

NOT PUBLIC UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT

OF

LIEUTENANT GENERAL DAVID A. OTTIGNON

DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR MANPOWER & RESERVE AFFAIRS

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL

OF THE

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

CONCERNING

MILITARY & CIVILIAN PERSONNEL PROGRAMS

ON

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INTRODUCTION

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

OUR PEOPLE

Your Marines are the centerpiece of the Marine Corps. As highlighted in our 38th Commandant's Planning Guidance, our principal emphasis is on our Marines. We remain focused on recruiting, educating, training, and retaining elite warriors with the mental toughness, tenacity, initiative, intelligence, aggressiveness, and adaptability in challenging environments.

Force Design 2030 is not possible without the continued excellence of our Marines. We are modernizing our talent management processes to ensure we continue to have the right Marines in this period of great power competition. Our initiatives cover the spectrum of a Marine's career – from accession goals and rating/promotion practices, to re-enlistment incentives and retention policies. We are leveraging technology and data collection to help understand – and someday predict – why individuals decide to join the Marine Corps and remain a Marine. To that end, we are implementing longitudinal accession, retention, and exit surveys and cognitive and non-cognitive testing with the objective of identifying and fitting the right person, with the right skill, into the right job. We are in our third year of developing the Retention Prediction Network, which uses cognitive, non-cognitive, and individual interest tests, performance, and personnel data to predict the probability of a successful Marine Corps career. These modernization initiatives will enable us to tailor our force to compete and win in the modern operating environment.

The Commandant has stated that we will keep faith with our Marines as we execute our Force Design 2030 plans. We are thankful to Congress for the force shaping authorities you have

given us and are confident that they are sufficient. Of course, we will come to you for additional statutory changes if in the future they become required.

Recruiting

All Marine Corps recruiting efforts - officer, enlisted, regular, reserve, and prior-service - fall under the Marine Corps Recruiting Command. This is unique amongst the services.

Operationally, this provides us with tremendous flexibility and unity of command, facilitating efforts to meet accession and end strength requirements.

Last fiscal year, COVID-19 impacted recruiting efforts. Social distancing requirements limited the capacity at our depots, delayed shipping activities, closed schools, and canceled community events that we depend on for personal contacts and outreach. We adjusted to these COVID-19 challenges by exploring new digital prospecting tools and researching the market reactions to those endeavors. These actions gave recruiters the means to operate in a reduced personal contact environment. As a result, we were better postured for FY21 than first anticipated. COVID-19's long-term impacts on recruiting remain unknown, but we are adapting and learning from the challenge.

The quality of your Marines remains exceptionally high. The Department of Defense requires 90% of enlistees to have a high school diploma or equivalent (Education Tier 1), and 60% of enlistees to score in the Mental Groups I-III A (mental aptitude). Last year, the Marine Corps achieved 99.5% for Education Tier 1, and 70.1% for Mental Group I-III A. We expect to be at these levels in FY21.

To meet the challenges ahead, we remain committed to assigning our best Marines to recruiting duty. Our recruiters closely reflect the face of the Nation we recruit, which is a testament to our efforts to recruit a more diverse force. Approximately 47% of our recruiters have a diverse

background, well above our Nation's demographics as a whole. Our recruiting efforts connect Marines with the communities they represent. We have recruiters assigned to every zip code in our Nation, and constantly strive to reach all qualified youth and their influencers - from the most rural of small towns to the largest of cities.

For future recruiting success, we must continue to adequately fund both recruiting operations and advertising; we thank Congress for its support in this goal. Our advertising program is vital to building awareness of the Marine Corps among high quality, diverse populations that are increasingly disconnected from military service. A strong advertising program enables our recruiting command to attract and recruit the highest quality accession cohorts. Advertising funds repay many times over, as they produce lower first-term attrition, higher quality Marines, and increased readiness.

Retention

The essence of Marine Corps talent management is to retain the very best Marines capable of fulfilling our leadership and operational needs. Overall, we met all of our retention goals in FY20, and are on track for FY21. However, there is a continuous challenge to keep high-quality Marines in the service, especially in the current competitive civilian job market. We thank this Subcommittee and Congress for the retention authorities and flexibility you have given us. We are using many of these authorities and holding others in reserve should the need arise.

We are implementing – and continuing to study – the use of monetary and non-monetary incentives; modernizing our performance evaluation systems; and refining the way we match and assign Marines to billets. Incentive pays remain critical to our retention effort, allowing the Marine Corps to fill hard to retain positions, such as cyber operators, special operators, and counter intelligence specialists. Selective Reenlistment Bonuses allow us to shape our career force by

targeting critical military occupational specialties and supporting lateral movement of Marines to these billets.

The Marine Corps is experiencing shortfalls in the number of fixed wing and tiltrotor aviators required to fill our aviation billets. As a result, we have implemented a narrowly-tailored aviation bonus to stabilize the pilot shortfall and facilitate the proper execution of all aviation staffing demands. We continue to build on the FY20 bonus plan in FY21. Similarly, and in concert with Force Design, we are offering Assignment Incentive Pay to offensive cyber operators to increase retention and build this capacity. This type of monthly pay is targeted towards hard-to-fill critical billets that have significant training requirements. These incentives help us recruit and retain the best Marines. At only one percent of our Marine Corps personnel budget, they offer a return on investment many times over.

Reserves

Your Marine Corps Reserve stands ready to provide forces for employment across the full spectrum of crisis and global engagement. While the Marine Corps Reserve is supporting current Service and Combatant Command requirements, it is also participating in the Service's efforts to redesign our force and our warfighting capabilities to deter against pacing threats as prescribed by the National Defense Strategy.

Despite the numerous recruiting and entry level training challenges presented by COVID-19, the Marine Corps' Selected Reserve is forecasted to meet Force Design recruiting and retention goals for this fiscal year. We continue to mitigate COVID-19 impacts and maintain personnel and training readiness with improvements to our enlisted and officer reserve force management.

This year the Marine Corps implemented a comprehensive Career Management Plan that provided full-service support to our Reserve officers and Staff NCOs throughout the Selected

Reserve. This talent management initiative that will help our NCOs, Staff NCOs, and officers move between commands to enhance their development and military career goals.

Throughout the past year, the Marine Corps Reserve continued global deployments despite the unprecedented challenges presented by COVID-19. The Marine Corps Reserve provided Combatant Commanders with forces focused on combat operations, crisis prevention, crisis response, and theater security cooperation.

This year, the Marine Corps Reserve is slated to mobilize Reservists in support of 28 formations. These operations greatly increase the Reserve Component's interoperability with the Active Component, joint forces, our allies, and coalition partners.

Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and inclusion are force multipliers and take advantage of the wide array of experiences and perspectives necessary to maintain our current and future warfighting excellence. We are committed to capitalizing on the knowledge, skills, abilities, performance, and potential of every Marine.

Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan will guide our actions over the next five years in the areas of recruiting and accessions, talent management, education, training, and commandership. It provides a framework to align a number of efforts, identify new initiatives, and provide oversight across the Corps for implementation by commanders at every level. A key component of this plan is to target diversity at our senior and General Officer ranks. Leadership must exemplify our core tenets and it is important to continue to improve diversity at our highest levels. To date, 21% of Brigadier Generals and Brigadier General-selects are diverse, the highest level of diverse representation at that rank in Marine Corps history. We look forward to seeing this trend continue.

One of our first actions to implement our plan was the appointment of a general officer as the Service's Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer. This position will communicate program goals, develop policy, and action the aforementioned strategic plan. Concurrently, the Marine Corps bolstered the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Review Board (DRB). The DRB serves as the action arm of the Marine Corps Diversity and Inclusion Management Program to address diversity, inclusion, and command climate issues that may impact the Marine Corps.

Outreach and external engagement are an important facet of our holistic approach to diversity and inclusion. We have steadily increased our Outreach Program budget from \$150k in FY2015 to \$1.3M in FY2021. This Program provides opportunities for professional development, mentoring, and networking experiences by fully funding approximately 500 Marines to attend 19 national/regional conferences hosted by non-federal entity affinity groups events throughout the year. For example, the Marine Corps recently hosted the Petersen Discussion Forum from June to December 2020. The forum was named after Lieutenant General Frank Petersen, the first African-American Marine Corps aviator and the first African-American Marine Corps General Officer. The forum met regularly to examine, analyze, and discuss pertinent issues on the state of race and gender relations in the Marine Corps.

Diversity in the Marine Corps is increasing. Since 2009, diverse enlisted accessions have increased from 34% to 43%, and diverse officer accessions have increased from 16% to 35%. Female officers have increased from 8% to 13.8% during this same time period. Females represented in previously restricted MOS are also on the rise. Last year, 737 females were in previously restricted units; that number is now 1,101. Similarly, 283 women were serving in previously restricted MOS; today that number is 415, including the first woman Reconnaissance Marine.

The Marine Corps is a full partner with the Office of the Secretary of Defense and other Services in accomplishing the recommendations set out in the Secretary's Diversity and Inclusion Board Final Report. However, the Marine Corps is also taking its own initiative to both study and make changes to continue to improve diversity and inclusion.

A host of independent studies are currently underway to better understand diversity and inclusion challenges and make improvements. Next month we expect to have the results of our Fitness Report Bias Study, an analysis which is examining the objectivity of the current performance appraisal process. The Basic School Military Occupational Specialty Assignment Study will examine historical performance data based on demographics to evaluate the impact of performance on MOS assignment. We are funding an independent study to identify and understand any barriers to advancement and retention of women and minorities in the Marine Corps. Finally, our Exit & Milestone Longitudinal Survey provides feedback to better understand personnel satisfaction regarding career opportunities, leadership, performance management, diversity, and work-life programs.

The Marine Corps acknowledges biases exist and is addressing these challenges by incorporating unconscious bias training at every rank through the training continuum. Diversity of thought and experience that each Marine brings will help us find more creative and innovative solutions to these future challenges. We must actively work to retain and grow this diversity. Diversity and inclusion are, more than anything, a leadership issue. Marine leaders must not just talk about changing culture – they must *be* the example of how to treat your fellow Marine and all individuals with dignity, respect, empathy and compassion.

TAKING CARE OF MARINES AND THEIR FAMILIES

Taking care of Marines and families improves our overall readiness and resilience. It also directly increases retention, quality of life and, most importantly, combat effectiveness. The Marine Corps Behavioral Programs are an integrated community-based service model that promote the social, behavioral, and psychological fitness of Marines and families to enhance mission effectiveness.

Sexual Assault Prevention & Response

Protecting Marines and preventing sexual assaults remain top priorities for the Corps. We are committed to preventing incidents of sexual assault by promoting positive behaviors, fostering healthy command climates, and building skills to identify and prevent negative behaviors. We remain committed to responding to sexual assaults, including those occurring before service, by providing victim-centered support.

We are dedicated to working with the Department of Defense and Congress on developing prevention measures to reduce the prevalence of this crime. The Marine Corps has reviewed and analyzed the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee report. From this report, the Marine Corps identified many recommendations for implementation focused on program management and structure; training; command climate; and disciplinary action. Additionally, the Marine Corps is directly engaged in the Secretary of Defense's directed 90-day Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military (IRC) and the Immediate Actions to Counter Sexual Assault and Harassment. The Marine Corps has representation in all four of the IRC lines of effort and is in the process of executing the Immediate Actions.

There are a number of important updates to our sexual assault prevention efforts to highlight. Our renewed focus seeks to tailor training to specific levels of leadership. This enables a multi-layered approach to prevention to fit Marines of every age, rank, and billet. For example,

updated SAPR annual training for Staff Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCO) provides more focus at the small unit level. This training's goal is to help increase SNCO knowledge about sexual assault, reporting, resources, rank-specific roles and responsibilities, and to build skills consistent with primary prevention.

We also updated the SAPR training for the Commander's Course to better prepare senior leadership to prevent sexual assault once they assume command. This includes information focused on actionable recommendations for pre-command leaders and small group discussions facilitated by Marine Corps mentors and SAPR experts. Commanders set the tone of their unit—we know how important it is to ensure they are equipped *before* they assume command to establish the right command climate—a climate that encourages Marines to look out for one another and report destructive behaviors and crimes, and that mandates accountability for perpetrators and enablers.

While we like to highlight our prevention efforts, we acknowledge that we are not where we need to be; we still have incidents of sexual harassment and assault and so we must ensure we provide the best support possible to victims. A revised SAPR Victim Advocate training was released in October 2019 and has been fully implemented. The revised 40-hour curriculum focuses on building and refining advocacy skills and includes cultural competency and prevention training.

We want to leverage technological developments too. SAPR is implementing online evaluation tools for select SAPR annual training, Victim Advocate (VA) training, and Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARC) initial training. The evaluation tools measure changes in knowledge, attitudes, and intentions, as well as training satisfaction, consistency of instruction, and quality of instruction. Beginning with pilots in FY21, these evaluation results will inform local SAPR personnel, as well as HQMC personnel, on the effectiveness of the trainings.

Collaboration is key in addressing sexual assault prevention and response. Our SAPR program works together with the other Services, Department of the Navy and Department of

Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Offices, and outside entities to enhance our ability to prevent and respond to sexual assault, identify best practices, and leverage resources. SAPR supports enterprise-wide efforts to prevent sexual assaults within the military and care for Marines.

The Marine Corps continually evaluates SAPR initiatives for effectiveness by conducting needs assessments, surveys, and staffing analysis. SARC and VA training curriculum development has been standardized which better ensures that Marines understand reporting options, SARCs and VAs are prepared to support victims, and all understand their role in sexual assault prevention.

Suicide Prevention

The Marine Corps cannot afford to lose any Marines to suicide. The Marine Corps approaches suicide prevention by using every resource available to promote and apply the leadership functions of strengthen, mitigate, identify, treat, and reintegrate to increase individual and unit readiness. We are working to reduce suicide by focusing efforts across four prevention lines of effort: (1) Communication: Our efforts equip commanders and Suicide Prevention Program Officers with tools and resources for prevention, response, and postvention, which includes the publication of a monthly newsletter that provides Marines with coping and stress management skills, and the distribution of an Embedded Mental Health Guidebook; (2) Collaboration: We coordinate with Navy behavioral health services to ensure non-medical and medical care are accessible and seamless. Community Counseling Program counselors conduct screenings, actively assess needs, provide counseling, and connect Service members and families with additional resources. We work with sister services and federal agencies to identify gaps in resources and services, and collaborate on actionable solutions for geographically dispersed service members; (3) Prevention and Resilience: Our new Command Individual Risk and Resiliency Assessment System (CIRRAS) enhances commanders' ability to conduct effective force

preservation and prevention efforts; and (4) Use of Data and Research: We track suicide-related events data to include monitoring for any indications of COVID-19 impact. We evaluate the effectiveness of suicide prevention initiatives, and conduct the annual USMC Death by Suicide Review Board, which reviews every Marine death by suicide to provide actionable/operational recommendations.

CIRRAS, a Commandant's priority, was released in October 2020, and has received positive feedback from commanders to mitigate personnel challenges. The system provides a single, standardized digital platform that enables proactive identification and assessment of individual Marine risk and resiliency factors. This information is compiled in the CIRRAS database by small unit leaders, medical officers, and other authorized support staff. It is transferable between commands so that, as Marines move to different commands, a clear picture of those Marines who are at higher risk for destructive behaviors is transferred as well. The overarching goal of CIRRAS is to reduce suicide and destructive behaviors by eliminating gaps in information and timeliness of information, as well as provides a safe and secure way to manage Personally Identifiable Information (PII)/ Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Information during the force preservation process. By presenting timely, prioritized, actionable information to those who can help Marines, leaders will be better equipped to reduce destructive behaviors in their units.

We have several other programs and services that contribute to our overall suicide prevention efforts. Our Unit Marine Awareness and Prevention Integrated Training (UMAPIT) teaches every Marine the basics of suicide prevention. Our Marine Intercept Program (MIP) provides Marines who verbalize suicidal ideations or who attempt suicide access to telephonic and face-to-face contacts to check in, assess risk, plan for safety, and refer to other services as needed. Our Operational Stress Control & Readiness (OSCAR) team includes trained Marines and OSCAR program extenders who can recognize the impacts of stress and connect Marines to needed support.

The OSCAR program extenders are medical staff skilled in prevention services, chaplains, corpsman, and other professionals who “extend” suicide prevention capabilities.

The importance of force preservation and resiliency cannot be understated for a ready Marine Corps. The Marine Corps force preservation process is the formalized method used by commanders to identify individual Marine risk factors and apply holistic risk management measures to improve individual and unit readiness. Every day, this process assists leaders across the Corps to identify those in need.

Wounded Warrior Regiment

The Marine Corps' Wounded Warrior Regiment (WWR) continues to execute our Recovery Coordination Program in support of wounded, ill, or injured (WII) Marines and their families. WWR facilitates their recovery and upholds our enduring commitment to keep faith with those who have incurred life changing impairments in service to our Nation. Regardless of the origin of affliction, our Marines require and deserve access to the comprehensive recovery care available through the WWR.

WWR Recovery Care Coordinators, in coordination with medical providers and unit leaders, help WII Marines develop and execute their individual Comprehensive Recovery Plans, which provide the road map for successful healing and transition. WII Marines with complex care coordination needs are assessed for post-separation support requirements. When appropriate, those Marines are transferred directly to a Department of Veterans Affairs Lead Coordinator prior to their medical discharge to ensure seamless support.

Since our WWR was established in 2007, thousands of WII Marines and family members transitioning from active service have benefitted from a full spectrum of support services that begins with physical recovery needs and increasingly focuses on post-service employment and education opportunities as they heal. Marines and their families, members of Congress, and the public at large can be assured that the Marine Corps, through the WWR, will continue to expertly provide recovery care coordination support at all times.

Child and Youth Programs

High-quality child care is a readiness priority for the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps provides high quality, accessible, and affordable programs and services for eligible families with children six-weeks to 18-years of age.

The Marine Corps is currently operating at 78% of child care capacity. COVID-19 and the resulting protocols have significantly impacted our child care capacity. Each installation is impacted differently by COVID-19, and operational status is based on local command needs and circumstances. Modifications of daily operations are in place to mitigate social distancing and operation changes implementing the Center for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines.

Currently, we have a total unmet need of 1,434 children in Priorities 1 & 2 (child development program staff; single and dual-military members; military members with working spouse) with notable waitlists at Camp Pendleton, Hawaii, Quantico, and Camp Lejeune/New River. These four installations maintain approximately 82% of the overall immediate waitlist. These are primarily due to a shortage of qualified workers, high turnover/low pay, and lengthy hiring process. We are addressing these issues through increased hiring and a non-competitive child care employee transfer program. We also offer fee assistance for eligible Marines who are geographically remote,

reside more than 15 miles from an installation, or are assigned to an installation that has a wait list. The program budget is \$5M in FY21 and currently supports 535 Marine families.

Spouse Employment

Spouse unemployment is a concern for many Marine Corps families, and can be an obstacle for financial security. The Marine Corps Family Member Employment Assistance Program (FMEAP) emphasizes a proactive approach for military spouses, and other dependent family members. This enables them to formulate informed career and educational choices by utilizing employment-related referral services, career and skill assessments, career coaching, job search guidance, portable career opportunities, and education center referrals/guidance. The FMEAP provides coaching and training such as: interview techniques; resume and cover letter writing; the federal application process; salary negotiations; appropriate dress; staff-assisted computerized job searches; skills and personality assessments; one-on-one career coaching; education, training and volunteer opportunities; and entrepreneur business opportunities.

Installations provide training/workshops to assist spouses and transitioning service members with the federal hiring process. Installations also conduct job fairs to assist veterans and family members in finding employment. FMEAP connects Marine Corps spouses with volunteer opportunities through installation Volunteer Coordinators to assist with establishing career experience throughout permanent change of station transitions. FMEAP also helps translate volunteer experiences into marketable skills on resumes. The program's holistic approach helps support spouses throughout a Marine's service.

The Marine Corps utilizes several approaches to recruit and appoint military spouses. We participate in the DoD Military Spouse Preference Program, which was instituted to reduce the adverse impact on the career paths of spouses of active-duty service members. Additionally, the non-competitive military spouse appointment authority is one of many hiring authorities through

which a military spouse can come into Marine Corps service. Furthermore, the Marine Corps participates in the Military Spouse Employment Partnership, which is a DoD-level partnership with employers who agree to offer transferrable, portable career opportunities to relocating military spouse employees.

The Marine Corps is now authorized to reimburse Marine spouses up to \$1,000 for state licensure and certification costs arising from relocation to another state. To date, the Marine Corps has reimbursed 248 individual claims totaling \$89,480. The Marine Corps also participates in the Military Spouse Career Advancement Account (MyCAA) Scholarship which provides up to \$2,000 per year (maximum of \$4,000) for military spouses (private to sergeant, warrant officers 1 & 2, and second Lieutenants to first Lieutenants) to pursue licenses, certificates, certifications or Associate Degrees necessary for gainful employment.

Civilian Marines

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

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

ill and injured. Overall, our civilians continue to truly shown themselves as Semper Fidelis by keeping our Marines and their families in the forefront.

CONCLUSION

The Marines of our Corps represent a diverse group of individuals bonded together by a sense of duty. Through recruiting, training, education, and retention of men and women of character, we will enhance the quality of our Corps and our overall combat effectiveness. To echo the sentiments of our Commandant - the Marine Corps is entering a period of transformation to produce a modern, elite force that will meet the challenges of the National Defense Strategy and uncertainty of the future. Your Marines have sworn an oath to defend and protect our Nation. They stand ready to fight, compete, and win. By ensuring we take care of all Marines and their families, we will keep faith with them to honor the commitment they have so freely given.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Semper Fidelis.