



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
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IN REPLY REFER TO:
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WHITE LETTER NO. 3-98

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

Subj: SUSTAINING THE TRANSFORMATION

Encl: Navy Times Article "Power Down"

1. In 1995 we published the Commandant's Planning Guidance (CPG) which mapped out the strategic vision for a 21st Century Marine Corps:

... The Marine Corps will be the nation's force of choice--a certain force for an uncertain world. ...

... This superb armed force will be composed of the world's finest military professionals -- disciplined, motivated, dedicated warriors -- stronger, smarter Marines, who are filled with the values that have served us well throughout our history, and infused with the agility of mind and body that will be required in future conflicts. ...

2. In addition to fighting traditional battles, Marines will be fighting the "three block war." One moment they will be feeding refugees and providing other humanitarian relief. A few hours later (conducting peace keeping operations) Marines will be separating fighting warlords and their followers -- later that day, they may well be engaged in mid-intensity, highly lethal conflict -- and all this will take place within three city blocks. We've already seen evidence of this in Somalia, and there will be many future Somalias. This battlefield is going to require a special kind of Marine. A Marine trained to the highest standards, ready for any challenge -- decision makers worthy of the trust of the people of this great nation of ours. They will need to be warriors with tactical skills second to none who have absolute faith in the integrity of their unit -- their team -- and they must be men and women of character.

3. The question is how do you make Marines who can fight and win the three block war? How do you impart to a 19 year old the intelligence, the tactical skills, the decision making ability -- both tactical and moral -- to know when to fire and when to protect? When to employ supporting arms in an urban slum and when not to?

4. For starters, we have raised our recruiting standards and enhanced the training future recruits receive while in the delayed entry pool. We lengthened and toughened recruit training, gave valuable time back to the drill instructor, and added the "Crucible" to instill in each recruit the importance of subordination of self for the team. We enhanced School of Infantry and Marine

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Combat Training to make it more rigorous and challenging, and we are building unit cohesion by forming Marines into MOS teams, sending those teams to their occupational school and then on to their first unit. All of these efforts contribute to the "Transformation" process whereby the young men and women who choose to enter our Corps become Marines.

5. In addition to Transformation, we are experimenting with, and purchasing a whole array of new warfighting equipment to include individual equipment. We are experimenting with emerging technologies and techniques and evaluating their collective impact on our doctrine and on how we organize, train and equip to fight in the future.

6. The driving force behind each of these initiatives is to build a Corps to fight and win our Nation's battles in the 21st Century. In the end, however, it is not the new training, equipment or doctrine that will ensure we win the battle -- it will be the actions of the Marines themselves. How they will respond on the battlefield will be determined by their leaders long before the execution order is issued.

7. Marine NCO's, SNCO's and junior officers have always borne the greatest leadership burden in combat. Unfortunately, it seems our expectations of these junior leaders differ significantly when we are not in conflict. Selling them short in peacetime is a disservice to our Marines, our Corps and the Nation. It is high time we start expecting and demanding as much of these valuable leaders in times of peace as we do in war. Our NCO's, SNCO's and junior officers must take responsibility for sustaining and building on the Transformation process. They must ensure Marines can fight and win the three block war; that they remain trained to the highest degree, ready for any challenge. Our junior leaders must establish professional and personal standards for their Marines today in order to prepare them for the battles of tomorrow. As always, the support and backing of the command will be critical to their success.

8. The enclosed Navy Times article, "Power Down," very effectively articulates the philosophy behind sustainment and what the Corps expects of its junior leaders in this regard. I want each NCO, SNCO and junior officer to have an opportunity to read the article. Later this summer I will be directing a Corps-wide standdown to discuss sustainment, its importance to our Corps, and how each and every Marine can contribute. This article should play a central role in those discussions.

9. Building Marines for the day after tomorrow must be our focus of effort today. With your help and that of your Marines, we can continue to build a Corps that will prevail on the 21st Century battlefield.



G. C. KEULAK

Your Corps needs your help so take this letter
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