DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
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IN REPLY REFER TO:
CMC-SD

WHITE LETTER NO 10-00

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

Subj MARINE CORPS SAFETY CAMPAIGN

1. This White Letter initiates the Marine Corps Safety Campaign. The reputation of the Marine Corps is based upon our tenacity, skill in combat, and readiness to fight our country's battles. This reputation is the result of hard work, effective training, and success in combat. It has come at considerable cost: the blood of Marines spilled in combat across the globe. We grudgingly endure these losses because risk is inherent in war. We assess it, we plan for it, and we avoid or minimize it as much as possible by wearing force protection equipment such as helmets, flak jackets and gas masks; using preparatory fires to reduce the threat; and avoiding obstacles. Unfortunately, our peacetime risk management activities are sometimes less proactive.

2. Leaders at all levels have historically been reluctant to halt an operation or training event due to safety concerns. Junior Marines have been even more hesitant to stop an evolution that "just does not feel right." It takes a bold individual to recommend to the commander that we cancel or halt an evolution. Yet, this aggressive and thoughtful spirit is just the sort of attitude that we expect from Marines in combat.

3. Each year, over 100 Marines die in mishaps and over 2000 are injured. We must reduce these losses. Non-combat casualties diminish our readiness, our cohesion and our camaraderie. Our Corps needs a cultural change and this change must be profound. We will effect this change through leadership.

4. To lead that cultural change, I have established the Marine Corps Executive Safety Board (ESB). On 15 June 2000 the Assistant Commandant hosted the first meeting of the ESB in Washington DC. The ESB consists of commanding generals from our operational commands, major bases and supporting organizations. Their mission is to provide safety policy and guidance for our Corps. The Marine Corps Safety Campaign Plan has been published by the ESB. This plan sets us on a course to reduce mishaps while increasing readiness and combat effectiveness.

5. The key to achieving our safety goals is to instill in our Corps the idea that Marines, of all ranks, must maintain a constant vigil against unsafe actions, practices or situations. They must be willing to voice their concerns. Supporting this attitude shift is a commitment to make accountability the cornerstone of our efforts as we seek to revolutionize our approach to safety. Responsibility for safety belongs to every Marine.

6. To begin implementation of this cultural shift, the following actions will be taken, effective immediately:

a. All personal safety equipment and seat belt requirements will be enforced both on and off base and Marines will be subject to administrative and/or disciplinary action for failure to utilize required safety equipment

b. Within seven days of any Class A mishap, all commanding officers shall brief their commanding generals on the circumstances surrounding the mishap and the steps taken to prevent recurrence.

c. The executive officer or deputy commander within each command is responsible for the execution of safety policy. Fitness reports will include mandatory comments on the executive officer's and deputy commander's fulfillment of safety responsibilities.

d. In order to better integrate operations and safety, we will reenergize our efforts to incorporate Operational Risk Management (ORM) throughout our Corps. ORM will be taught at all formal schools and that training will be reinforced throughout the length of the school. At a minimum, commanders should ask two questions during any brief:

"What are the risks of this event or course of action?" and, "What have we done to reduce those risks to an acceptable level?" All Marines should ask themselves the same questions when beginning any off duty activity.

7. Safety and operations must intertwine in such a manner that risk management and safety are a part of the planning and execution of all missions, exercises, and daily evolutions. Risk awareness must be increased through aggressive training. Safety must become an enduring principle for the Marine Corps.

8. I am committed to halting the accidental deaths and injuries in the Marine Corps. To that end, commanders must embrace the idea that safety is an element of force protection. By doing so, we will save the lives of our Marines and increase the combat readiness of the Corps. Both are worthy goals.

J. L. JONES