted effort to reach out to male service members. We employed an extensive communication strategy that focused on awareness, outreach, prevention, and supportive services. Our posts on official Marine Corps social media pages reached more than 1.6 million people.

Sexual assault is a complex problem with many facets. The Marine Corps recognizes that destructive behaviors like alcohol abuse and sexual assault can be interrelated. Therefore, in 2016, we developed a Professional Military Education (PME) titled “*Join the Conversation*” which encourages participants to identify potentially destructive behaviors, confront biases, and intervene appropriately when necessary. We have carried the momentum from this effort forward, developing a campaign on Marine Corps social media and in print that shares methods to identify and respond to destructive behaviors. Additionally, we organized two symposiums in April 2017 to better understand the nature of gender bias and the problem of social media misconduct. Drawing on researchers, public health representatives, law enforcement officers, and Marine subject matter experts, the symposiums facilitated dynamic and collaborative discussions on social media misconduct and gender bias.

In coordination with DoD and our sister Services, we have also worked to combat retaliation. The Marine Corps takes allegations and acts of retaliation very seriously. Retaliatory behavior - whether on duty, on liberty, or online - is detrimental to victims, unit cohesion and

readiness. The way ahead for combatting retaliation, as it relates to sexual assault or sexual harassment, is engaged leadership, enhanced training, and improved communication to the fleet.

Personal and Professional Development

As Marines transition to civilian life, it is imperative that we ensure they have the right preparation to reach personal goals and effectively translate their military experiences to a successful civilian life.

One way to ensure Marines will be successful in transitioning is for their military skills and work experience to be transferred into civilian employment. The Marine Corps Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) is part of that initiative. COOL links Marines with civilian certifications related to their Military Occupational Specialties. It is a public website, accessible to all current Marines, as well as veterans, spouses, potential employers, enterprises, credentialing agencies, and associations. A credential translates Marine Corps technical skills into marketable language recognized by employers and may make the post-service job search easier. Marines are able to choose from 943 certifications depending on their Military Occupational Specialty or by the name of a specific credential or agency. The Marine Corps will pay for examination fees and annual maintenance for enlisted Marines to earn civilian/industry credentials closely aligned with the Marine's Military Occupational Specialty.

Our Marine For Life Cycle is a career-long process that helps Marines prepare for transition. The Marine Corps strives to provide a continuum of tangible learning or experienced-based opportunities at nine different Action Points to ensure that every Marine is transition-ready throughout their career. Emphasis is placed on three primary action points where Marines will be asked to devote specific time and energy to transition readiness: First Permanent Duty Station, promotion to Corporal, and at the Transition Readiness Seminar.

At their First Permanent Duty Station, Marines complete the Personal Readiness Seminar within 90 days of arrival to the installation. This seminar provides an overview of Personal and Professional Development services to include Voluntary Education, Career Technical/Credentialing, Personal Financial Management, Family Member Employment Assistance, and Information and Referral; the seminar also emphasizes financial readiness awareness.

As an element of “Leading Marines,” “Your Readiness” training is required for promotion to Corporal. This online, MarineNet training provides an overview of Personal and Professional Development services; the reenlistment process, transition readiness, developing the Individual Transition Plan (ITP), and an introduction to available resources and support provided at our installations.

Approximately 12-14 months prior to separation or 24 months prior to retirement, Marines complete the Transition Readiness Seminar. The week-long program seminar includes a mandatory standardized core curriculum followed by three two-day track options to align with their individual future goals and aspirations. Available track options are Accessing Higher Education, Career and Technical Training, or Entrepreneurship.

No later than 90 days prior separation, Marines meet with their commanding officer for Capstone. During Capstone, the commanding officer will validate whether the Marine has met their career readiness standards. If a Marine does not meet their career readiness standards or have a viable transition plan, a warm handover will be provided to Department of Labor or Veteran Affairs partner agencies for additional post-transition assistance. After separation, our nationwide network of Marine For Life representatives provide reach back support to Marines via the Marine For Life Network.

The Marine For Life Network formally extends our commitment to “take care of our own” by growing and sustaining a self-perpetuating, Marine-friendly network to inform Marines and their families of resources identified through the network in order to assist with the transition to civilian life and pursuit of lifelong goals. In order to build a robust virtual community, we are currently expanding our online presence on LinkedIn and Facebook. Our goal is to have an online community and network of Marines and friends of Marines to help transitioning Marines identify opportunities in the civilian marketplace.

Wounded Warrior Care

The Marine Corps’ Wounded Warrior Regiment (WWR) continues to execute our service’s recovery coordination program in support of wounded, ill, or injured Marines and their families, in a manner that greatly facilitates their recovery and upholds our enduring commitment to “keep faith” with those who have incurred life changing impairments in service to our Nation. Regardless of the origin of affliction, our Marines supporting operations in or near combat zones, those requiring continued support for PTS and TBI, and those with complex care needs as the result of severe non-combat illnesses require and genuinely deserve access to the comprehensive recovery care available through the WWR.

WWR Recovery Care Coordinators, in coordination with medical providers and unit leaders, help WII Marines develop and execute their individual Comprehensive Recovery Plans, which provide the road map for a successful transition. WII Marines with complex care coordination needs are assessed for post-separation support requirements. When appropriate, those Marines and their recovery needs are transferred to a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) designated Lead Coordinator prior to their medical discharge to prevent gaps in support. WWR maintains faith with our Marines through our District Injured Support Coordinators and the Sergeant Merlin German

Call Center, which conducts outreach calls to those Marines and receives and responds to calls for assistance 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Since our WWR was established in 2007, thousands of WWII Marines and family members transitioning from active service have benefitted from a full spectrum of support services that focuses on post service employment and education opportunities and connects them to the benefits and services available through the VA and local civilian community resources. Particular emphasis is placed on ensuring those in need have access to behavioral health support post separation.

Marines and their families, members of Congress, and the public at large can be assured that the Marine Corps, through the WWR, will continue to expertly provide recovery care coordination support in times of war and peace.

Marine Corps Exchange Services

The Marine Corps delivers a myriad of quality of life programs via an integrated Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) construct that combines Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR); Marine Corps Exchange (MCX); Warfighter and Family Services; and Child Development Programs. This integrated model is unique within DoD and provides many operating efficiencies, including consolidated non-appropriated fund back-office support, e.g. human resources, finance and accounting, procurement, construction, and information technology. The MCX is a self-sustaining retail operation, providing critical non-appropriated fund dividend support for MWR programs. These revenue contributions remain an essential and mission critical asset to the Marine Corps.

Our MCX is an integral business component of MCCS, delivering products and services in garrison and expeditionary environments. Marines and their families can count on real savings when they shop at the MCX. The September 2016 market basket survey showed an average savings

of approximately 25 percent. Further, our MCX is proud to employ military family members, representing approximately 33 percent of our workforce.

Transformation and innovation are the fabric of MCCA as we continue to investigate new program and service delivery models by leveraging technology, partnerships, and sponsorships. These efforts will transform our critically important businesses and enhance the overall services provided to Marines and their families. The Marine Corps is also an active participant in the Defense Resale Business Optimization Board chartered to seek efficiencies, while preserving the valued quality of life benefits provided by both commissaries and exchanges.

CONCLUSION

The Marines of our Corps represent the American people who have stepped forward and sworn to defend and protect our Nation. Through recruiting, training, education, and retention of men and women of character who take up our challenge to become one of “the Few and the Proud,” we will enhance the quality of our Corps and our overall combat effectiveness. By ensuring that we take care of all Marines and their families, we fulfill our responsibility to keep faith with the honor, courage, and commitment they have so freely given.

Our individual Marines are our most precious asset. They are proud of what they do. They are proud of the “Eagle, Globe, and Anchor” and what it represents to our Nation. With your support, a vibrant Marine Corps will continue to meet our Nation’s call.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present this testimony.