

**STATEMENT  
OF  
MR. PAUL D. WILLIAMSON  
COMMAND ADVISOR, WOUNDED WARRIOR REGIMENT  
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL  
OF THE  
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
CONCERNING  
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND MILITARY SERVICE WOUNDED WARRIOR  
PROGRAM UPDATE  
ON  
FEBRUARY 3, 2015**

NOT PUBLIC UNTIL RELEASED BY THE  
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Paul D. Williamson

Mr. Williamson began his Civil Service career in October 2001 with his appointment as President, Department of the Navy Physical Evaluation Board, Washington, DC. In December 2007 he was selected for his current position as the Command Advisor for the United States Marine Corps' Wounded Warrior Regiment.

As Command Advisor Mr. Williamson advises the Regimental Commander and other senior Marine Corps officers, to include the Commandant of the Marine Corps, on all matters related to wounded warrior and family care coordination.

Previous to his initial Civil Service appointment, Mr. Williamson completed a distinguished career of 32 years active naval service. Mr. Williamson enlisted in June 1969 and promoted to Senior Chief Petty Officer prior to his commissioning as an Ensign in April 1979 through the Navy's In-service Procurement Program. As an Administration Limited Duty Officer he held a variety of leadership and command positions at sea and ashore. Mr. Williamson retired from active duty in January 2001 as a Commander.

Mr. Williamson graduated from the University of Southern Illinois with a Bachelor's Degree.

In recognition of his outstanding performance of duty as the President, Department of the Navy Physical Evaluation Board, Mr. Williamson was awarded the Superior Civilian Service Award in 2007. In 2014 Mr. Williamson was awarded the Meritorious Civilian Service Award for his service with the Marine Corps' Wounded Warrior Regiment.

## **I. Introduction**

Chairman Heck, Ranking Member Davis, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, it is my privilege to appear before you today to provide an overview on Marine Corps Warrior Care policy and procedures.

In 2007, the United States Marine Corps responded to the need for a more coordinated, thorough, and effective delivery of services for wounded, ill, and injured Marines, Sailors in units directly supporting Marines, and their families with the establishment of the Wounded Warrior Regiment. Headquartered at Marine Corps Base Quantico, the Wounded Warrior Regiment commands two battalions, located at Camp Lejeune and Camp Pendleton; 11 detachments, including overseas locations; three resource call centers, one at each battalion and one in Quantico area; and field level District Injured Support Coordinators across the nation to support reserve and transitioning Marines.

Recovery care for Marines must be enduring because the Marine Corps must always be ready at a moment's notice to care for its combat wounded during times of conflict. In addition, the Marine Corps will always have casualties as the result of wounds, injuries or illnesses incurred in service during peacetime, and it is the responsibility and moral obligation of the Marine Corps to account for their care. The Wounded Warrior Regiment maintains the expertise and resources to ensure coordinated recovery care is provided to our wounded, injured or ill. Catastrophic injuries, post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, and other psychological health problems often do not present themselves until long after combat has ended and require long-term care. The need for coordinated care delivery extends beyond the impacts of combat. Historically, at any given point in time, approximately one percent of the Marine Corps' total force is in a medically-impacted duty status and referred into the Disability Evaluation System process. This

population requires ongoing case/care management to ensure they receive needed medical and non-medical care, benefits information, and transition support. We are committed to resourcing the capabilities we have established in times of war and peace. As stated in our Commandant's 2015 Planning Guidance, "Our commitment to our wounded Marines and families is unwavering."

## **II. Assignment / Support**

Marines suffering catastrophic wounds or injuries or requiring complex care coordination for treatment of acute or chronic illnesses are typically assigned to a Wounded Warrior Regiment element during hospitalization. However, in most cases, the Marine Corps model remains that wounded, ill, or injured Marines will continue serving with their parent units so long as their commanders can ensure their medical and other recovery needs are being met. Unit commanders and medical providers of Marines requiring either acute or chronic complex care have access to a Regimental referral and assignment process. Currently, approximately 450 Marines are formally assigned to the Wounded Warrior Regiment, and approximately 475 Marines receive support while remaining with their parent units.

As with any military unit, an assigned Marine understands the primary mission - in this case, recovery from their specific illness or injury. Maintaining the structure and support of a military unit reinforces the Marine mindset that supports successful recovery and elimination of obstacles.

The Marine Corps and Regiment staff understands that an individual's physical and psychological recovery from a wound, illness, or injury is not predictable. In addition to the underlying medical conditions, many psycho-social factors must be considered by the recovery team in the development of a Marine's recovery plan. The overarching approach is a

relationship, not a process. In addition to the medical case managers, appointed by the servicing medical facility, recovering Marines joined to the Wounded Warrior Regiment are assigned a core recovery care team composed of a Recovery Care Coordinator (RCC) and Section Leader. RCCs work with the recovering Marine and family to develop a personal Comprehensive Recovery Plan following a comprehensive needs assessment. The section leader provides leadership, accountability, and motivation, which encourages a focus on ability vice disability, and helps recovering Marines manage their daily schedules to meet their recovery goals. Through the services of their recovery team, recovering Marines receive assistance with the identification of career and education opportunities; referral to other programs and federal agencies that may assist them; and advocacy as they navigate the joint DoD/VA Integrated Disability Evaluation System

Marines recovering with their parent units also have access to the resources available through the Wounded Warrior Regiment, including RCCs, mental and behavioral health counselors and Veterans Affairs professionals. Additionally, battalion call centers conduct outreach calls to those recovering Marines who are not assigned to provide assistance as necessary.

Disability retired Marines, transitioning and reserve Marines receive assistance from District Injured Support Coordinators, geographically dispersed mobilized reserve Marines. To ensure long-term care oversight, our Sergeant Merlin German Wounded Warrior Call Center provides a continuum of access by conducting an average of 9,500 outreach calls per month to Purple Heart recipients, Marines placed on the Temporary Disability Retired List, and Marine Veterans. The call center, available 24/7, also receives calls for assistance on the average of 1,200 per month.

The Marine Corps adopted this longitudinal approach to recovery care support – enabling coordinated care while on active duty as well as meaningful post-separation support – to ensure we keep faith with our Marines and meet our moral obligation to ensure necessary long-term care is provided for those who have fought in defense of our country.

### **III. Administration and Training**

This highly effective means of providing the care and support wounded, ill, and injured Marines need requires a full team of Marines, sailors, Department of Defense civilians and contractors. The Marine Corps is dedicated to recruiting and retaining the most highly skilled and motivated Marines and civilians to serve wounded, ill, and injured Marines.

In order to facilitate timely and efficient training of warrior care staff, the Wounded Warrior Regiment developed a comprehensive training curriculum that trains our Marine staff through online modules, in-class lectures, and scenario-based discussions. The training must be completed within the first 30 days of assignment and provides an overview of the major functions and resources of the Wounded Warrior Regiment in order to ensure our cadre understands the issues affecting and resources available to wounded, ill, and injured Marines.

Additionally, Regiment leaders screen reserve Marines applying for a mobilization tour with the Wounded Warrior Regiment to ensure their personnel records and medical history do not disqualify them for mobilization as a Marine responsible for ensuring the care of recovering Marines.

A diverse work-force and complementary non-medical resources within Marine and Family Programs ensure overall success of the mission. The robust civilian force in the Marine Corps' warrior care community provides both continuity and expertise. The civilian staff includes a team of licensed clinical social workers and behavioral health specialists who are

available to advise leaders at all levels on major issues facing Marines as well as review individual case files to ensure coordinated delivery of medical and non-medical care.

#### **IV. Assessments**

The Marine Corps seeks to be a self-regulating entity; identifying issues and implementing changes that have an immediate, positive impact. Efforts to seek best practices, improved policies, and enduring resources include participation in the Recovery Warrior Task Force and Department of Defense Inspector General's Assessment of Wounded Warrior Matters. In concert with the findings of the DoD IG report, issued in August 2014, we are conducting a future requirements analysis of our Wounded Warrior Regiment's recovery care command. Results of that assessment and associated recommendations are being developed and considered. In the interim, we have developed protocols for screening personnel assigned to leadership positions within the Wounded Warrior Regiment and implemented updated training courses to address the essentials of warrior care.

The Wounded Warrior Regiment also conducts annual surveys of recovering Marines. The most recent survey, completed November 2014, included questions used to assess the overall command climate. The survey yielded highly positive responses: Section Leader Availability, 98% positive; Section Leader Frequency of Communication, 96% positive; RCC is well trained and knowledgeable, and they are sensitive to their concerns, 96% positive. Nine questions concerning the prevention of discrimination and sexual assault had favorable responses; eight of nine questions had a favorable response rate of 94% or greater.

## **V. Conclusion**

Recovery care for our Marines must be multi-faceted and enduring. Often, the initial phase of recovery addresses physical injuries. Post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, and other psychological health issues may require long-term, often acute, care. Many Marines first seek treatment for these conditions years after returning from combat when they realize they can no longer face their symptoms alone. Others transition from the Marine Corps and find themselves periodically reaching back to the Marine family who guided them through their physical recovery, in need of encouragement and focus. Warrior care resources for those wounded in combat, injured on duty, or battling a chronic illness remain consistently available. Through the Wounded Warrior Regiment, the Marine Corps offers unique capabilities in support of Marines so that an illness or injury does not preclude a meaningful career, cause the mental or emotional breakdown of a family, or worse, end a life.

To facilitate the warm hand off transition of a Marine with a permanent, severely disabling wound, illness or injury from our recovery care services and support to that provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Marine Corps is actively engaged with the DoD/VA Interagency Care Coordination. Embracing the two agency Secretary's vision of One Mission – One Policy – One Plan, the Marine Corps fully supports the collaborative efforts that will ensure the Marine's seamless transition to the VA.