



**DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
2 NAVY ANNEX  
WASHINGTON, DC 20380-1775**

IN REPLY REFER TO:

CMC-M&RA

30 AUG 2002

WHITE LETTER NO. 09-02

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

Subj: EXPANDED TRANSITION ASSISTANCE/MARINE FOR LIFE PROGRAM

1. The Marine Corps depends on the support of the American public for current operations and future potential. Our most visible institutional links to our society are the Marine Corps Reserve, our recruiting establishment, and the nearly 27,000 veterans who return to society each year with the "Corps" values, leadership skills and self confidence that will make them better citizens. In recognizing both the critical role that our veterans play in sustaining our mutually beneficial connection with the public we serve, and the potential role of our Reserve and recruiting establishments in focusing this effort, I directed the development of the Marine For Life Program under the initial cognizance of the Manpower and Reserve Affairs Department at Headquarters, Marine Corps. The Marine For Life Program has at its core the implementation of our ethos, "Once a Marine, Always a Marine."

2. My intent is to expand our transition assistance to Marines through enhanced communication and continued affiliation with our veteran Marines who have gone on to become successful civic and business leaders in our communities. For those who have served honorably, our debt of gratitude must extend well beyond their last day of active service. "Taking care of our own" means we must not only provide the appropriate recognition and support as our Marines prepare to leave, but we must also invest the resources, effort and infrastructure to aid their continued success as they transition to their follow-on careers. The investment we make in helping to ensure a successful transition will not only thank a Marine for his/her service, but will also provide the following additional benefits:

a. Expands our ethos across future generations by ensuring that Marines who have honorably worn the Eagle, Globe and Anchor are provided the opportunity to remain affiliated with the Marine Corps in a transition support role.

b. Harnesses the civilian skills, business contacts, and personal and professional networks of veteran Marines into a self-perpetuating resource for sponsoring transitioning Marines on their last set of orders, recruiting future generations, and promoting the Marine Corps as an institution.

c. Helps focus the efforts of Marine affiliated organizations, veterans, and professional associations in an assistance role.

d. Makes the Marine Corps an attractive option for the best and brightest men and women as they graduate from high school or college.

3. Overview. Detailed implementation will be outlined in a forthcoming ALMAR and subsequent Marine Corps Order. The Marine For Life Program will formalize and expand currently existing networks of veteran Marines, Marine affiliated organizations, and Marine-friendly employers interested in the proven

Subj: EXPANDED TRANSITION ASSISTANCE/MARINE FOR LIFE PROGRAM

leadership abilities and demonstrated performance of transitioning Marines. These networks will correspond to major geographic areas of our current Marine Corps Reserve sites and recruiting infrastructure. The program will achieve an initial operating capability in FY02 with the standup of approximately 50 sites and full operational capability the following year. There are two critical components of the program.

a. Hometown Links. For each geographic area, there will be a Reserve Marine serving as the Hometown Link. The Hometown Links will develop the local human network, focus the efforts of Marine Alumni in the area, and coordinate assistance for the transitioning Marine as they relocate. During initial establishment of the local network, Hometown Link duties will require full time attention. As the program matures, the cooperative effort of the local network in helping the Hometown Link maintain sponsorship, support and connectivity will greatly increase our ability to support the transitioning Marine.

b. Electronic Network. The primary tool in managing the local network and connecting the Hometown Links will be a nationwide, web-based electronic network. This electronic backbone will provide access to employers seeking proven abilities; assistance in gaining admission to educational programs and local relocation resources; and contact with local Marine organizations (e.g., Marine Corps Association, Coordinating Councils, Marine Corps League) and veterans groups.

4. Retention. In my initial Commandant's guidance, I shared my thoughts on the value of the individual Marine as the true strength of our Corps. The significant investment we make in recruiting and training mandates that we do our best to retain our quality Marines on active duty and in the Marine Corps Reserve. By our actions and example, retention is the daily responsibility of every leader, from our junior NCOs to the senior officers who develop policies and make decisions that directly impact the day to day lives of our Marines in operational units. I expect commanders and leaders at all levels to create a command climate that makes our Marines want to stay Marine. By providing a formal transition support network, the Marine For Life Program will help commanders accomplish that goal.

5. Commander's Role. Because we are a young, first-term force, there will be a significant portion who choose to leave active service after meeting their initial obligation, despite our best efforts to retain them. I expect leaders across the Corps to improve the transition process by accomplishing the following:

a. Change the paradigm associated with the way we view Marines who choose to leave active service. In formal Marine Corps publications, written correspondence and in our daily jargon, the term "transition" will replace the term "separation" when referring to Marines who depart honorably.

b. Place personal emphasis on the value, sense of pride and dignity that comes from serving Corps and country honorably.

c. Assess all elements of the command's retention and transition process, from a Marine's first contact with the Career Retention Specialist, to the check out process encountered on the last day of duty.

Subj: EXPANDED TRANSITION ASSISTANCE/MARINE FOR LIFE PROGRAM

d. Ensure our Career Retention Specialists make every effort to steer our transitioning Marines toward continued service, Marine Corps Reserve opportunities, and the benefits of the Marine For Life Program.

e. Ensure mandatory attendance at established Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP) events by all Marines 90 days prior to their approaching transition date. Personnel responsible for the conduct of TAMP will ensure training covers the benefits of the Marine For Life Program and that accurate contact information is provided to Hometown Links.

f. Ensure all transitioning Marines receive the appropriate level of recognition and appreciation for the contributions made toward the continued success of our Corps.

g. Ensure all Marines are offered an appropriate letter of recommendation that provides a synopsis of the Marine's service, attests to his or her character and capabilities, and encourages consideration by future employers or educational institutions.

6. Our upfront investment will pay off in creating the longterm recruiting and retention environment that will ensure the continued success of our Corps for generations to come. A Marine's last active duty experience may be the one that remains for the rest of his/her life. The transition process should be conducted with the same sense of purpose, professionalism, and esprit de corps that we employ in our preparation for war. Through the professional and civic growth of our veterans, the efforts of our commanders, and the focus provided by the Marine For Life Program, our veterans will continue to strengthen our critical link between the Corps and society. Inherent in our credo, "Once a Marine, Always a Marine," our men and women must be fully aware of the benefits and responsibilities that come with earning the lifetime title of "Marine."

  
J. L. JONES