DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
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IN REPLY REFER TO:
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WHITE LETTER NO. 06-97

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps
To: All General Officers
All Commanding Officers
All Officers in Charge

Subj: SEMPER FIT

1. For over 200 years, our commitment to the words Semper Fidelis has secured the bond that makes us the world's premiere fighting force. However, there are unseen enemies on the attack. They undermine our efforts and slowly erode individual readiness. The enemies are unhealthy lifestyles, and they are armored in the myths about how some Marines acted in the past--using tobacco, consuming lots of alcohol, and behaving with reckless abandon. It's time to change those myths.

2. Semper Fit, the Marine Corps Health Promotion Program, was established by MCO 6200.4 in May 1992. Through education and training, the Semper Fit Program provides our Marines the tools to achieve and maintain optimum fitness and well being. The program helps to sharpen each Marine, creating the "ultimate warrior" through increased awareness and knowledge about how to live more healthfully. Just as Marines learn the importance of proper care of their weapons, Semper Fit teaches Marines proper care and maintenance of their bodies.

3. The core of the Semper Fit Program contains nine elements of health promotion: tobacco cessation, injury prevention, suicide awareness, alcohol and substance abuse prevention and control, stress management, hypertension education, sexually transmitted disease and human immunodeficiency virus prevention, nutrition education, and physical fitness. Education and training in these areas are available through local commands and orchestrated by Semper Fit coordinators assigned at the major command and installation level. It is our responsibility as commanders to ensure that effective communication is established with these Semper Fit coordinators so that the program will continue to grow.

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4. The Semper Fit Program is not just another training program. It combines several Marine Corps programs under one tent. This action allows the program to organize other efforts under the common theme of health.

5. The Marine Corps Order on the Semper Fit Program was revised in April and incorporates changes that will allow us, as leaders, an opportunity to improve and enhance the lives of our Marines. Additionally, in December 1996, we distributed a series of six standardized lesson plans that were designed to allow any Marine to instruct on the elements of the Semper Fit Program. There is also a home page on the world wide web (www.hqmc.usmc.mil) that makes program updates, lesson plan and file download, and general program information available to all.

6. The knowledge gained through Semper Fit allows us to maintain and increase mission readiness by preventing disease, bolstering productivity, and reducing absenteeism. Healthy Marines also overcome injuries more easily, both in peacetime and in combat. In addition to improved mission readiness, we will also see a reduction in health care costs and costs associated with first term attrition due to stress, suicide, weight control, and substance abuse. Improving health and fitness will also contribute to the retention of valuable Marines. It is my intent to ensure the success of this program and help change the myths about Marine lifestyles. Marines have fought many enemies during the last 200 years--the Semper Fit Program will help us overcome our enemies over the next 200 years, including the enemies of good health.

C. C. KRULAK