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Before the

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

## **UNITED STATES SENATE**

HEARING TO RECEIVE A BRIEFING ON  
INFORMATION SURROUNDING THE MARINES UNITED  
WEBSITE

Tuesday, March 14, 2017

Washington, D.C.

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HEARING TO RECEIVE A BRIEFING ON  
INFORMATION SURROUNDING THE MARINES UNITED WEBSITE

Tuesday, March 14, 2017

U.S. Senate  
Committee on Armed Services  
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m. in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John McCain, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators McCain [presiding], Inhofe, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Graham, Cruz, Sasse, Strange, Reed, McCaskill, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Donnelly, Hirono, Kaine, King, Heinrich, Warren, and Peters.

1           OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN McCAIN, U.S. SENATOR  
2 FROM ARIZONA

3           Chairman McCain: Well, good morning.

4           The Senate Armed Services Committee meets this morning  
5 to receive testimony on information surrounding the  
6 unfortunate matter of the Marines United Facebook group.

7           I want to thank each of our witnesses for appearing  
8 before the committee this morning: Acting Secretary of the  
9 Navy Sean Stackley; General Robert Neller, Commandant of the  
10 Marine Corps; and Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Ronald  
11 Green. Sergeant Major, good morning and thank you for  
12 coming and thank you for your appearance here.

13          The committee is saddened and disturbed by allegations  
14 that female marines have been subjected to online harassment  
15 and abuse, including denigrating comments and nonconsensual  
16 sharing of images apparently in some cases by fellow  
17 marines. Our witnesses are here to inform us about these  
18 allegations and what is being done to address the impact on  
19 the service, especially those marines who have been  
20 victimized.

21          All who love the Marine Corps are embarrassed and  
22 outraged by these allegations, none more so than our  
23 witnesses today. General Neller, since these allegations  
24 were made, you have been unequivocal in communicating to the  
25 men and women you lead that behavior like this is

1 unacceptable and fundamentally opposed to the values of the  
2 Marine Corps.

3 I want to reemphasize the Commandant's message to  
4 marines last week. The members of this committee share your  
5 hope that marines who have been victims of harassment and  
6 abuse will report that conduct to their chain of command,  
7 chaplain, or victim leader counsel. It is our expectation  
8 that Marine officers and leaders will support those victims,  
9 protect them from reprisal, and do all in their power to  
10 prevent abuse of any marine.

11 At this time, we do not know how many marines were  
12 involved in these allegations of harassment and abuse or  
13 what motivated those who were to engage in such disgraceful  
14 and unprofessional behavior. We do not know the origin of  
15 images of female marines on the Marines United Facebook  
16 group, some of which may have been taken or shared without  
17 their consent. And we do not know how many marines may have  
18 been targeted.

19 This committee expects the Department of the Navy and  
20 its senior Marine Corps leaders to provide updates on the  
21 investigation into these issues when appropriate, as well as  
22 keep the committee apprised of any corrective action the  
23 Marine Corps may take concerning policies, procedures, and  
24 the education and training of marines. We realize that much  
25 of this information may be law enforcement sensitive due to

1 ongoing criminal investigations. For that reason,  
2 immediately following this open hearing, the committee will  
3 proceed to a closed door session to hear from our witnesses  
4 on these sensitive matters.

5 While there may be much that we still have to learn,  
6 there is much that we know already. We know that the  
7 actions of those marines involved in Marines United do not  
8 reflect the culture and values of their service, not only  
9 honor, courage, and commitment, but also mutual respect for  
10 all of their fellow human beings, values that are upheld and  
11 lived each day by the overwhelming majority of marines.  
12 That is why Americans are proud of our Marine Corps because  
13 the conduct of most marines is deserving of our praise and  
14 respect.

15 We also know the challenges we see in our military  
16 often reflect similar challenges confronting broader  
17 society. In this case, we are all confronting the unique  
18 challenges posed by the advent and proliferation of social  
19 media which, like any technology, is an enabler, an enabler  
20 of incredibly good and decent things, but also dark and  
21 troubling things. The same technology that allows one group  
22 of marines to create a support group to help their battle  
23 buddies struggling with post-traumatic stress can be used by  
24 another group to humiliate and demean their fellow female  
25 comrades.

1           At the same time, we know that those who serve in the  
2 profession of arms must be held to a higher standard. They  
3 would not want it any other way. We know that the Marine  
4 Corps cannot fight and win the Nation's wars if marines do  
5 not respect and trust one another. This is not just a  
6 matter of good personal conduct. It is a matter of military  
7 effectiveness.

8           That is why any marine who disrespects a fellow marine  
9 dishonors the values of the Marine Corps and harms its  
10 mission to defend the Nation. This kind of behavior is  
11 unacceptable for any marine or any member of the United  
12 States Armed Forces. And the actions of our civilian and  
13 military leadership, not just in response to these  
14 allegations, but at all times, must demonstrate that such  
15 misconduct will not be excused or tolerated.

16           Finally, as members of the committee are aware, these  
17 allegations surrounding Marines United are currently under  
18 investigation by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service.  
19 Therefore, I encourage members of the committee to please  
20 reserve any questions that may be law enforcement sensitive  
21 for the closed session to follow. I do not want this  
22 committee's proceedings to be construed in any way that  
23 might interfere with the swift delivery of justice to those  
24 individuals that may have engaged in criminal behavior.

25           Once again, I thank the witnesses for appearing before

1 the committee today.

2 Senator Reed?

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1           STATEMENT OF HON. JACK REED, U.S. SENATOR FROM RHODE  
2 ISLAND

3           Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman,  
4 for holding this very important session to give the Marine  
5 Corps the opportunity to give an initial briefing on what  
6 they know and what they do not know about reports of  
7 abhorrent behavior by some of our marines using the Marines  
8 United website. It is unusual for the committee to receive  
9 a briefing like this one on an ongoing criminal  
10 investigation, but this issue is so important that it  
11 warrants this kind of attention. However, we must take care  
12 to ensure that we do not put the Commandant of the Marine  
13 Corps in the position of making statements that later could  
14 be alleged as exercising unlawful command influence and  
15 therefore disrupting the criminal investigation.

16           The nonconsensual posting of explicit photos of female  
17 marines on a public website is repugnant and just plain  
18 wrong and inexcusable. All of us who have had the privilege  
19 of serving in uniform know the value of a cohesive unit  
20 where all members of the unit looked out for each other and  
21 took care of each other. I can only imagine the harm that  
22 this type of behavior can have on morale and unit cohesion.  
23 Our service members must have confidence that their fellow  
24 service members always have their back. There simply is no  
25 room for behavior that humiliates and degrades a fellow



1 service member.

2 In my view, the Marine Corps must and will attack this  
3 problem with the vigor that the Marine Corps has  
4 demonstrated time and time again. It should begin with a  
5 good, thorough investigation to establish provable facts  
6 that can be used to hold offenders accountable for criminal  
7 conduct. I will be anxious to hear whether the NCIS has the  
8 resources and expertise to fully and completely investigate  
9 this matter. If they do not, we need to help them get those  
10 resources and that expertise. Once the investigation is  
11 complete, commanders will have the task of taking  
12 appropriate action based on the findings of the  
13 investigation.

14 Aside from the immediate issue of marine misconduct on  
15 the Marines United website, the Marine Corps must also  
16 address the culture that allowed or facilitated that  
17 misconduct. I will be interested in hearing about actions  
18 the Marine Corps will take to improve the culture,  
19 especially in a Marine Corps that is in the process of fully  
20 integrating female marines into its ranks.

21 With that, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to our  
22 briefings, both the open and closed sessions. Thank you.

23 Chairman McCain: Thank you.

24 We will begin with you, Secretary Stackley. Welcome.

25

1 STATEMENT OF HON. SEAN J. STACKLEY, ACTING SECRETARY  
2 OF THE NAVY

3 Mr. Stackley: Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed,  
4 members of the Armed Services Committee, thank you for this  
5 hearing.

6 Discovery and investigation these past several weeks  
7 into the toxic, predatory behavior harbored by the website,  
8 Marines United, has uncovered a grievous breakdown of good  
9 order and discipline, a violation of our core values, and  
10 what amounts to an insider threat. Some unknown number of  
11 marines or former marines, when denigrating their fellow  
12 marines, undermined the very honor and integrity and unit  
13 cohesion that has long underpinned the strength of the  
14 Corps.

15 Marines United is a bell ringer. Beyond the emotions  
16 that surround this issue, anger, revulsion, frustration, we  
17 are committed, dedicated to fixing this issue and our  
18 immediate actions are threefold.

19 First, we must take care of those marines who have been  
20 victimized by this behavior, counseling, legal services, and  
21 beyond in strict confidence inside and outside the chain of  
22 command. Every resource will be made available to those  
23 seeking support.

24 We are prosecuting the matter of Marines United to the  
25 full extent of our abilities, and we will hold accountable

1 those who have violated the standards, going by law, by  
2 policy, by code. Of the 30,000 members reported to be on  
3 Marines United, we do not know how many are, in fact, active  
4 duty marines, much less how many in fact participated in  
5 this denigrating affair. Getting to the facts will take  
6 time, but the Navy Criminal Investigative Service is working  
7 every lead, every path available to overcome the challenges  
8 we are running into posed by nameless, faceless predators  
9 and cyber bullying on social media.

10 Perhaps most importantly, we will get at the root  
11 underlying issues in order to eradicate this cancer. The  
12 task force formed by the Commandant is central to this  
13 effort which today involves senior officers and enlisted.  
14 We will expand to include the expertise called upon by this  
15 problem and in the long run will involve commitment of every  
16 tier of leadership within the Marine Corps. This, again,  
17 will be a long road, but we are on the road for good and we  
18 will share with the committee our efforts, our course, our  
19 progress on that course as we move forward.

20 Every young man and woman who takes the oath to support  
21 and defend our Constitution, who puts on the uniform and  
22 puts their life on the line to defend our way of life here  
23 at home is owed utmost trust and respect by every American.  
24 Any breach of that trust and respect within the very ranks  
25 of the services themselves must be dealt with immediately,

1 decisively, unceasingly before, like a cancer, it steals  
2 from us our strength, our spirit, our honor. We will be  
3 immediate, decisive, and unceasing in fixing this problem  
4 and in defeating this attack on our core values.

5 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to addressing  
6 your questions.

7 [The prepared statement of Mr. Stackley follows:]

8 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman McCain: Thank you.  
2 General Neller?  
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1           STATEMENT OF GENERAL ROBERT B. NELLER, USMC,  
2           COMMANDANT OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

3           General Neller: Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed,  
4           Senators of the committee, normally I appear before this  
5           committee to take an opportunity to tell you about the  
6           extraordinary actions and things that your marines are doing  
7           at home and around the globe. Today, however, is different.  
8           I am here to discuss the details of some truly disturbing  
9           and unacceptable actions that have allegedly been committed  
10          on social media primarily against the women of our Marine  
11          Corps.

12          The recent release of information first uncovered by a  
13          combat-wounded marine reporter about the online posting of  
14          explicit and lewd pictures and even more troubling  
15          derogatory, demeaning, and in some cases sexually violent  
16          comments about female marines are why we are here and what  
17          we are going to talk about. Such actions pervert our  
18          culture and bring me here.

19          As I am sure you did, I received this recent news  
20          regarding actions on the Marines United Facebook site with a  
21          mixture of emotions: disappointment, shock, anger, disgust,  
22          and outrage. The Marine Corps I have served for over 40  
23          years has a problem and we intend to fix it.

24          I struggle with labeling the problem we face. Some say  
25          we have a problem with our culture. Some say it is an

1 insider threat. My natural inclination is to resist this  
2 because I believe in my heart the Marine Corps culture is  
3 based on our core values of honor, courage, and commitment.  
4 It represents who we are. The online behavior of some  
5 individuals, whether they are currently serving marines,  
6 former marines, or others who simply wandered in, have  
7 attacked our Marine Corps values, our ethos.

8 We draw our strength from the team. Everything we do  
9 in training from day one is focused on the team and not the  
10 individual. But some seem to have forgotten that every  
11 member of our team is an equal and a valued member of our  
12 Corps. Every marine has a role to play. Every marine who  
13 earns our title commands the respect of their fellow  
14 marines.

15 We proudly advertise the transformation that occurs at  
16 recruit training and officer candidate school, first by the  
17 methods by which we recruit, train, and transform young men  
18 and women from citizens to marines, but the transformation  
19 is not perfect in all cases. Some marines can lose their  
20 way and disregard or fail to comprehend our ethos. At every  
21 level of leadership, we must do a better job of sustaining  
22 this transformation and eliminating any behavior that  
23 targets any individual as less than a teammate or a fellow  
24 marine. We must attack any behavior that has a corrosive  
25 effect on good order and discipline of our Corps.

1 I came in the Marine Corps with the problems of the  
2 1970s shortly after Vietnam. Drug use and race relations  
3 were tearing us apart. Some of you were there then and you  
4 remember this. Our Commandant at the time, General Lewis  
5 Wilson, took a firm stance to get our Corps back to true  
6 north. He improved our recruiting standards and made it his  
7 personal mission to address those who cannot or do not want  
8 to measure up to our standards needed to find another place  
9 to perform.

10 I believe we face a similar situation today. The vast  
11 majority of marines, past and present, are American citizens  
12 who are good and decent people. They are as upset by the  
13 behavior represented on Marines United as you and I. And I  
14 am calling on all marines to take a stand against this  
15 destructive conduct, to take a stand and support and respect  
16 every marine, to demonstrate to the American people who we  
17 really are, that we embody our ethos of honor, courage, and  
18 commitment.

19 When any Marine unit goes into action, there are never  
20 bystanders. We all have a role to play. We are all to be  
21 fully committed to the mission. The same is true in  
22 garrison and the barracks back here at home. There can be  
23 no bystanders. We must all be engaged as teammates. Every  
24 marine has a role to play to ensure that our team remains  
25 strong.



1 I would ask to take this opportunity to speak directly  
2 to every female in our Marine Corps, past and present. I  
3 know I am asking a lot of you right now, but I ask you to  
4 trust the leadership of the Marine Corps to take action and  
5 correct this problem. I ask you to trust me personally as  
6 your Commandant and when I say I am outraged that many of  
7 you have not been given the same respect when you earn the  
8 title "marine." I know you are not asking to be labeled as  
9 victims, for anyone's pity. I know you would find that as  
10 insulting as the recent behavior and comments on social  
11 media. I know what you do for our Corps, for our team, and  
12 what you have contributed, to include during the past 16  
13 years of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. I know when you  
14 earn in the eagle, globe, and anchor, you wear it as proudly  
15 as the marines you are.

16 To the men in our Corps serving today and those who no  
17 longer wear the uniform, you are still marines. I need you  
18 to ask yourselves, how much more do the females of our Corps  
19 have to do to be accepted? Was it enough when Major Megan  
20 McClung was killed by an IED in Ramadi or Captain Jennifer  
21 Harris killed when her helicopter was shot down while she  
22 was flying blood from Baghdad to Fallujah surgical or  
23 Corporals Jennifer Parcell and Hally Ann Sherrod and Ramona  
24 Valdez, all killed by the hands of our enemies? What is it  
25 going to take for you to accept these marines as marines?

1 I am committed to making this right, and I need all  
2 marines equally committed. We all have to commit to getting  
3 rid of this perversion in our culture. Enough is enough.

4 So, ladies and gentlemen of the committee, we will take  
5 action to correct this stain on our Marine Corps. I have no  
6 illusions or delusions about how difficult that will be, but  
7 that does not mean we are going to stand by and watch it.  
8 It cannot go on anymore.

9 And I am prepared to answer your questions.

10 [The prepared statement of General Neller follows:]

11 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1           Chairman McCain: General Neller, I want to thank you  
2 for that statement. I think it is strong and it is powerful  
3 and, frankly, it is reassuring to this committee about your  
4 commitment.

5           Sergeant Major Green, do you have any comments to add  
6 to the Commandant's remarks?

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1 STATEMENT OF SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE MARINE CORPS RONALD  
2 L. GREEN, USMC, SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE MARINE CORPS

3 Sergeant Green: Good morning, Chairman. Senator  
4 McCain, Ranking Member Senator Reed, and all Members of the  
5 Congress. I want to thank you all for allowing the Marines  
6 Corps to come before you today, the leadership, and  
7 explaining exactly what we are doing.

8 I did not prepare any words, but I can tell you that no  
9 one is more outraged than the leadership you see sitting  
10 before you today. This tears at the very fibers that bond  
11 us together as we fight for the Nation's freedom and  
12 liberty.

13 We are protecting our victims. We are allowing the  
14 legal system to go forward so that we can bring those who  
15 have committed these crimes before the Commandant, the  
16 leadership, and hold them accountable. We are researching  
17 our policies and reinforcing the gaps. And I am prepared to  
18 do whatever it takes to protect not just enlisted marines,  
19 but all marines and their dependents and those who serve  
20 under the eagle, globe, and anchor.

21 Thank you for the opportunity.

22 [The prepared statement of Sergeant Green follows:]

23 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman McCain: Well, thank you, sir, and thank you  
2 for your outstanding leadership.

3 General Neller, has the Marine Corps embarked an effort  
4 to communicate with and assist identifiable victims?

5 General Neller: Sir, as far as the Marines United,  
6 there have been a small number of victims or people who have  
7 claimed that they were targeted by this website. And so we  
8 are talking to those, and NCIS is working investigations on  
9 those that they are aware of. But the number is too small.  
10 And, again, we need others to come forward.

11 Chairman McCain: And what are you doing to encourage  
12 others to come forward, General?

13 General Neller: This hearing is an opportunity to ask  
14 marines to come forward, not just marines that may have been  
15 victimized but marines that have been aware of this. And I  
16 think that is starting to happen. We are getting  
17 information from other men, other male marines, that they  
18 know about this, and they are, as I stated, I believe as  
19 upset about this as we are.

20 We had a press conference the other day where, again, I  
21 asked marines for their help. We have gone out to the  
22 leadership, told them the path where they can direct  
23 marines. I have directed commanders to go out and talk to  
24 their marines about this and directed them that if anyone  
25 comes forward, they can be directed toward their victim

1 advocate, to their chaplain, to their victim legal counsel,  
2 or the chain of command, and they are going to forward this.  
3 We put a site up on our marines.mil webpage. If you are  
4 aware of any actions of this or someone is being bullied or  
5 harassed in cyberspace, to contact this certain number or an  
6 email address or their chain of command. I know NCIS has  
7 done the same. So we have gone out in any possible forum  
8 that we can to ask marines to come forward if they are  
9 either a victim here or they are aware of any of this  
10 behavior.

11 Chairman McCain: And you are assuring them that there  
12 would be no reprisal or retaliation?

13 General Neller: They have my word that the leadership  
14 will not take retribution against them. And I know that is  
15 a big issue. And I have talked to some of the members here  
16 about that. That is why I know it is difficult because I  
17 cannot necessarily guarantee -- social media -- one of the  
18 insidious natures of this problem is there is a certain  
19 level of anonymity out there. And so if you were to push  
20 back on any of this, you immediately get attacked by the  
21 crowd and they are anonymous. I think for many of us who do  
22 not participate in that type of behavior, that is foreign to  
23 us.

24 And I will admit this is something -- I am not a social  
25 media person. We use it to message marines and talk about

1 the good things that marines do. But sites like this are  
2 not a place that I would think any of us would frequent,  
3 even for the altruistic and positive things, as you  
4 mentioned, Chairman, that Marines United was set up to do,  
5 how veterans deal with whatever issues they had coming back  
6 from the fight.

7 So there is risk. I cannot protect people necessarily  
8 on social media. I can ensure that the chain of command is  
9 going to take action, and I can direct commanders to take  
10 any allegations that anybody makes. And they are going to  
11 take them and follow them through and report them to NCIS or  
12 do an investigation. But our ability to -- and this is not  
13 an excuse -- manage what happens on social media, if it  
14 remains up, is an issue.

15 I will say, though, that when we have seen this type of  
16 behavior and we have gone to the organizations that host  
17 this, they have, in general, been very helpful with us with  
18 taking these sites down. But when they do that, what we  
19 have also seen is then they move. And I would prefer to get  
20 into it in the closed discussion about what the legalities  
21 are about certain things that happen in cyberspace because  
22 there are certain things about the law that are not always  
23 going to be helpful to us getting accountability. Again,  
24 that is not an excuse, but I think there are some things  
25 that we may need your help with.

1 Chairman McCain: I agree.

2 Secretary Stackley, can commanders use the UCMJ, the  
3 Uniform Code of Military Justice, to hold personnel  
4 accountable for transmitting, receiving, viewing, possessing  
5 of photos without the consent of the person in your view?

6 Mr. Stackley: Yes, sir. And now what we are trying to  
7 do is actually run to ground each instance, each example  
8 that we can find where we have the perpetrator, we have the  
9 evidence that frankly has been preserved so we can hold them  
10 accountable in accordance with articles 120 and 134 of the  
11 UCMJ.

12 Chairman McCain: And, obviously, General Neller  
13 pointed out one of the challenges we face, and that is of  
14 these websites just morphing over to another site after they  
15 are shut down.

16 Mr. Stackley: Yes, sir. I used the term  
17 "nameless/faceless." It is very difficult to identify the  
18 individuals that are on these websites. And as we work with  
19 the owners of the websites, we have to deal with First  
20 Amendment rights. We have to deal with Privacy Act issues.  
21 So we are pushing it as far as we can to get every piece of  
22 evidence that we can find. And a key to this, as the  
23 Commandant described, is to have individuals come forward.  
24 So we are trying to reach out, not just get the word out for  
25 people to come forward, but also provide an environment



1 where they feel safe and secure to bring their case forward.

2 Chairman McCain: Senator Reed?

3 Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

4 And I would just like to ask one question because I  
5 know there is great interest of my colleagues in the public  
6 session, and then we have a closed session later.

7 General Neller, this is not the first experience  
8 recently the Marine Corps has had. In 2013, there was a  
9 cyber bullying of female marines. How did you react to that  
10 issue, and what lessons have you learned, and how are you  
11 applying those lessons to this situation?

12 General Neller: Senator, we went back and looked at  
13 that and looked at all the actions. And I can give you a  
14 long list of things that we did as far as addressing sexual  
15 assault, changing values-based training at all our different  
16 levels of training. There was a policy written about  
17 conduct on social media in 2010, but it was not focused on  
18 this type of thing. We are in the process of actually  
19 issuing out today an updated policy on conduct on social  
20 media and what is acceptable and not acceptable and what is  
21 a violation of a lawful order or article 134 or article  
22 120(c).

23 So there was a lot of training that we did, but looking  
24 back at it -- I mean, I can only speak for myself, Senator.  
25 We were focused on the issues of sexual assault which were

1 very important at that time. And I do not think we got at  
2 the social media thing to the level that we are going to get  
3 at it now.

4 I put myself in that category. I went back and I  
5 thought about all the stuff we talked about and all the  
6 things that the Commandant, General Amos, did with the  
7 Heritage brief, about our values, about how we treat each  
8 other, the things we have done since about discussing  
9 alcohol abuse and protect what you have earned, and even the  
10 message I put out after the first of this year stating we  
11 need to treat each other better. But when I wrote that, I  
12 did not have in my mind this particular -- so I have no  
13 excuse for that. We were dealing with a lot of things.

14 So now this is front and center. And I think part of  
15 it is I think victims were afraid to come forward because if  
16 they came forward, they were going to be attacked tenfold on  
17 social media again. And I think for those that do not  
18 participate in this domain, I think we are ignorant. I am  
19 not ignorant anymore. I am trainable and I accept  
20 responsibility for that. But we were focused on other  
21 things that we were trying to get at. And I do not think  
22 social media was absent from that, but I do not think it got  
23 front and center like it should have at the time.

24 Senator Reed: Thank you very much.

25 Again, I think we all recognize the seriousness of this

1 issue. It goes to the very heart of the Corps, not just the  
2 Marine Corps but every service. You cannot have individual  
3 marines, soldiers, sailors, airmen, coast guardsmen who are  
4 marginalized because of gender or any other characteristic.  
5 So we have a lot of work to do, both you and the United  
6 States Congress.

7 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Chairman McCain: Senator Inhofe?

9 Senator Inhofe: General Neller, the first quote that I  
10 heard from you was that those who are involved will be held  
11 accountable. I know your background. I know you. I have  
12 every confidence that is what is going to happen. I have no  
13 questions.

14 Chairman McCain: Senator Shaheen?

15 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Secretary Stackley, a November 2015 report from the  
17 Government Accountability Office found the Department of  
18 Defense measures to assess the effectiveness of its sexual  
19 assault prevention efforts were not fully developed and  
20 missing key attributes. Can you tell me if anything has  
21 been done since that GAO report to address that?

22 Mr. Stackley: Yes, ma'am.

23 Senator Shaheen: And can you tell me specifically  
24 what?

25 Mr. Stackley: Okay. There are a list of initiatives

1 that have gone out in terms of first identifying cases of  
2 sexual assault. And this gets right down to everything from  
3 anonymous surveys, to interviews, to capturing reports and  
4 then running reports to ground.

5 I could provide examples of things that have been done,  
6 but when we look at the statistics and the results, what we  
7 are trying to do is correlate measures that were taken with  
8 results that we are getting. And, frankly, we are  
9 challenged to do that. The statistics move around, and  
10 within the Department of the Navy, within our SAPRO, I am  
11 trying to correlate what actions are we taking that are  
12 giving us positive results that we have confidence in so in  
13 fact we can grow those actions versus a number of  
14 initiatives that we cannot quite correlate to the results  
15 that we are looking for.

16 Senator Shaheen: Well, I would argue that one of the  
17 challenges is that people are not being held accountable in  
18 a way that sends a very strong message to others that they  
19 serve with that this is unacceptable behavior.

20 General Neller, according to a 2014 RAND military  
21 workplace study, the Marine Corps has the highest rate of  
22 sexual assault among the service branches. And I know that  
23 we are not talking about sexual assault directly as we often  
24 think about the definition in this scandal, but I do believe  
25 there is a correlation between the two. So can you just

1 respond to why you think that is?

2 And I appreciate your statements and the statements of  
3 everyone here about needing to address this issue, but  
4 understand that this committee has heard those kinds of  
5 statements for as long as I have been on the committee and I  
6 think much longer. So it is hard to believe that something  
7 is really going to be done when we hear this repeated again  
8 and again and we see these kinds of situations again and  
9 again. So why should we believe that it is going to be  
10 different this time than it has been in the past?

11 General Neller: As I stated earlier, Senator, this  
12 particular issue -- I mean, we can talk about sexual assault  
13 and the numbers. As the Secretary said, we have struggled.  
14 I had expected that the numbers would go up when we started  
15 our training back in 2013 to try to get after sexual assault  
16 per se -- and I have talked to Senator Gillibrand, Senator  
17 McCaskill about this -- and that they would flatten out and  
18 then they would go down. And they flattened out but they  
19 have not gone down.

20 I can give you some other statistics. I can track  
21 every one of these allegations to show you how it was  
22 culminated in some sort of action or no action.

23 Why is it going to be different now with the social  
24 media? I think we addressed the action of individuals which  
25 is sexual assault or bullying, but I think the bigger issue

1 is within the culture, we have just a fact with all marines  
2 that all marines are marines. And the female marines that  
3 are there are a small group in our Corps, and for whatever  
4 reason, there are still some number -- and I do not think  
5 this is separate from the sexual assault issue, but this  
6 issue of denigration of women, objectification of women,  
7 misogyny, however ever you want to articulate it are just  
8 bad behavior. It is tied to the way that some group of male  
9 marines look at women in the Marine Corps.

10 And I think we can fix that. I think we can fix it by  
11 holding those accountable who do not want to accept the fact  
12 and we make it part of -- we got to tell commanders, hey,  
13 look, there are things you can do out here within the UCMJ  
14 if that parameters are met. But this is a very difficult  
15 problem.

16 On the sexual assault thing, I am not going to give up  
17 on any of this. I still think part of our -- I mean, I  
18 could give you the demographics and that is an excuse. You  
19 know, the percentage of the marines and what their ages are  
20 and all that and the numbers. We are a young force. Okay.  
21 But they are marines and they are expected to conduct  
22 themselves at a higher level. You expect that. I expect  
23 that.

24 I think that alcohol abuse is another problem that we  
25 are going to have to deal with that I think we will get

1 after that. But this is all about our leaders going out  
2 there, setting the example, and expecting the behavior is  
3 going to be in a certain way.

4 Is it going to be different? It has got to be  
5 different. And that is my charge to myself. I have got to  
6 go out there and, as the senior marine, say this is the way  
7 it is going to be, and if you are not going to get along --  
8 if you have a problem with this, then, as I mentioned in the  
9 video I did, you need to ask yourself do you really want to  
10 be a marine. If that is not going to change it, then -- I  
11 believe it is. I have heard enough from enough men and  
12 women that are seniors out there that they realize -- why  
13 they did not realize it before I have no excuse -- that we  
14 are going to change and that we can change. And all I would  
15 ask is an opportunity to address this. I know you have  
16 heard that before, but that is my ask.

17 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, General. I would suggest  
18 that you use the term "survivor" rather than victim for  
19 those people who have been attacked.

20 General Neller: Yes, ma'am.

21 Chairman McCain: Senator Fischer?

22 Senator Fischer: General, this behavior has to change.  
23 It has gone on for too long, and we need to see those  
24 changes.

25 You spoke about social media and the lack of

1 recognition that you had on what is going on on social  
2 media. The Corps does have a policy on social media. Is  
3 that correct?

4 General Neller: Yes, ma'am, we do.

5 Senator Fischer: And you have spoken today about  
6 making changes to that policy. Do you have any ideas on how  
7 that policy needs to be changed? What would make a new  
8 policy different and more effective at this point?

9 General Neller: I believe the policy that we revised  
10 is focused more on certain behaviors such as the one we are  
11 here to discuss today on social media and that to tell all  
12 marines that these types of things are unacceptable. They  
13 are not part of the inner marine and they are also  
14 punishable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The  
15 previous policy said that, but it did not say it quite as  
16 directly.

17 But it is also going to take leadership to go out and  
18 reinforce that, to not just hide -- not hide, but to use a  
19 piece of paper. But they are going to have to go out and  
20 sell it. They are going to have to talk about it. They are  
21 going to have to make commanders and senior enlisted  
22 understand that this has got to change.

23 Our marines -- they use social media. They use it for  
24 a lot of good things, as was mentioned by the chairman. We  
25 use social media to tell the story of the Marines, and that



1 is fine. But marines have got to understand that using the  
2 social media to degrade, denigrate, be disrespectful to  
3 another marine is not just not who we are but it is illegal  
4 and that if you are found doing this, then you are  
5 potentially subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

6 Senator Fischer: And I assume marines are educated on  
7 the current policy?

8 General Neller: They are, but I do not believe -- I  
9 cannot tell you, Senator, that it is done with enough time  
10 or reinforcement. We start talking to marines about the  
11 values and ethos of the inner marine when they are still  
12 waiting to go to recruit training. Whether or not there are  
13 specific discussions about this type of thing, I cannot say  
14 to you that it is done in a manner that is satisfactory to  
15 me both in the quality of the discussion and the quantity.  
16 But it will be.

17 Senator Fischer: Have there been any punishments for  
18 marines who have violated the current policy that you have?

19 General Neller: Senator, I cannot give you a specific  
20 quote that this individual did X and was found guilty at Y.  
21 I would ask to take that for the record and get back to you.  
22 I asked that question myself. But much of this type of  
23 behavior should be held, could be held accountable at a  
24 nonjudicial punishment, which is an administrative action,  
25 and I do not have the data to give you that answer.

1           Mr. Stackley: If I could add. We have been able to  
2 track individuals who have used government computers to  
3 access these types of websites, and then we are able to  
4 identify the individual and clearly bring punishment to  
5 bear.

6           Senator Fischer: That was my next question. Were  
7 government computers used to access these websites or to  
8 post anything on them?

9           Mr. Stackley: We have not been able to find any  
10 incidents of government computers being used to access or  
11 post, but we are continuing with the investigation.

12          Senator Fischer: General, how well do we understand  
13 the membership of this group and how it breaks down between  
14 former marines and active marines and also retired marines?  
15 Do you have any information on that right now?

16          General Neller: Senator, all I can tell you is we  
17 believe the numbers of individuals that belong to Marines  
18 United was about 30,000 on their public facing Facebook  
19 page. How many of them are active or former or other  
20 services or civilians I do not have the answer to that. The  
21 NCIS is looking into that.

22          The place where these individuals went to post these  
23 pictures and make their comments was a link to a server  
24 hosted by another Internet provider, which has since been  
25 taken down. The numbers that we believe had access to this

1 site was much, much smaller than 30,000. I would ask for  
2 NCIS to give you that number in the closed session.

3 Senator Fischer: Thank you.

4 Chairman McCain: Senator Gillibrand?

5 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 General Neller, the military, the Marines, have been  
7 aware of online victimization, online exploitation of other  
8 marines since 2013 because there is a letter here from  
9 Jackie Speier to Chuck Hagel and General Amos with  
10 screenshots. So there is no mystery that this has been  
11 going on for a very long time. It was right in front of you  
12 and the command to do something about it since 2013.

13 We have countless victims who have come forward, and  
14 they are not just being harassed online. Once their name,  
15 face, where they are stationed is posted, do you think the  
16 harassment ends online? It does not. I spoke to a marine  
17 yesterday. Excuse me. I spoke to a civilian yesterday who  
18 has been continued to be harassed in her community because  
19 her ex-boyfriend exploited her online.

20 So I have to say when you say to us it has got to be  
21 different, that rings hollow. I do not know what you mean  
22 when you say that. Why does it have to be different?  
23 Because you all of a sudden feel that it has to be  
24 different?

25 Who has been held accountable? I very much align

1 myself with Senator Fischer's comments. Who has been held  
2 responsible? Have you actually investigated and found  
3 guilty anybody? If we cannot crack Facebook, how are we  
4 supposed to be able to confront Russian aggression and cyber  
5 hacking throughout our military?

6 It is a serious problem when we have members of our  
7 military denigrating female marines who will give their life  
8 to this country in the way they have with no response from  
9 leadership. I can tell you your answers today are  
10 unsatisfactory. They do not go far enough.

11 And I would like to know what do you intend to do to  
12 the commanders who are responsible for good order and  
13 discipline. All of this behavior is in violation of article  
14 120 and article 134 as so stated. They are violating the  
15 Code of Criminal Justice. Why are commanders who have asked  
16 for all responsibility to deal with sexual assault and these  
17 behaviors for the 5 years this committee has been focused on  
18 this issue -- you have demanded that you maintain control of  
19 all these issues. But where is the accountability for  
20 failure? Who is being held accountable for doing nothing  
21 since 2013? Who? Which commander?

22 I am very concerned that this is part of a culture that  
23 is resulting in the high levels of sexual assault. We know  
24 from the fiscal year 2014 SAPRO report that 60 percent of  
25 men and 58 percent of women who experienced sexual

1 harassment or gender discrimination in the previous year  
2 throughout all the services indicated that a supervisor or  
3 unit leader was one of the people engaged in the violations.  
4 That is a problem with our command.

5 So if you are dedicated to fixing the culture of the  
6 marines and all the services, what do you plan to do to hold  
7 commanders responsible who fail to get this done?

8 General Neller: Senator, I understand and share your  
9 concern. If I were aware or I would expect that any  
10 commander who was aware of someone who has reported any  
11 allegation of anything, but particularly something as  
12 serious as sexual assault, and the chain of command did not  
13 do anything, that that commander would be held accountable.

14 I do not have any statistics for you on that. I can  
15 tell you that of all those individuals who have come forward  
16 with allegations of sexual assault, what has happened to  
17 individuals that the charges ended up with some sort of  
18 process and ended up with an adjudication, but those are  
19 just numbers.

20 As you clearly and rightfully state, this is a problem  
21 with our culture. I mean, I do not have a good answer for  
22 you. I am not going to sit here and duck around this thing.  
23 I am not. I am responsible. I am the Commandant. I own  
24 this. You know, you have heard it before, but we are going  
25 to have to change how we see ourselves and how we treat each

1 other. That is a lame answer, but ma'am, that is the best I  
2 can tell you right now. We have got to change and that is  
3 on me.

4 Senator Gillibrand: My time has expired.

5 Chairman McCain: Senator Cotton?

6 Senator Cotton: I was very disappointed and troubled  
7 to read this news recently, as were all members of this  
8 committee and most Americans no doubt. I am reassured by  
9 the comments of General Neller and the Sergeant Major this  
10 morning about how serious they take it and the gravity with  
11 which they treat it.

12 General Neller, you mentioned that there are 30,000  
13 members of this group. You do not have the breakdown of  
14 active versus reserve versus retired. Any indication yet of  
15 the breakdown between marines, NCOs, and officers?

16 General Neller: Not in specific numbers. I think we  
17 are going to get that information, Senator. I am not going  
18 to speculate on what the level of officer involvement is or  
19 is not. But I think the NCIS folks can tell you that. I do  
20 not know the number. I would be speculating. I would not  
21 say this is -- it is highly unlikely this is just enlisted.  
22 It does not really matter.

23 I would just remind, not to stick up for Marines  
24 United, but the great majority of people that went to this  
25 site -- and there are other sites. We find sites all the

1 time. We are looking out there and NCIS is looking, and  
2 people are telling us about other sites. So Marines United  
3 is not alone in this despicable, disgusting behavior.

4 But I think eventually we will know the breakdown, not  
5 just who was a member of Marines United but who went to this  
6 other link and participated in this behavior.

7 Mr. Stackley: Sir, if I could add.

8 Senator Cotton: Yes, Mr. Stackley.

9 Mr. Stackley: To date, we are dealing with cooperative  
10 information. In other words, we are trying to draw  
11 information -- short of probable cause in which we can seize  
12 the information, we are gaining it cooperatively. NCIS has  
13 opened up a tip line. They have received as of yesterday 53  
14 calls on that tip line that is opening up other avenues to  
15 help to identify individuals but also to identify these  
16 other sites that the Commandant has referred to.

17 In my opening statement, I called this a bell ringer.  
18 This is a bell ringer. We are not going to go back. We  
19 need dive, plumb the depths of this issue to understand how  
20 far, how wide it is, and then working up and down the chain  
21 of command, whether you call it culture, whether you call it  
22 good order and discipline, get not just every marine, every  
23 man and woman in uniform to understand what our standards  
24 are, what is and is not acceptable on one hand and, on the  
25 other hand, prosecute these other avenues where this

1 behavior is taking place to the extent of our ability. We  
2 are not going to go backwards.

3 Senator Cotton: We have spoken at this hearing this  
4 morning quite a bit so far about law and policy, and those  
5 are important questions. I want to speak about the  
6 expectations we have for the young men and women we have in  
7 uniform putting aside law and policy.

8 Back when I was a company grade officer and we had to  
9 do safety briefs every Friday afternoon to ensure that if  
10 our soldiers misbehaved on the weekend, we could tell our  
11 chain of command that we had ordered them not to do so.

12 Rather than getting into single detail that soldiers might  
13 do over the weekend, I would simply say obey your general  
14 orders and the law and be a good soldier, a good citizen,  
15 and a good man. I assume that your company grade officers  
16 and company grade NCOs do something similar on weekends or  
17 before passes.

18 Putting aside the requirements of law and policy,  
19 General Neller, do you believe every marine should know that  
20 this kind of conduct violates the spirit and the ethic of  
21 the Corps?

22 General Neller: Senator, you would think, after all  
23 the discussion and all the training and things that we have  
24 done, that people would understand that this type of  
25 behavior was unacceptable. But apparently whatever we have



1 done or tried to do has not worked or we have not been clear  
2 or people think that they can go on social media with some  
3 persona or avatar character. But as Senator Gillibrand  
4 rightfully stated, I mean, some people use their full name  
5 and their unit, and because they participate, the  
6 frustration is what is a crime and what is not as opposed to  
7 boorish, stupid behavior. And this is beyond that. So that  
8 is where we are in working through that right now.

9 Yes. And I believe even they do not, they should now.  
10 I am going down Camp Lejeune tomorrow. I am going to talk  
11 to people and make sure they try to make this as crystal  
12 clear as I possibly can.

13 Senator Cotton: Sergeant Major, if I could just ask  
14 you one question.

15 Chairman McCain: Your time has expired.

16 Senator Blumenthal?

17 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 You used the words, Commandant Neller, "despicable and  
19 disgusting." That certainly is a feeling that everybody on  
20 this panel shares with you. I think also many of us share  
21 the passion and impatience that Senator Gillibrand expressed  
22 very powerfully because there have been instances in the  
23 past, and your acknowledgement that perhaps the past  
24 violations of trust and law have not been addressed  
25 sufficiently aggressively may give us some comfort here.

1 But I think we are all going to watch closely and demand  
2 from you not just the words that you have given us, which we  
3 trust, but also action which speaks louder than words.

4 Do you know personally of any commanders who had  
5 knowledge of this site before it was disclosed?

6 General Neller: No, Senator, I do not.

7 Senator Blumenthal: And do you believe that the same  
8 kind of aggressive discipline should be focused on the chain  
9 of command, as well as on the perpetrators who were involved  
10 in the immediate conduct, if they had knowledge?

11 General Neller: I do.

12 Senator Blumenthal: And will you assure us that you  
13 will take aggressive action against them?

14 General Neller: I do.

15 Senator Blumenthal: You mentioned earlier that you  
16 thought that nonjudicial punishment was appropriate for the  
17 marines who may have been involved or at least many of them.  
18 Would you agree that the Uniform Code of Military Justice  
19 should be applied as aggressively as possible in these  
20 instances and that violation should be prosecuted to the  
21 full extent of penalties that can be achieved?

22 General Neller: Let me clarify my comment. When I  
23 said nonjudicial punishment has applicability, it does, but  
24 whether that is the level at which these allegations are  
25 adjudicated is up to the chain of command. All I was trying

1 to imply is that that is a tool available to commanders. If  
2 the act is more egregious, then there would be other venues,  
3 more serious venues available to commanders.

4 Senator Blumenthal: Would you agree that the chain of  
5 command may be unable to prosecute as aggressively as  
6 possible if in fact there are allegations within the chain  
7 of command that ought to be pursued?

8 General Neller: I do not think that should make a  
9 difference. I mean, it might cause a commander if someone  
10 or their subordinates was complicit in this, but a violation  
11 is a violation. We are all accountable.

12 Senator Blumenthal: But that might make it more  
13 difficult for someone to take action against a fellow marine  
14 who was within the chain of command. Would there be some  
15 process even now under existing law? And we have sought to  
16 reform or change it to make sure that there is  
17 accountability.

18 General Neller: We select our commanders based on  
19 their skill and their ability and their potential to  
20 command. They have got to make the hard decisions. And so  
21 if that involves -- we have all done it. If that involves  
22 disciplining somebody that is in our own chain of command or  
23 that you know, then that is what you do.

24 Senator Blumenthal: And two articles of the Uniform  
25 Code of Military Justice have been mentioned, 120 and 134.

1 Neither specifically prohibit cyber bullying. My thought  
2 has been that perhaps there ought to be a specific provision  
3 that is applicable to the conduct involved here which, in  
4 effect, is a form of cyber bullying. Would you support such  
5 a provision?

6 General Neller: We have had discussions about whether  
7 or not the UCMJ has the ability to address this. To me, we  
8 have stated what behavior in cyberspace is acceptable, not  
9 acceptable. To me that has the weight of an article 92  
10 disobedience of an order. So 120(c) addresses specifically  
11 taking someone's picture without their permission and using  
12 it and 134 would address good order and discipline and those  
13 things. So I believe the tools are there if that is the  
14 level of punishment or administrative action you wanted to  
15 go to if the facts support that.

16 But I think there may be some discussion about -- I  
17 think that is something that we are going to get into with  
18 this task force whether there are provisions within the UCMJ  
19 that may need to be more specific about this particular type  
20 of potential offense because this is not new, but there have  
21 got to be some tools for commanders to be able to address  
22 this specifically.

23 Mr. Stackley: Senator, if I could add. On cyber  
24 bullying, we hypothetically are talking about ways we could  
25 prosecute it through the UCMJ, but it has not been tested

1 yet. And so your question regarding is there value in  
2 getting into greater detailed specifics within a specific  
3 article, I think the task force which the Commandant has  
4 launched, I think that is central to one of the areas that  
5 they are, in fact, looking at. And we need to keep it on  
6 the plate, and we need to come back to you with specific  
7 recommendations.

8 Chairman McCain: Senator Ernst?

9 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

10 Those who participated in these disgusting and horrible  
11 actions have not only failed our Marine Corps, they have  
12 failed the men and women who wish to join your ranks and  
13 they have failed our country. I am not as eloquent as some  
14 of the other members on this panel. All I can do is express  
15 to you how disappointed I am. I am very disappointed.

16 General Neller, I hope that you can convey the concerns  
17 you have delivered to this committee today directly to your  
18 marines, not through a press conference, not through your  
19 designees, but directly to as many marines as you possibly  
20 can. Implementing change to this type of behavior begins at  
21 the ground level, and you are a leader, sir.

22 As reports continue to come in across the DOD, it is  
23 clear that this seems to be service-wide. This is service-  
24 wide. And so we need a service-wide approach to addressing  
25 this issue. This is a cultural problem not just in our

1 military but society at large. And hearing that many  
2 individuals were not surprised about these reports  
3 disappoints me. Hearing that there may not be a way to hold  
4 many of the people that were involved in this accountable --  
5 that angers me.

6       Illegal or not, members of our community need to know  
7 this type of activity creates a culture that leads to sexual  
8 assault. Those that sat complacently by as this unfolded  
9 from the NCOs to the officers are all contributing to this  
10 issue. There is no excuse, and you have stated that,  
11 General Neller. I appreciate that greatly. There is  
12 absolutely no excuse for this, especially for those who wear  
13 our Nation's uniform.

14       The steps that you now take moving forward following  
15 this event will define each of us before this committee.  
16 Regardless of what legal or administrative action you are  
17 able to take, I hope this leads to you personally sitting  
18 down and you, Sergeant Major, as well and educating our  
19 marines.

20       A social media handbook has been discussed by a number  
21 of folks here on the panel, but how many marines actually  
22 read that? How many sit down and read it? It is up to all  
23 of us to educate our marines.

24       The Marine Corps has a high turnover rate. We have  
25 thousands of marines coming through every year, and we have

1 to make all of them aware of what they represent. They need  
2 to know that the actions they take here at home and online  
3 can take away from the success of their brothers and their  
4 sisters in arms.

5 This is an absolute issue that impacts our entire  
6 society. It is an absolutely horrible issue impacting us,  
7 but it is one that we must stop. And I say we. It is not  
8 just the Marine Corps. It is those of us who are sitting  
9 here today.

10 We will be evaluating how to give you the right tools,  
11 the necessary tools to combat this issue, and absolutely you  
12 must hold those marines accountable.

13 In the meantime, I hope that you will continue to  
14 evaluate what we need to do to combat this issue, not just  
15 in the Marine Corps but service-wide, and what we need to do  
16 to impact society at large.

17 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

18 Chairman McCain: Senator Donnelly?

19 Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 The marines who did this have betrayed their fellow  
21 marines, and these women marines stood up and said they  
22 would put their lives on the line for this country and give  
23 them up, if necessary. And this is the treatment that they  
24 got in return.

25 But they have also betrayed those marines who fought in

1 Anbar Province and Helmund Province, in the Gulf, in Vietnam  
2 and Korea and Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima who built the Corps inch  
3 by inch, step by step. And these marines who have done this  
4 have disgraced themselves, but they also let down the Corps  
5 and all of those other marines who fought for our country to  
6 help create the Corps.

7 I went online and found that there is already a Marines  
8 United 2.0 posting links to the same materials, that already  
9 has over 3,000 members. What can be done about this, and  
10 what does that say? General?

11 General Neller: Sir, if the Marines United 2.0 is  
12 there for their original mandate to help veterans, that is  
13 fine. But if there is a link that takes anybody who can get  
14 access to a similar page where there are posted pictures of  
15 anybody, but more likely female marines, and when they are  
16 making commentary, we will go like we did before, and we  
17 will ask the provider to take it down. But that is where we  
18 find ourselves.

19 Now, whether we can get the information or make them  
20 hold that data for us -- you know, we have recently in this  
21 investigation with Marines United -- NCIS recently got some  
22 more information, so that should allow us to get to that.

23 But, again, we are addressing the symptom here. The  
24 problem is that anybody would even want to do this in the  
25 first place. That is the part -- this does not make any



1 sense to me. Okay, they are doing it. Why? What is it  
2 that makes anyone feel that they are going to make  
3 themselves feel better by being degrading about any  
4 individual, whether it be based on their gender or their  
5 race or their sexual preference? If they are, indeed, a  
6 marine or anybody -- it does not matter -- that is not who  
7 we are and what we do.

8 So our folks now and with NCIS's help -- we are out  
9 there looking and we are finding other sites. And we go  
10 through the legal process. They go to the provider and ask  
11 them to take it down. I think NCIS can give you more  
12 information in the closed session because there are other  
13 sites out there. Marines 2.0 is just one. And again, some  
14 of them are legit and they do good or proper things for  
15 veterans or anybody that belongs. Others not so much. Not  
16 at all.

17 Chairman McCain: Senator Sullivan?

18 Senator Donnelly: I would suggest, General, that they  
19 are also disrespecting you.

20 Chairman McCain: The gentleman's time has expired.

21 Senator Sullivan?

22 Senator Sullivan: Mr. Chairman, I believe he had a  
23 minute and 23 seconds left.

24 Chairman McCain: Please proceed.

25 Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1           What I wanted to say is they are basically challenging  
2 you, General. They are thinking that they can get away with  
3 this. You are the Commandant of the Corps, and I think it  
4 is up to you -- and I trust and believe you will tell them  
5 and show them that they are not bigger than the Corps, that  
6 they cannot treat their fellow marines like this.

7           How can women marines feel that the Corps has their  
8 back? When a young woman makes a decision that, number one,  
9 she wants to serve the country and put her life on the line  
10 for us, why will she choose the Marines? How do we  
11 reinstate that trust that we have her back?

12           General Neller: The only way we can, Senator, is  
13 through our actions and show that anyone who sticks their  
14 hand up to support and defend the Constitution of the United  
15 States and has the willingness to earn the title of marine  
16 is going to be a full-fledged member of the team like the  
17 two female marines sitting behind me here. We have got to  
18 make them believe it. We have got to earn. They do not  
19 just have to earn the title of marines. We have got to earn  
20 their belief that they are going to get the same opportunity  
21 as anybody else to compete and be the best person they can  
22 be. So I can sit here and say it. We have got to re-earn  
23 the trust and not just of them, this committee, and the  
24 American people. I understand that.

25           Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 Chairman McCain: My apologies, Senator Donnelly, for  
2 cutting you off.

3 Senator Donnelly: Do not worry, sir.

4 Chairman McCain: Senator Sullivan?

5 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 I want to begin by thanking Senator Gillibrand for her  
7 calling for this hearing and her unfailing advocacy for  
8 women in the military.

9 Like you, General, I am a father of three daughters and  
10 also spent a lot of my civilian career focused on combating  
11 the problem that Senator Ernst mentioned is a problem not  
12 only in the military, but across the country of domestic  
13 violence and sexual assault. And I think Senator  
14 Gillibrand's focus on this benefits the military and the  
15 country.

16 I also appreciate your and the Sergeant Major's opening  
17 statement to say you are going to take responsibility for  
18 this.

19 I think like everybody on this committee, General, when  
20 I first read the news about the marines attacking and  
21 degrading other marines -- it was what Senator Donnelly just  
22 mentioned -- I was outraged, disgusted, embarrassed as a  
23 citizen, as a lawmaker, and as a marine. And I am here in  
24 this capacity as a U.S. Senator, but earning the title of  
25 marine is the proudest personal achievement of my life. It

1 always has been, always will be.

2 You know, we talk about that there has been no more  
3 formidable fighting force in the world, but the Marine Corps  
4 in my view goes much deeper than that.

5 I mentioned a story. Last year, I was walking down the  
6 street on Capitol Hill. There was a mom and two young kids,  
7 a boy and a girl, walking by me, and a group of eight or  
8 nine marines in PT gear coming up strong, formidable, and  
9 they passed this family, and this mom looked at her kids and  
10 said those are marines. They are courageous. They are  
11 fearless, and they will do anything to protect our country  
12 and keep us safe. That is what mothers in the country are  
13 telling their kids.

14 This goes way deeper than this. I believe that if the  
15 Marine Corps cannot prevent marines from attacking and  
16 degrading women marines, that the Marine Corps is going to  
17 lose what it means to the country, to the Marine Corps, to  
18 other marines.

19 So, General, you talked a lot about a perversion of the  
20 culture. What do you mean by that?

21 General Neller: Well, Senator, like you I believe all  
22 marines have a belief that our motto, *semper fidelis*, our  
23 core values of honor, courage, and commitment are what we  
24 are, and that everything that we have seen in this Marines  
25 United event is not. And so anybody that is out there

1 involved in this or any other site that are doing this --  
2 and as has been accurately pointed out, this is something  
3 that has been out there for some time. I do not know how  
4 they think they can reconcile the inner marine with this. I  
5 do not mentally see how you get from A to B.

6 Senator Sullivan: One of the things about the Marine  
7 Corps and all military services, but particularly in the  
8 Marine Corps, there is a culture and it is part of what we  
9 do is we bring violence to the enemies of our Nation, and we  
10 are good at bringing violence upon the enemies of our  
11 Nation. Is it the perversion of the culture where the  
12 marines are actually bringing violence upon women marines?  
13 Is that not the perversion? The culture, which every marine  
14 who is honorable thinks this is a disgusting perversion?

15 General Neller: I believe that is a very accurate  
16 description, Senator. Thank you for that.

17 Senator Sullivan: Sergeant Major, can I ask you a  
18 question? You both have talked about boot camp and getting  
19 at this early. One of the things, as you know, that the  
20 Marine Corps does very well in boot camp is it focuses on  
21 the history of the Marine Corps. You walk out of boot camp,  
22 if you can make it, after 3 months, and you know about  
23 Chosin Reservoir. You know about Iwo Jima. You know about  
24 all those things and you take pride in it.

25 General, I thought your opening statement about

1 referencing five marine women who were killed in action  
2 defending our Nation -- do you think, Sergeant Major, that  
3 focusing on some of those issues with regard to our history  
4 in boot camp can start to set the culture on a more proper  
5 course to recognize that, hey, look at these. They are  
6 marines. Right? It does not matter if they are men or  
7 women. They died for their country. Could we do a better  
8 job of instilling that at the outset as we shape the outlook  
9 and minds and culture of these 18- and 20-year-old kids?

10 Sergeant Green: Absolutely, sir. The task force that  
11 the Commandant has put together, led by the Assistant  
12 Commandant of the Marine Corps -- we met a few days ago, and  
13 that is exactly where we are starting. We are going beyond  
14 that and starting at the delayed entry program. We are  
15 looking at everything we teach marines, and we have to  
16 understand within ourselves, in a 4-year enlistment 120,000  
17 marines would have gone in and out of the Marine Corps.  
18 120,000. We would have turned over two-thirds of the Marine  
19 Corps in a 4-year period.

20 And we need to step back after 15, 16 years of fighting  
21 and we are still in that fight and absolutely take a look at  
22 not only how we make marines from those who walk through the  
23 door and want to be something better themselves, but also  
24 how we retain marines and families with our ethos of honor,  
25 courage, and commitment.

1           We are going to seriously take a look at that because  
2           the processes that worked yesterday -- they are not working  
3           today because there are other societal ills that come  
4           through the door with every individual that comes in, that  
5           the tools that we have are not being ask effective as they  
6           need to be today. So we are going to take a look at from  
7           the recruiting of our marines until the time they leave the  
8           gates and also beyond that as to veteran support  
9           organizations out there, to take a look at our motto, "once  
10          a marine, always a marine." And every marine that leaves  
11          out the door, tell them they are responsible for that eagle,  
12          globe, and anchor.

13          There are some bad actors that have worn the eagle,  
14          globe, and anchor. They are determined to keep these things  
15          going, and we know this for a fact. And we got to do better  
16          with our ethos and find the tools, the ways and convince  
17          those that come through the gates and those who, like you  
18          said earlier, are thinking about coming through the gates,  
19          the moms and dads who are talking to their kids.

20          I have a son at the Naval Academy. They left for  
21          spring break going to Orlando, and my wife is freaking. She  
22          is scared to death. And I just sat down with the four boys  
23          in my basement and talked about this, talked about sexual  
24          assault, talked about the ethos of honor, courage, and  
25          commitment, the fact that one day they too are going to lead

1 and they may lead in combat. But first they must lead back  
2 here in peacetime showing that they are worthy leaders and  
3 lead marines and sailors in combat.

4 I have a 14-year-old daughter. I would like to be  
5 proud if my daughter said she wanted to be a marine, just  
6 like my son. I have to assure her I will leave the  
7 footprint, along with the Commandant, that provides a way of  
8 safety for not only my kids but all kids, sir.

9 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

10 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 Senator Reed [presiding]: On behalf of Chairman  
12 McCain, Senator Kaine, please.

13 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the  
14 witnesses.

15 This is, obviously, a very serious hearing, important  
16 to have it. I am the father of a marine. I employ a lot of  
17 marines in my office. My State is a State where every  
18 marine officer is trained, every marine security guard is  
19 trained, a lot of other marines are trained and serve  
20 honorably. And I think I just can say on behalf of an awful  
21 of Virginians, this is a moment when the story broke that a  
22 lot of people's hearts sunk. A lot of people's stomachs  
23 were turned.

24 And this is absolutely critical to get right. You are  
25 completely aware of the work of this committee under the



1 leadership of Senators Gillibrand, McCaskill, and others to  
2 tackle sexual assault in the military. And it is still very  
3 much an open proposition on this committee because the  
4 question about whether sexual assault or other crimes should  
5 be treated within the Uniform Code of Military Justice or  
6 separately is something that we have resolved for now to try  
7 within the chain of command, but we are testing the  
8 evidence. We are looking at the data to determine if that  
9 was right or not. And many of us, if we conclude that we  
10 are not getting the results that we want, even those of us  
11 who have supported chain of command in the past, may  
12 conclude that it is just not sufficient.

13 And it would be tragic for the Marine Corps if that  
14 decision were to be made because of a belief that the Marine  
15 Corps' bad example would cause us to make that decision for  
16 all branches or the Marine Corps' bad example would cause us  
17 to make a decision that would be with respect to one branch  
18 of the service and not the others. And so that is the  
19 weight of this matter in a body that is still really  
20 assessing whether the military, the Marine Corps, but the  
21 other branches have to tools that they need to tackle this  
22 problem.

23 The Marine Corps does a great job of setting people  
24 aside who do not meet physical fitness standards. The  
25 Marine Corps has done a very intense amount of work to get

1 into the redefinition of military MOSs to provide gender-  
2 neutral standards that people need to meet to serve in MOSs.  
3 If the Marine Corps attacks this problem with the same  
4 degree of attention and passion that they attack an issue  
5 like physical standards, then you are going to solve it.

6 But I think I speak for everybody up here out of a  
7 belief that we just have not seen that. We just have not  
8 seen that level.

9 General, I want to ask you something. I thought your  
10 opening statement was very good, but I did have one question  
11 about it. Could you get your written statement -- because  
12 we do not have copies of it here -- and just read the first  
13 couple sentences of it again to me? Because I have one  
14 question about what you said.

15 General Neller: The beginning, sir?

16 Senator Kaine: Yes, just right at the very beginning.

17 General Neller: Normally I appear before this  
18 committee to tell you about the extraordinary things your  
19 marines are doing at home and around the globe. But today  
20 is different. I am here today to discuss the details of  
21 some truly disturbing and unacceptable actions that have  
22 allegedly been committed on social media.

23 Senator Kaine: Stop right there. "That have allegedly  
24 been committed on social media." Are we talking about  
25 allegations here or are we talking about something that has

1 happened? I mean, it might be an allegation as to who was  
2 involved, but this is not just an allegation about something  
3 that happened on social media. This is a fact. Is that not  
4 correct?

5 Senator Reed: Senator, we are going to go into closed  
6 session. That might be a question that is most appropriate  
7 for a closed session.

8 Senator Kaine: But I just think it is important to  
9 really make this clear. We are not talking about any  
10 individual in this hearing, and we should not for the reason  
11 that you stated. But if in the public hearing, this is  
12 described as alleged behavior, that there were allegations  
13 of something on social media, I do not think we are treating  
14 it with the seriousness need to. This is not allegations  
15 about social media. This stuff happened. And the General's  
16 testimony that Marines United is not unique and Senator  
17 Donnelly's description of Marines United 2.0 -- I just think  
18 it is important that we not leave confusion with the public  
19 that we are here just talking about some allegations of  
20 something on social media. This happened. Now, who was  
21 involved -- we are not going to get into that in an open  
22 session. But I would just put that to your attention going  
23 forward because we are talking about more than just  
24 allegations here.

25 Secretary Stackley, let me just ask you in close. I

1 have a hard time believing that this massive sharing of  
2 information about women in the Marines would just be limited  
3 to this branch. Talk to me about investigations into  
4 whether this is also going on in the other branches of the  
5 military.

6 Mr. Stackley: I cannot speak specifically for the  
7 other branches, but in the closed session, what I would  
8 recommend we discuss is some of the information that NCIS is  
9 arriving at through their tip line and the number of  
10 websites that indicate similar activity on other websites.  
11 That is very important.

12 Senator Kaine: Then let me just ask it this way. Do  
13 you believe this activity is limited just to the Marine  
14 Corps?

15 Mr. Stackley: No, sir.

16 Senator Kaine: Thank you.

17 Senator Reed: On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator  
18 Tillis.

19 Mr. Stackley: But I do not want to let it stop right  
20 there. This is at the top of Secretary Mattis' priority  
21 list working across the service departments to get at this  
22 issue. This is not being managed as an isolated issue for  
23 the Marine Corps as regards the Department of Defense. We  
24 recognize vulnerabilities here and we need to prosecute  
25 those.

1 Senator Reed: Senator Tillis, please.

2 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to  
3 try and be brief so that we can get to the closed session.

4 But I did want to get a clarification on the Marines  
5 United, really the structure of what we are talking about  
6 here because I think it is important and we can get into  
7 numbers later. But we are talking about 20,000 or 30,000  
8 marines involved in a social media network, much of which is  
9 not the subject of the actions that we need to get to the  
10 bottom of.

11 Can you give me some rough idea of the sub-page where  
12 the illicit activities were occurring, that that is as a  
13 percentage of the total people engaged in what would  
14 otherwise be positive social media interaction?

15 General Neller: We believe there are about 30,000  
16 total members of the page. How many active, how many  
17 former, how many reserve, how many other services --

18 Senator Tillis: But in that page --

19 General Neller: But in the link to take you to the  
20 separate drive, I have been told that the numbers were about  
21 500.

22 Senator Tillis: That is the important point because I  
23 think a lot of people think that there are some 30,000  
24 marines engaged in this activity. The number is whatever it  
25 is, but it is a subset and what we think is a minor subset

1 of the total page. I think that is very important.

2 General Neller: I would understand and appreciate your  
3 comment, Senator, but it does not matter if there is one.

4 Senator Tillis: I get it.

5 Now I want to get to the next. For those who are in  
6 the subset and involved in these activities, what is the  
7 maximum penalty and discipline that they can receive if they  
8 are found to have been engaged at any level in that sub-  
9 site? Can they be court marshaled? Can they be imprisoned?  
10 Can they be fined? In other words, what discipline are  
11 these folks subject to right now based on the current rules?

12 General Neller: I think that would depend on what  
13 their level of involvement was and what they were doing.

14 Senator Tillis: Let us say for the worst of the worst,  
15 whatever that may be, just hypothetical. For the worst of  
16 the worst, what potential penalty could they receive from  
17 this?

18 Mr. Stackley: They could be court marshaled, sir.

19 Senator Tillis: What about a veteran, somebody who is  
20 no longer in active service that is also engaged in this? I  
21 am assuming just based on the numbers of the Sergeant Major,  
22 there are going to be some of those involved. What  
23 consequence could they possibly suffer?

24 General Neller: I think it depends on the State.  
25 Certain States have certain laws about this, and there are

1 certain provisions about what is consent with the use of a  
2 picture.

3 Senator Tillis: I would like to find out -- you do not  
4 have to answer the question, but I want to look at other  
5 things that we need to do here to make this a very, very  
6 painful exercise for somebody caught guilty of doing this.  
7 As a member of the Veterans Committee, if there is something  
8 that we could do to disallow their benefits for bad behavior  
9 after they are discharged, those are the sorts of things  
10 that we have to do. A part of what you need to do is change  
11 the culture, and I believe that you will, General Neller.  
12 And I think that we need to work on that, but we also need  
13 to make it a very frightening proposition for people going  
14 forward to be captured into this sort of activity.

15 So I would like to get people to report back to me as a  
16 member of the Veterans Committee, as the chair of the  
17 Personnel Subcommittee, what more do we need to do to make  
18 this a very frightening proposition for somebody to get  
19 tempted into doing going forward so that you do not have to  
20 focus on these sorts of things. I want you to train marines  
21 to be able to be safe and lethal on the battlefield, not  
22 doing these sorts of things. And I think we need to work to  
23 make it very clear that this is going to produce dire  
24 consequences for people stupid enough to do these kind of  
25 things going forward.

1 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

2 Chairman McCain [presiding]: Senator King?

3 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 I have gone from anger and disappointment to really  
5 sadness. This is a sad day for the Marine Corps and for our  
6 armed services.

7 What bothers me, General Neller, is that I am convinced  
8 that all of us human beings have the capacity to be good or  
9 evil. And how that comes out in any given situation,  
10 particularly in a group situation, depends almost entirely  
11 on how we are led.

12 And one of the things that bothers me is there was a  
13 quote in the press last week from the reporter and the  
14 former marine who really broke this story that not once on  
15 this website or on Marines United 2.0 did he see anybody say  
16 this is not what we are going to do. This is wrong. This  
17 is improper. This is disrespectful. Not once.

18 And that speaks to me of a culture that goes all the  
19 way down. And you can have proclamations and issue letters  
20 and everything else, but if you have got lower ranking  
21 officers and noncommissioned officers who are winking and  
22 laughing and they deliver the statement with a little grin,  
23 that undermines the whole thing. And this is an indication  
24 to me of a serious cultural problem that goes beyond the  
25 specifics of orders. Do you understand what I am



1 suggesting?

2           General Neller: Senator, I understand perfectly what  
3 you are suggesting, and I agree. You know, being a  
4 bystander for any sort of an offense is something that we  
5 struggle with. I was told once by a senior officer that the  
6 Marine Corps is built on discipline and it is a rock. It is  
7 the foundation of our house. And every time you walk by  
8 something you know is wrong, it is the equivalent of taking  
9 a hammer and hitting that rock and putting a chip in it.  
10 And if enough people walk by, pretty soon that thing is  
11 going to crack. So we may be at that point.

12           I think marines in their mind -- they somehow separate  
13 that they do during operational things, what they do in  
14 training, and what they do when they are not out there  
15 actively engaged. They think that the social media, the Net  
16 gives them anonymity to do this type of thing. They are  
17 ignorant as to the impact. That is what I have got to make  
18 everybody understand. No, it does not work that way.

19           But this is your Marine Corps and --

20           Senator King: Beyond this posting and being dumb about  
21 what they put online is the underlying -- these guys  
22 apparently did not feel that they were doing anything wrong.  
23 They were on this website with 30,000 people on it, and they  
24 were posting it and nobody said this is not appropriate or,  
25 gee, fellows, do you think this is a good idea? That

1 indicates to me that they felt empowered or enabled to do  
2 this.

3 So it is really not a question of issuing orders. It  
4 is issuing orders that are credible that go all the way down  
5 the line in terms of not only saying the right thing but  
6 meaning it and conveying it.

7 General Neller: Mr. Brennan, the individual that broke  
8 the story -- he said it. And I think we are finding and we  
9 are going to find that there are more that are going to come  
10 out and say what should have been said before. You know,  
11 there are a number of people out there that have the ear of  
12 whatever this group is.

13 Senator King: By the way, you know that they are  
14 mocking you and the leadership --

15 General Neller: I understand that.

16 Senator King: -- on this MU 2.0 and they are saying,  
17 come and get us, NCIS. They are continuing to post pictures  
18 as recently as this past weekend. I mean, they are not  
19 getting the word here.

20 General Neller: Well, then we will have to get the  
21 word to them.

22 Senator King: Let me just follow up with one quick  
23 question to what Mr. Tillis asked, and perhaps this is for  
24 the closed session. I think one of the real problems here  
25 what is the jurisdiction, what is the accountability for a

1 former marine. Under the military code, there are  
2 consequences for people who are in the Marines now, but if  
3 they are out -- again, one of the things I have read is a  
4 guy posted his discharge papers and said, try to come and  
5 get me, NCIS. So that is a separate question.

6 Mr. Stackley, can you respond in open session on that,  
7 or is this going to be a matter of State law?

8 Mr. Stackley: Today it is a matter of State law. The  
9 first thing I tried to dive into is what is legal versus  
10 what is not legal, and then what is acceptable versus what  
11 is not acceptable. And there are a number of behaviors here  
12 that are absolutely unacceptable and yet they are legal.  
13 Within the services, we have the ability to draw that line  
14 in terms of something that is not acceptable, we are going  
15 to prosecute. Outside of the service, where it is legal and  
16 unacceptable, we are limited in our ability to prosecute.  
17 So I welcome Senator Sullivan's comments -- or I am sorry --  
18 Senator Tillis' comments regarding added authorities that we  
19 might want to look into that give us the ability to go  
20 outside of uniformed services for everybody to understand,  
21 you served in our country, you left the uniform behind, you  
22 remain accountable to the code that we hold those still in  
23 uniform to behave to.

24 Senator King: Thank you.

25 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 Chairman McCain: Senator Graham?

2 Senator Graham: Thank you.

3 Did someone actually put their discharge online and  
4 said, come get me? Did they actually do that? Who is that  
5 person? Do we know their name?

6 Senator King: I will give you the citation.

7 Senator Graham: Well, let us make them famous right  
8 here. What is their name? We will get it later. We will  
9 publicly let the world know who this person is.

10 The website -- I am a little confused now. I am not  
11 the best person to tell you about the Internet. That is for  
12 darned sure. But the 30,000 people who are viewing this --  
13 were most of them doing bad things, or were they just  
14 talking as marines, Mr. Secretary?

15 Mr. Stackley: The numbers that we are looking at right  
16 now is the majority of them were not involved in this  
17 activity.

18 Senator Graham: So the posting of photos, you know,  
19 somebody took a photo of a young female marine -- how many  
20 of the 30,000 went to that part of it?

21 Mr. Stackley: The number that we are carrying is about  
22 500, but the investigation remains ongoing.

23 Senator Graham: I am agreeing with the General. One  
24 is too many. But I am just trying to get my head around it.  
25 What was the purpose of this website?

1           Mr. Stackley: Marines United was initiated 5 or 6  
2 years ago with good purposes in mind, and that was to  
3 support marines who were suffering from PTSD and coming out  
4 of combat action.

5           Senator Graham: So these websites started with a good  
6 purpose and some people have hijacked it basically. Is that  
7 right?

8           Mr. Stackley: Yes, sir.

9           Senator Graham: Sergeant Major, you got a 14-year-old  
10 daughter.

11          Sergeant Green: Yes, sir.

12          Senator Graham: What would you tell someone who has a  
13 14-year-old daughter that does not know as much about the  
14 Marines as you do about whether that daughter should join  
15 the Marines?

16          Sergeant Green: First of all, sir, I am ashamed of the  
17 actions of this website. We recruit marines, as I said  
18 before, 30,000 a year. And I can assure that parent, mother  
19 or father, that the chain of command in the Marine Corps,  
20 the leadership -- we are going to do everything we can --

21          Senator Graham: Would you tell those parents to send  
22 their daughter to the Marines given what we know today?

23          Sergeant Green: Yes, sir. And I can assure then that  
24 myself, the Commandant, and the leadership -- we are going  
25 to pave a way that is respectful --

1           Senator Graham: What would you say to that young  
2 woman, General, who is thinking about joining the Marines?

3           General Neller: I could understand why they would have  
4 some questions.

5           Senator Graham: Do you not think this has kind of  
6 stepped all over recruiting of young women?

7           General Neller: Senator, we are talking to our  
8 recruiting folks because the irony of all this is we are  
9 trying to increase the number of women in the Marine Corps.

10          Senator Graham: Right.

11          General Neller: This certainly, I would say, is not  
12 helpful.

13          Senator Graham: I would say this is devastatingly bad.

14          Would you agree with me that this is one of the darkest  
15 chapters in the history of the Marine Corps, even though  
16 there are maybe 500 people involved?

17          General Neller: We have not distinguished ourselves in  
18 this affair.

19          Senator Graham: Having said that, you are the finest  
20 fighting force in the history of the world, pound for pound,  
21 the United States Marine Corps. You have an honored  
22 tradition, but every organization has dark moments.

23          Do you agree with me this is one of the darkest moments  
24 and it needs to be fixed?

25          General Neller: Yes, Senator.

1           Senator Graham: There are two ways to get people to do  
2 better. Appeal to their better nature. Sergeant Major  
3 Green, do you agree with that?

4           Sergeant Green: Absolutely, sir.

5           Senator Graham: And scare the hell out of them.

6           Sergeant Green: Yes, sir.

7           Senator Graham: General, do you believe that people  
8 are sufficiently afraid of degrading their fellow female  
9 marines as of this moment?

10          General Neller: Based on their actions, no. No,  
11 Senator.

12          Senator Graham: Will you promise me that there will be  
13 a lot of fear coming?

14          General Neller: We will do all that we can to hold  
15 people accountable.

16          Senator Graham: The Marine hymn says, first to fight  
17 for right and freedom and to keep our honor clean. Do you  
18 believe you need to fight to keep that honor clean?

19          General Neller: Absolutely, Senator. We have to.

20          Senator Graham: Are you committed to winning that  
21 fight?

22          General Neller: I am.

23          Senator Graham: Thank you.

24          Chairman McCain: Senator Hirono?

25          Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 I realize that so much of this kind of behavior has to  
2 do with some attitudes and culture, and it is very  
3 difficult, General Neller, to change the culture. So I am  
4 wondering whether one of the ways that we can deal with this  
5 issue is to provide some deterrence. Would you agree that  
6 one of the ways that we could deter this kind of behavior is  
7 through court marshal where appropriate?

8 General Neller: Senator, I believe deterrence is part  
9 of this, and there has got to be accountability, whether it  
10 be a court marshal or other processes. Yes.

11 Senator Hirono: In terms of changing the culture, how  
12 would you begin to even change the culture? This has been  
13 longstanding not just in the Marines but issues that involve  
14 all of our services. So how do you even begin to change the  
15 culture when, for example, you have a Commander in Chief who  
16 exhibits certain attitudes toward women? How do you change  
17 the culture?

18 General Neller: The only way I know how we have done  
19 this in the past when we have dealt with other issues -- I  
20 mean, there are always going to be those that are going to  
21 not be able to adjust, and that will be addressed. But I  
22 believe that most marines join the Marine Corps to improve  
23 themselves, that they are good and decent people, and they  
24 have got to understand that there are certain behaviors that  
25 we expect and that we recognize positively and there are



1 others that we do not. And part of that is having a  
2 discussion. It has got to start at the beginning when they  
3 first see their recruiter, and it has to be modeled  
4 throughout the organization. There are, obviously, those  
5 either who are not modeling the culture that we want or they  
6 are even condoning it.

7       So as the Sergeant Major said, we are going to go back,  
8 take a look where it starts. For all marines, it starts at  
9 recruit training or it starts at officer candidate school.  
10 And we are going to look at how we talk about this, make  
11 sure they understand it. But as you say, at some point  
12 there has to be deterrence because -- I would like to say we  
13 would be 100 percent successful, but we probably will not.  
14 So for those that are not able to comply, there has to be  
15 deterrence.

16       Senator Hirono: So I am assuming that you will take  
17 every step necessary to identify whether certain codes of  
18 behavior were violated and then to pursue court marshals,  
19 that you will do that very, very strenuously.

20       General Neller: Yes, Senator.

21       Senator Hirono: I would say another aspect of all of  
22 this is that what kind of message are you giving to the  
23 current female marines. I do not know how many women there  
24 are in the Marines, but have you brought everyone together  
25 in a way that the message gets to not just individuals who

1 are undergoing training or during the recruitment process,  
2 but the current situation with all of your women marines?  
3 Have you had any kind of a gathering of the marines, both  
4 male and female, to talk about how this is totally  
5 unacceptable?

6 General Neller: Senator, the only way I can address  
7 185,000 marines or right today about 184,000 -- and there  
8 are about 15,000 women marines. About 1,500 of them are  
9 officers. 13,500 are enlisted -- is for me to use our own  
10 platforms on social media to tell them what is going on and  
11 what they should expect from their leadership.

12 Senator Hirono: Excuse me. Yes, that is you. But  
13 there are also of your leaders on the bases. What are they  
14 doing to get the message across en masse?

15 General Neller: And we have spoken to all leadership  
16 last Friday. We issued instructions for them to go out and  
17 engage in this conversation. I am going to follow that up  
18 this week with even more direction. I am going down and the  
19 Sergeant Major and I are going down to Camp Lejeune to  
20 directly speak to marines in person. But it is going to  
21 take some work so that everybody gets down to the last  
22 marine. So we have a plan to speak both personally and  
23 using other venues or forums such as this hearing today to  
24 tell them what is going on and what they should expect and  
25 what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.

1           Senator Hirono: So if I were to go to Kaneohe Marine  
2 Corps, for example, would there be a session that I could  
3 attend where this situation would be discussed?

4           General Neller: There will be or there has been. I do  
5 not know exactly when commanders have scheduled this, but I  
6 can find that out for you, Senator, and when you are home  
7 and you want to participate, I would appreciate that.

8           Senator Hirono: I will certainly check into that.  
9 Thank you very much.

10          Chairman McCain: Senator Rounds?

11          Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

12          General, you and the Sergeant Major have both made it  
13 very clear that you have been disgusted with this activity.  
14 I believe you when you say that you want this ended.

15          At the same time, I am just wondering when you first  
16 heard about this and you were working your way through it,  
17 did it come to mind that this may very well be an outgrowth  
18 of the discrimination that we have seen in terms of men who  
19 may very well have thought that we just simply do not think  
20 this is the place for women in the military?

21          General Neller: Senator, we talked about that, and I  
22 am sure there are going to be people that have that  
23 particular view. But okay. But I do not see how that gets  
24 you from that particular view to where you have to take a  
25 picture of somebody, post it online, and then mock, haze,

1 harass, degrade, or even potentially assault them online. I  
2 mean, whether that is their motivation or not, I do not  
3 know. And I have heard it described as the dark humor of  
4 veterans. That is a copout. But we also know that there  
5 are marines that are participating in this who never have  
6 been shot at in their lives. So they are just trying to get  
7 credibility. I do not know.

8 It really does not matter what their motivation is to  
9 me. It is the behavior. And whatever made them think that  
10 they were going to do this or watch it and not report it,  
11 that is what we have got to get after.

12 Senator Rounds: The reality is that we cannot go to  
13 war without women anymore. Can we?

14 General Neller: No, Senator, we cannot.

15 Senator Rounds: There are 500 individuals that we  
16 believe have participated in the inappropriate activity on  
17 this particular website that has been brought to light. Do  
18 we know how many of the 500 would perhaps have been former  
19 members versus the number that are current members? Do we  
20 have the numbers there yet?

21 General Neller: No, Senator, we do not. NCIS in the  
22 closed session -- they may have more because they just got  
23 access to some more information, but right now we do not  
24 know.

25 Sergeant Green: Senator Rounds, sir, if I can say

1 something about --

2 Senator Rounds: Yes, sir.

3 Sergeant Green: -- that you just talked about.

4 One of the worst parts, besides the victim or the  
5 survivor, about this whole ordeal, if there are men in the  
6 Marine Corps that have served in the uniform or that feel  
7 that women are not supposed to be in the Marine Corps, they  
8 have absolutely captured a voice with this social media  
9 venue and denigrated women that are serving, that may want  
10 to serve, and those that have served. And if we do not get  
11 this right, they can absolutely drive women out of the  
12 Marine Corps and give women a reason not to want to serve  
13 with us. And that is why we must get at this because if  
14 there are men that exist in the Marine Corps outside that do  
15 not want women in the Marine Corps, this is absolutely a  
16 mouthpiece for them, and we would not allow them to have  
17 that voice.

18 Senator Rounds: So in order to address specifically  
19 the actions that have occurred here, we have to make certain  
20 that we have within your ability to discipline clear and  
21 appropriate guidelines within the code that allow you to  
22 address the specific actions for people that are still in  
23 the military, but then we have also got to find a way to  
24 address the actions of those who were formerly in the  
25 military and who are no longer a part of it but who are

1 still displaying this type of activity. Is that a fair  
2 statement? And we have got to be able to break it down into  
3 those two?

4 Sergeant Green: Yes, sir, it is.

5 Senator Rounds: Thank you.

6 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 Chairman McCain: Senator Heinrich?

8 Senator Heinrich: General Neller, would you agree that  
9 taking down a site is not going to solve this problem?

10 General Neller: I would agree with that, Senator. It  
11 is only a symptom.

12 Senator Heinrich: I think it is really important that  
13 we recognize that this is not a digital problem. It is not  
14 a social media problem. It is not Facebook's problem, that  
15 that is a whack-a-mole approach. And we have tried it in  
16 the past. It does not work. This is a conduct problem. It  
17 is a criminal problem, and unfortunately it is a cultural  
18 problem.

19 You said in your opening testimony that it is your  
20 inclination to resist that description of cultural, but I  
21 think it is important to recognize that until we recognize  
22 that for what it is, this will not change.

23 Now, this pattern of social media groups pasting  
24 pictures of female marines without consent -- I have seen  
25 some pictures, screenshots glorifying horrible sexual

1 violence. It has happened before. I got an article here  
2 from 2014. I will not share it with you because I do not  
3 want to share the marine's name. But she said, I was  
4 freaked out. I would not even look at it at first. I have  
5 all of my social media set up so it is private. So I was  
6 really confused how in the world they got a photo of me. I  
7 was terrified of the comments I was going to be receiving.  
8 And then subsequent comments were not only overtly sexual,  
9 but some threatened sexual violence.

10 So you have asked for the trust of female marines. You  
11 have asked for the trust of survivors. I just want to ask  
12 you given that this has happened again and again -- it is  
13 pervasive in the social media environment in particular --  
14 what would you say to those female marines to demonstrate  
15 that Marine Corps leadership has earned that trust?

16 General Neller: That is why I am asking them to trust  
17 me because my ability to sit there and say I have earned  
18 your trust -- because we have not gotten after this. I  
19 acknowledge that. But I cannot get after it if they do not  
20 become part of the solution. And I know that is a big ask  
21 because, as you rightfully mention, if they are out there  
22 within these venues, all the haters will be back there  
23 attacking them again tenfold. And I think that is part of  
24 the problem. It is the worst part of retribution in cyber  
25 bullying that if you make a comment, that you end up getting

1 shouted down or threatened or all the hate. I am sure you  
2 deal with that. I know I am going to deal with it. I have  
3 dealt with it. I am going to certainly deal with it after  
4 today.

5 Senator Heinrich: A big part of that problem -- and  
6 you mentioned this -- is anonymity. Are active duty marines  
7 allowed to participate in social media in that space  
8 anonymously? And have you looked at that issue that maybe  
9 the rights of active duty marines in a social media  
10 environment might be different from just the general public?

11 General Neller: This is where it gets difficult. I  
12 would ask that we get with the lawyers because I am not an  
13 attorney. But it becomes an issue of free speech, and as  
14 the Secretary said, what is criminal and what is not, what  
15 is consent to a picture and what is not consent to a  
16 picture. But there are individuals out there that put their  
17 name, their unit, and there has to be accountability for  
18 that. So that is what I am asking our women to help us  
19 with.

20 Senator Heinrich: I would ask you to help us if there  
21 are specific changes to the UCMJ that you need to be able to  
22 address these sort of abusive behaviors. If there are  
23 specific statutory changes for people who have already been  
24 discharged, we need to know what those potential tools are  
25 that we need to help you get ahead of this problem.



1 Chairman McCain: Senator Cruz?

2 Senator Cruz: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 Gentlemen, thank you for being here today.

4 This is a sad day for the Marine Corps, and it is a sad  
5 day for our armed forces. All of us on this committee are  
6 agreed that the conduct at issue here was despicable, that  
7 we owe a sacred trust to the women and men who join our  
8 volunteer military and put it all on the line to keep us  
9 safe. And to find themselves abused and victimized by  
10 fellow marines is completely unacceptable.

11 I appreciate your addressing this issue with the  
12 seriousness that it deserves. And my question to each of  
13 you is twofold. How do we ensure that this never happens  
14 again, and what needs to happen so that those who violated  
15 the rights of their fellow marines are held accountable?  
16 General?

17 General Neller: Senator, to ensure that it does not  
18 happen again, we have got to change the way we see each  
19 other as marines. And that is not going to be easy, but it  
20 has got to be done. I do not know how many people we are  
21 dealing with here. Some of them maybe they are just --  
22 whatever their beliefs are or they just happen to be piling  
23 on or they are just misguided or ignorant. But if they are  
24 in this organization, they cannot participate in this  
25 anymore.

1 I honestly believe that the leadership out there and  
2 particularly the sergeant majors and the senior enlisted and  
3 the NCOs -- they are the ones that have their finger on the  
4 pulse of the organization. And I have got great trust in  
5 marines. I have seen what they can do. I know their  
6 spirit. I may be wrong. I pray to God I am not. But I do  
7 not believe this is indicative of the great majority of the  
8 marines that wear this uniform. So they are going to solve  
9 this. I cannot do this myself. The Sergeant Major cannot  
10 do this. We have got to solve this together.

11 Now, for those that do not want to be part of that  
12 solution, then there has got to be accountability. And we  
13 will work our way through this, but there are, as we  
14 discussed -- we have got to clarify for our leadership what  
15 their actions can be if this behavior is identified and what  
16 they can do to hold these people accountable. And we are  
17 looking at a whole number of things in addition to what is  
18 in the UCMJ. So that is our path forward.

19 So we have got a training piece. It starts at the  
20 beginning, but it is really a leadership piece, a discussion  
21 piece, but then at the end there has to be accountability  
22 because, as Senator Graham said, there are those -- they  
23 understand what is right and what is wrong, and there are  
24 others -- they understand it, but they may feel like they  
25 have to do this. And then they are the ones that are going

1 to have to be deterred and held accountable.

2 Senator Cruz: Sergeant Major?

3 Sergeant Green: Yes, sir. Sir, we have to build an  
4 environment. You know, if a marine walked into anyplace,  
5 the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, and they already have an  
6 idea of what that organization does, they walk in there and  
7 they realize that where they are going -- the door that they  
8 walked through -- they are not really doing what my thought  
9 was when I went in or what they advertise, then in real  
10 life, if they are doing something illegal, if they are doing  
11 something to denigrate and disrespect people, I am going to  
12 report it.

13 We have to build that environment in our Marine Corps  
14 where they go in the social media world and to really  
15 understand the meaning of friend because when you hit the  
16 button and you give somebody the right as a friend, that is  
17 not the same meaning as in I meet someone. And that is the  
18 reality of today in the virtual world. Just because you tag  
19 somebody as a friend, that does not mean you actually know  
20 that person, and that is not really your friend. Some  
21 people just learned that day, see people, tag them as a  
22 friend, let them in, not understanding in the social media  
23 world everything on your page you have just given the right  
24 to because they can screenshot it. They can do what they  
25 want, take it and do what they want. And understanding the

1 laws that we have right now today that protect an  
2 individual-- we have to explain that to our marines, our  
3 leadership and those that we recruit.

4 Senator Cruz: Thank you.

5 Chairman McCain: Senator Warren?

6 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 So we are here today to discuss marines using social  
8 media to share intimate photographs of female service  
9 members and veterans without their consent. And it seems  
10 like every time we shut down one of these websites that a  
11 new one pops up.

12 General Neller, I appreciated your strongly worded  
13 message last week, but we have already seen that at least  
14 one new website seems to have appeared in defiance of your  
15 guidance. We can keep playing digital whack-a-mole, but we  
16 will keep losing until we have better tools to prosecute  
17 those who are responsible.

18 So I want to go back to a question about the Uniform  
19 Code of Military Justice, but I want to ask it from a  
20 different perspective. General Neller, it is my  
21 understanding that if the original photo was taken  
22 consensually, the UCMJ may not allow for the strictest  
23 penalties under article 120(c) even if it was subsequently  
24 shared without consent. Is that accurate?

25 General Neller: Senator, my understanding is, as the

1 Sergeant Major was discussing, if you are on a public facing  
2 webpage and you post a picture, that in itself can be  
3 construed as consent, and if someone else takes that  
4 picture, that there is no criminal action. I am not saying  
5 I agree with that, but that is an interpretation.

6 Senator Warren: So let me ask this question. Many  
7 States have implemented laws that make so-called revenge  
8 pornography a criminal offense. Do you believe that we need  
9 a change like that to the UCMJ?

10 General Neller: I think that would be helpful in the  
11 accountability process. Some of these pictures of these  
12 women where they were fully clothed -- and it is the  
13 commentary and all that stuff.

14 Senator Warren: I understand.

15 General Neller: But, yes, I do agree.

16 Senator Warren: But are photographs that were taken  
17 consensually and then someone else posted them or they were  
18 posted in a different context and then forwarded --

19 General Neller: That is correct.

20 Senator Warren: I know you are committed to pursuing  
21 this, but if we are going to shut down this conduct, then  
22 you ought to have every possible legal tool at your  
23 disposal.

24 Now, I want to ask you a second question about this.  
25 Every Marine Corps base maintains a list of places that are

1 off limits for service members. In 2013, one of your  
2 predecessors, General Amos, told Congress that the Marines  
3 were examining whether you could legally make certain  
4 websites off limits in the same way. You cannot visit there  
5 any more than you can go into town and visit these  
6 particular places.

7 What was the result of that assessment? And do you  
8 need additional authorities to be able to do that?

9 General Neller: Senator, I am not aware -- I will take  
10 that for the record, and maybe my SJA can talk to you about  
11 that. But I am not aware that we ever, because of right of  
12 free speech and other things, placed a website off limits.  
13 On a government computer, we block certain websites, but  
14 when someone is on their individual device, I am not aware  
15 that we have said the following websites are off limits and  
16 to frequent these sites, if we were even able to determine  
17 if the marine had, that you would be in violation of a  
18 lawful order.

19 Senator Warren: I think this may be something that may  
20 be worth exploring again so that you have the maximum number  
21 of tools available to you to stop this behavior.

22 I have one more that I want to ask, and that is,  
23 General Neller, you are not the first Commandant to attempt  
24 to address this issue, and in all due respect, it does not  
25 seem to be working. And I think it is because the social

1 media scandals are symptoms of a much larger problem. It  
2 happens in the barracks and it happens in the field, and it  
3 starts as early as basic training. Are you willing to  
4 reconsider the role that Marine recruit training plays in  
5 this and reevaluating the Marine Corps' policy of gender  
6 segregation at basic training?

7 General Neller: Senator, we are taking a very long  
8 look at how we do recruit training right now. I would not  
9 couch our recruit training as segregated, and I would, at  
10 this time, invite you down to see how we do what we do.

11 Senator Warren: We are not separating men and women  
12 anymore in the Marines?

13 General Neller: All recruits in all the services live  
14 separately because they live in an open squad base. And our  
15 training is done by platoons, men and women in platoons. A  
16 good portion of their training, as we do it now at Parris  
17 Island where all our women get trained, they do things with  
18 male recruits, the swim tank, the rifle range, the crucible,  
19 the field training, even now their final fitness exams. So  
20 to say that we are segregated I do not believe is a fair  
21 statement, but we do do it differently than everybody else.

22 That said, we are looking --

23 Senator Warren: Can I just clarify, General? Because  
24 I just want to make sure I understand, and I am past my time  
25 here, but I want to make sure I understand. Are you saying

1 no activities are segregated other than sleeping, or are you  
2 saying that some activities are segregated and some are not?

3 General Neller: Some are and some are not.

4 Senator Warren: The question I am asking is whether  
5 you want to take another look at that.

6 General Neller: We are looking at the entire way that  
7 we do recruit training, from how we educate and train our  
8 drill instructors to how we do the entire program of  
9 instruction for men and women.

10 Senator Warren: Thank you, General.

11 Service members who disrespect their fellow service  
12 members dishonor the service and dishonor our Nation. And  
13 we have got to put an end to this conduct so none of us is  
14 here again. Thank you.

15 Chairman McCain: Senator McCaskill?

16 Senator McCaskill: General, I think there are two  
17 issues I want to talk about during my brief time here.

18 The first one is I want to make sure that you all  
19 respond to the point that has been made previously, but the  
20 idea that this had to be discovered by a journalist and not  
21 discovered by you. There is a fundamental flaw in oversight  
22 in terms of good order and discipline and conduct unbecoming  
23 if we are not ferreting out this kind of ugly, ugly  
24 representation of the Marine ethos without journalists  
25 having to do it.



1           So I will look forward to a plan. And I am going to  
2 ask my colleagues to join me in a letter to Secretary Mattis  
3 because I think this is something that needs to be done in  
4 all the services. What are you all doing internally to  
5 monitor online conduct that is related to active service  
6 members, and how are you addressing that in terms of not  
7 just the vitriol that was on these sites, but also cyber  
8 bullying that could be impacting morale? And I want to get  
9 to the bottom of that.

10           The second one is accountability. Now, I am going to  
11 tell you a brief story, and that is when I was a prosecutor  
12 in Kansas City, I wanted to do more on domestic violence.  
13 And the detectives came to me and they said, well, Senator--  
14 I was not a Senator then -- prosecutor, you need to  
15 understand that many times the victim does not want to  
16 cooperate, and if we do not have a victim, we cannot  
17 prosecute. And I said, well, let us shut down the homicide  
18 unit then because we do not have victims in homicide and we  
19 figure out a way to make the case.

20           And I bring that up because for 134 and 133, conduct  
21 unbecoming and good order and discipline, it does not matter  
22 if the victims cooperate. If you can prove that this was an  
23 active marine and they went online and said these things and  
24 referred to fellow marines in this manner, then I mean, the  
25 prosecutor in me tells me you have got a prima facie case.

1 And I know you cannot comment on that because of undue  
2 influence, but I just want to point out that it is very  
3 important to understand that accountability is possible here  
4 even if the survivors are not interested in coming forward  
5 to be, quote/unquote, part of the case. Could you  
6 acknowledge that, General?

7 General Neller: Senator, I understand your point.  
8 Again, no excuse, but it would require us to be out there --  
9 I mean, we surveil our network for people that are passing  
10 information. We look for malware. We do a lot of things.  
11 That is why Major General Reynolds behind me -- she is our  
12 MARFORCYBER commander. Our ability to look at all these  
13 potential websites where there is this kind of nefarious,  
14 disgusting behavior -- I mean, it goes to the point where  
15 there is a certain -- where is the right of the marine to  
16 express free speech and where does it go into an illegal  
17 act.

18 Senator McCaskill: Well, I get that.

19 General Neller: And so our ability to monitor that.  
20 So we are having that discussion now, and I take your point.

21 Senator McCaskill: And I think it is really important,  
22 and we can talk about this in closed session more. It is  
23 not something that has to be in closed session, but NCIS is  
24 the one that I want to talk to about it.

25 We have detectives all over this Nation that are posing

1 as bad guys online to catch horrible people that are  
2 trafficking children and doing other illegal activities. It  
3 would not be hard for someone to pose as an active marine  
4 looking for a spot where they can see what these guys  
5 obviously were interested in looking at. This is something  
6 that you could do on a random basis. And once it is known  
7 that that is out there, it is amazing the deterrent effect  
8 that that would have in terms of this being seen as  
9 acceptable.

10 I also want to say that I think this accountability  
11 piece -- you know, there are crimes you can deter and there  
12 are crimes you cannot deter. I guarantee you you throw some  
13 marines out of the Marine Corps, you say you are no longer  
14 welcome here and you are dishonorably discharged for this  
15 behavior, you do that in a high profile way -- and  
16 obviously, I do not want you to comment because I do not  
17 want to get into undue influence territory. But let me just  
18 say for the record if you go after the active marines that  
19 you have evidence on and if they are dishonorably  
20 discharged, that will begin to send a signal that many of us  
21 up here are desperate for you to send.

22 And then I would close, Mr. Chairman, just by pointing  
23 out that there has been some progress made. The 2014 SAPRO  
24 survey was cited by Senator Gillibrand. I do want to say  
25 that in 2015 -- I want to say this for all the survivors out

1 there -- 77 percent of the survivors that were surveyed in  
2 2015 recommended that other survivors come forward. So that  
3 is a positive that we are having that increase in numbers of  
4 survivors advising other survivors to come forward. And I  
5 wanted to get that publicly on the record today so survivors  
6 out there in this incident hear that those who are coming  
7 forward who now have services and support available to them  
8 can expect a more positive experience as we all try to hold  
9 these jerks accountable. And "jerk" is a kind word.

10 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 Chairman McCain: Senator McCaskill has her usual  
12 reticence. I thank you for your passion. I thank you for  
13 your involvement in this issue for many years. Many of us  
14 do appreciate your commitment, Senator McCaskill. Thank  
15 you.

16 Senator Peters?

17 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 I have to agree with my colleagues up here that today  
19 is, indeed, a very sad day for the Marine Corps and for our  
20 services. Without question, disgusting, absolutely  
21 reprehensible behavior that needs to be aggressively dealt  
22 with, and it has to be dealt with immediately. I know,  
23 General Neller, you know the entire country is watching  
24 today. Although I appreciate your strong words, I know that  
25 you know that we also need strong action, that words will

1 not be enough. We are going to need to immediately take  
2 action. In my experience with you, I know that that is the  
3 type of leader you are, and we will be working with you in  
4 any way that we can to be helpful to you.

5 My colleagues have made some very important points  
6 regarding the culture in the Marine Corps. I want to build  
7 on that and specifically talk a little bit about recruit  
8 training, which has been brought up, particularly though at  
9 Parris Island. As all of the witnesses here know, Marine  
10 Corps recruits from the eastern half of the United States,  
11 including my State of Michigan, as well as all female  
12 recruits attend basic training at Parris Island in South  
13 Carolina. And without question, basic training is the place  
14 where the Marine Corps instills its core values. A marine  
15 is always a marine. So those are values that stay with that  
16 individual for their entire life.

17 Last year, the Marine Corps completed three command-  
18 level investigations into hazing and abuse of recruits and  
19 even hazing among drill instructors at Parris Island.  
20 Allegations include the targeted hazing of recruits for  
21 their ethnic background or religious beliefs, including a  
22 Muslim recruit who was placed in an industrial clothes dryer  
23 multiple times.

24 A separate Muslim recruit from my State of Michigan  
25 died at Parris Island by jumping over a stairwell after

1 enduring abuse by the marines entrusted to train him. The  
2 command investigation into the recruit's death found that,  
3 quote, maltreatment by his drill instructor team, leadership  
4 failures at multiple levels of command, and administrative  
5 and process failures contributed to his death. The  
6 investigation also found a senior drill instructor at Parris  
7 Island taught subordinate drill instructors to, quote, hate  
8 recruits -- end of quote -- in order to train them.

9         And I am very concerned that the poor practices in the  
10 training of Marine recruits at Parris Island as a result of  
11 some of these instances may have contributed to some of the  
12 inexcusable behavior that we are discussing today. As you  
13 know, General Neller, respect is a fundamental core value,  
14 respect for every aspect of that individual.

15         So I know you have referenced a comprehensive review of  
16 recruit training, but could you let the panel know what will  
17 the scope of this review be, how it will be conducted, and  
18 has it already resulted in some corrective actions in  
19 recruit training at Parris Island?

20         General Neller: Well, Senator, after the  
21 investigation, we sat down and went through and looked at  
22 what was going on at recruit training. And what we found  
23 was that we had rules and regulations, but there was a  
24 failure in leadership and in supervision. So we have done a  
25 number of things to clarify what the rules were, what they

1 were not. We have increased the supervision at the recruit  
2 depots and by increasing the numbers of officers. We have  
3 gone back to look at how we train our drill instructors.

4 There were some practices that had crept in over time  
5 that were not in compliance with the orders. There were a  
6 number of officers, to include a battalion and regimental  
7 commander, who were relieved due to their inability to  
8 maintain good order and discipline and follow the rules and  
9 regulations.

10 The individuals that you mentioned, plus others, are in  
11 the process of going through the military justice system.  
12 And I will leave it at that. And you probably will have  
13 read or hear about where they are within that process in the  
14 next few weeks.

15 So with this, I hate to say that this provided an  
16 opportunity, but again, to look back at, okay, so how does  
17 this -- this just does not happen here. It starts  
18 somewhere. And so we are in the process, and we are already  
19 in the process of going back and talking to drill  
20 instructors about what it is to lead, what it is to coach,  
21 teach, mentor. We have got a number of things we are  
22 looking at, and we have already implemented as far as  
23 changing the attitude. The commanding generals that are  
24 there at both San Diego and Parris Island are all in with  
25 this. They understand what we are trying to do. And I

1 think they are making progress. But we have to prove that  
2 we have changed.

3 So I agree with you that part of this -- part of what  
4 has to change at the recruit training and in officer  
5 candidate school is a discussion of how we view each other  
6 as marines, whatever our race, our gender, whatever, because  
7 that is where you learn what right looks like. And so we  
8 are in the middle of that. I believe we have a plan. It is  
9 not going to change overnight, but it is going to change. I  
10 am confident of that, and we will correct this. And if  
11 there are others that do not want to follow the rules, they  
12 will be held accountable.

13 So I believe we are headed in the right direction  
14 there. But, again, you want to see results. I am  
15 responsible to give you those results, and it is not going  
16 to happen overnight. But, again, I would ask and invite you  
17 to come down and see what we do at Parris Island or San  
18 Diego and see some of your Michigan marines because I  
19 believe we are on the right path.

20 Senator Peters: Thank you, General.

21 Chairman McCain: Secretary Stackley, thank you for  
22 your appearance today and thank you for your input as we  
23 recognize the civilian stewardship of our military.

24 Sergeant Major Green, your leadership is probably now  
25 more necessary than most times in the past as we repair the



1 damage that has been done and to put into proper perspective  
2 that this is a terrible thing. And from time to time, these  
3 things have happened, but at the same time, we recognize the  
4 United States Marine Corps and their service and sacrifice  
5 that is going on today as we speak, and we do not want to  
6 ever diminish that service and sacrifice that they have  
7 made.

8 General Neller, you came before this committee with  
9 candor. We have now, I believe, embarked, thanks to your  
10 testimony and your commitment, on an effort that may take a  
11 long time. But I think this hearing was an important  
12 beginning to fixing a problem that apparently has been out  
13 there for some period of time. I believe you are facing it  
14 head on.

15 And the one request I have from this committee is that  
16 you keep us informed not only of the progress that you make  
17 but in the challenges that you face because we are looking  
18 at a new form of communication amongst our citizens, and it  
19 is called the Internet. And as I mentioned in my opening  
20 statement, it has provided knowledge and information in a  
21 way that has never been available before. There is also a  
22 dark side, and we are looking at the dark side today.

23 And we are going to look forward to your and Secretary  
24 Stackley's recommendations if it is necessary to pass  
25 additional legislation. We cherish the right of all

1 citizens to have a right of privacy, but I think when we are  
2 seeing this kind of outrageous and offensive behavior, then  
3 we need to provide some protection to our fellow citizens  
4 and those who have served our country with honor because  
5 when we do something like this, we harm the reputation of  
6 all. A few have done that and it is our obligation to try  
7 to see that this kind of thing is not repeated.

8 Senator Reed?

9 Senator Reed: Mr. Chairman, I simply want to concur  
10 and thank you for holding this hearing. It has been very  
11 important, and it will be a foundation for further work by  
12 all the military services, not just the Marine Corps, all  
13 the military services, and this Congress to get it right.

14 Chairman McCain: We will meet in 10 minutes in Russell  
15 220 to continue this conversation in a classified setting.  
16 Thank you.

17 [Whereupon, at 123 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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