

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION
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THE HOUSE ARMED
SERVICES COMMITTEE**

STATEMENT OF

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HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

BEFORE THE

MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE

OF THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

CONCERNING

**MILITARY RESALE AND
MORALE, WELFARE AND RECREATION OVERVIEW**

ON

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Chairman McHugh, Congressman Snyder, and distinguished members of the Military Personnel Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before your subcommittee to report on the quality of life of Marines and their families and the status of our Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Program and Marine Corps Exchange operations. During times of increased operational tempo, we are clearly focused on providing high quality and relevant deployment support for Marines and their families. As a premier expeditionary force, Congress can be proud of the fact that Marines and Marine families have superbly endured the challenges of deployment and separation as “well seasoned warriors” and will continue to do so. Stories abound which attempt to capture the significance of their dedication to duty, including feats of courage and persistence; indomitable spirit as they faithfully anticipate return and resumption of “a normal life”; and inspirational examples of personal sacrifices made simply as a matter of course. Thank you for your efforts to support these remarkable Marines and their families and for your efforts to recognize their extraordinary contribution to the Nation, through this hearing, and unwavering sponsorship of their MWR and exchange benefits. The continued commitment of the Congress and the American people is central to the strength of our warfighting and crisis response capabilities, but also to the state of Marine Corps quality of life and morale.

Deployment Support

Last year, approximately 25,000 Marines were deployed to the Al Anbar province in Iraq. The Marine Corps provided concurrent support to other regions including Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, the Pacific, support to the evacuation of non-combatants from Liberia, peace operations in Haiti, and Tsunami relief in South Asia. Today, we are rotating our forces in Iraq and the entire Marine Corps is supporting the Global War on Terrorism. The demand on our force is high and we are currently rotating based on a one-to-one ratio (7 months out / 7 months back) for our infantry battalions, squadrons, and other high demand capabilities. In real terms, this means our operating forces are either deployed or training to deploy.

Marine Corps Installation Commanders and their Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) teams are predominantly responsible for the success and strength of our deployment and home station response and support system. As the on-ground Commanders, they gain first-hand understanding of the needs of both deployed Marines and Marines and families who stay behind; determine the level and priority of support required for tenant combatant units with the assistance of those units' operational commanders; and most importantly, balance the needs of the extended community (deployed and home station). In this capacity, Installation Commanders must be highly visible aboard the base as well as in their local surrounding communities; attentive to customer feedback received from Marines and their families; and flexible in addressing lessons learned based on operational commander experiences. In providing a

continuum of care, Installation Commanders are supported by a professional and caring staff capable of providing quality programs or services.

To help ease the burden on our Installation Commanders, the Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) infrastructure and philosophical approach to support services was completely renovated and revitalized in the Marine Corps five years ago. Program stovepipes were removed that inhibited maximum support capabilities and staff were refocused to achieve common goals. The “united team” pools organizational assets and capabilities and pulls them all together for the good of the Marines and their families. The wisdom of establishing MCCS (including Family Services, Voluntary Off-Duty Education, Child Development, Morale, Welfare and Recreation, and Exchange) under a single overhead structure has proven to be extremely beneficial in effectiveness and efficiency—particularly in view of our expanded expeditionary tempo and our any time/any where customer service needs. In five years of operation, we have sponsored numerous listening and learning sessions that have further assisted our organizational evolution. Based on comments received from Marine Corps commanders, MCCS is “hitting its stride.”

The MCCS structure allows Installation Commanders the flexibility to target support where it is most needed using a combined arms approach. Under our “continuum of care” philosophy, we provide support for Marines and their family members from the very beginning of the deployment cycle, to the end, and beyond. Not surprisingly, home-station support plays a significant role throughout this continuum.

Pre-Deployment Phase. During pre-deployment periods, Marines and their families receive various “preparedness briefs” and information on support services available to further Marine and family readiness. Ultimately, this helps them to ensure their emotional, financial, and logistical house is in order prior to deployment. Once a unit is stood up for deployment, commanders are encouraged to arrange for at least two pre-deployment briefs with the first brief commencing three months ahead of the scheduled departure and a subsequent brief four weeks prior to departure. Briefs are held at different times of the day or on weekends to attain maximum participation. In conjunction with the pre-deployment briefs, additional workshops and programs are offered to help children. The overall emphasis for pre-deployment briefings is to link proactive, self-sufficient families to unit and mission readiness and also to give commanders the opportunity to engage the audience and ensure them that their concerns are acknowledged and embraced. Key readiness members of the unit, such as Family Readiness Officers, Key Volunteer Coordinators, network volunteers and the Chaplain are typically present during the briefings and workshops.

Pre-deployment briefs offer families and deploying Marines factual information about the upcoming deployment, so as to squelch any rumors or misconceptions and establish reasonable expectations. The briefs feature: information on resources to assist with problem resolution; preventive actions to provide for smooth household operation while the Marine is deployed; an

overview on both operational and personal security concerns; and information on communication flow to and from the unit to include resources such as MotoMail. (Note: MotoMail is a web-based email system that we stood up last December. It provides hard copy emails to Service members deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan from family members back home, usually in 24 hours, or less. To date, more than 124,000 MotoMail “letters” have been created).

The pre-deployment briefs ensure that Marines and spouses are educated about pay fluctuations resulting from deployment. Many internal and external subject matter experts provide deployment-specific information to assist families with the challenges of transition. Command financial specialists may be brought in to brief or to offer individual counseling at a later date. Support service representatives such as Marine and Family Services, Marine Corps Family Team Building, Red Cross, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society are also potential briefers. These sessions are coordinated by the deploying command in conjunction with relevant MCCS staff.

Participating Marine spouses greatly benefit from the services of the pre-deployment phase as they receive spouse mentoring and assistance from the Key Volunteer Network (KVN) and the Lifestyle, Insights, Networking, Knowledge, and Skills (L.I.N.K.S.) programs. At the point of deployment, MCCS extends to support not only the deploying Marine, but also Marines and families who remain behind.

Deployment Phase—Those Who Deploy. To maintain our high level of morale and commitment and ease mission-related anxieties during deployment, MCCA and other agencies provide support to deployed Marines in many forms that can be adjusted to the level and intensity of the mission. We have Tactical Field Exchanges, phone service, free Internet service and expedited mail service. At the camps in Iraq, morale, welfare and recreation equipment and program support are available including gyms, phone centers, Internet cafes, swimming pools, recreation centers and a movie theater. Library paperback book kits are available through MCCA installations prior to deployments. MCCA also has off-the-shelf fitness and recreation kits that were shipped to Iraq to supplement in-theater assets already on site and to support remote locations. These kits include fitness, sports, and electronic equipment (such as televisions and computers with DVD players), and leisure items such as playing cards, games, books, and magazines. Finally, education opportunities are also available in-theater through distance learning sources.

As I have testified in past years, the Marine Corps Exchange entered into an agreement with the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) whereby AAFES supplies the products and the Marine Corps Exchange (MCX) supplies the labor force to operate and sell the products. I am pleased to report that our partnership with AAFES continues to successfully provide important exchange services to our deployed warriors. We are currently operating four direct operational exchanges-tactical (DOX-T), eight Tactical Field Exchanges (TFEs), and three Warrior Express Service Teams that serve about 13 different remote

sites. The DOX-Ts are located in hard buildings with a minimum of 3,000 square feet and offer a full assortment of the items sold in Iraq. The TFE's are situated in tents or 40-foot trailers that have been customized as retail stores. The Warrior Express Teams are mobile convoys of exchange, postal, disbursing, and legal services delivered to Marines in remote locations. This collection of Exchanges provides a wide variety of items – everything from health and comfort items, to CD's, DVD's, and snack foods. To ensure that Marines stay in touch with home telephonically, AAFES provides in-theater comprehensive telephone services for Marines deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

To deal with individual and readiness concerns in theater, the Marine Corps has a wide range of proactive counseling services. We carefully observe our Marines for signs, symptoms, and risks of untreated combat stress and provide ready and accessible resources for counseling or treatment as necessary. Before Marines depart theater, we have a scheduled decompression period for military chaplains to provide our Warrior Transition Brief, which consists of various sessions developed to help Marines positively transition back into their family life and communities. Once our Marines are back at home-station, there is another decompression period scheduled, prior to leave authorizations. Support services and counseling are also available to Marines and Marine spouses on installations through Chaplains, Medical Treatment facilities, and MCCS.

Deployment Phase--Those Who Remain Behind. MCCS programs, like MWR, exchanges and our family programs, are the heart and soul of “home-station support.” During major deployments, they provide a measure of normalcy and a sense of community. Fitness Centers, exchanges, libraries, and golf courses, for example, provide value-priced or free recreational outlets to increase socialization aboard the installation, and help alleviate the stress of waiting for their Marine to return home. Marine Corps Family Team Building (MCFTB) Programs like KVN, L.I.N.K.S., and the Child Development Program are family readiness enhancers that serve specific needs of the community. Additionally, I would like to emphasize that MCCS/Military One Source continues to be a powerful resource and referral tool for Marines and their families 24/7.

The KVN is not only an invaluable element of pre-deployment support, but also for every day command or unit family readiness efforts. It is also the primary communication link between the commanding officer and unit families. Commanders use the KVN to pass important, factual, and timely information on the status and welfare of the operational unit. This formal contact comforts family members and helps them relate to the mission and their Marine. KVN volunteers are trained, dedicated members of the Marine Corps community who have a vested interest in helping Marine families. They help the unit by creating and nurturing a sense of community by welcoming new families and familiarizing them with the base and local area. KVN volunteers additionally provide reliable information and referral on many issues facing Marine Corps spouses. We are indeed fortunate to have these dedicated program volunteers. Their hours of

service are essential to aiding our commanders as they pursue family readiness goals. We are also pleased that the number of certified KVN volunteers has increased dramatically over the past year. KVN training certification more than doubled in FY04.

A companion to the KVN and the training/education arm of the family readiness arsenal is L.I.N.K.S.—a program designed by spouses for spouses. L.I.N.K.S. helps our “new join” spouses to more quickly and effectively acclimate to the military lifestyle and learn from our experienced L.I.N.K.S. trainers how to: decipher Marine Corps culture; understand terms and traditions; and be self-sufficient and endure (even flourish) when facing the challenges of frequent deployments and long separations. When coursework is complete, L.I.N.K.S. trainers continue to act as mentors to the “trainees.” As with the KVN, we rely upon dedicated volunteers to conduct the L.I.N.K.S. training to ensure credible delivery and facilitate networking. As this training is very important to unit readiness, no-cost childcare is provided to participants to ensure maximum attendance. As with the KVN, we are happy to report that the L.I.N.K.S. participation rate has experienced a significant increase, with FY04 participation increasing by nearly 50 percent over FY03. This increase translates to more prepared spouses. When spouses are more comfortable, knowledgeable, and capable of seeking out solutions to their own problems, it greatly enhances the readiness of the deployed Marine and his or her unit.

Both KVN and L.I.N.K.S. training programs are available online and have CD-ROM versions for families away from a base or station, or for those whose schedules are not conducive to attending classes.

The quality of care and availability of child development programs is an important family readiness concern for the Marine Corps. Through various initiatives—many sponsored and funded by OSD—MCCS is providing respite care, extended child care hours, child care during deployment briefs, and deployment training materials geared for children. As an example, the Enhanced Extended Child Care (EECC) initiative provides needed child care for families in emergency situations or when their regular child care is not available. Care is available 24/7 as needed in designated Family Child Care homes at no cost to the parent. EECC is currently available at five Marine Corps installations. Other initiatives have been specifically focused on families who live in areas where military sponsored child care is not available. Partnerships or expanded partnerships have been established with the Boys and Girls Club of America, Early Head Start National Resource Center Zero to Three, and National Association for Child Care Resource and Referral and to provide subsidized care or assist families in locating or selecting quality care providers. Finally, to further assist parents, MCCS developed deployment oriented coloring books, literature for children, and a short children's puppet show video. The video and other training aids are designed to normalize children's emotional feelings about the deployment and return of their parent, by encouraging parents and children to talk about the deployment and return of the military parent.

Even though many of our Marines are deployed, we must still ensure that needed services are not diminished for those who remain behind. As previously related, our Installation Commanders act as town mayors, and more, to ensure the right services are available. Let me assure you, Installation Commanders adjust programs and services based only after careful assessment and deliberative command involvement. In this capacity, the Installation Commander assesses the needs of the community and ensures appropriate hours of operation, consistency, and availability of recreation and family services for all—whether deployed or at the home station.

Marine Corps Exchange Operations and MWR Programs

Since 1897, Marine Corps Exchanges have been providing for the retail needs of Marines and their families. The MCX is an integral and vital component of MCCS. The stability of this program is essential to our long-term functioning and capability. For the Marine Corps Exchange, 2005 will be a banner year as it will represent the culmination of several years of effort devoted to achieving customer centric and efficiency-oriented goals. The Marine Corps Exchange previously unveiled and implemented a new and bold logo that firmly links the Exchange to the pride of the Marine Corps. The excitement and energy continues through this year as we finally complete our planned and extensive overhaul of the internal functioning of our exchange and promises made good on our desire to offer our customers quality branded merchandise at an everyday fair value. Our energy, strategies, and actions are directed to ensuring that this

important non-pay benefit includes quality customer service and valued shopping experiences. A key element of the MCX strategic focus is to deliver excellence consistently throughout the Marine Corps. We have a basic, three-prong approach for reaching this goal. First is the efficiency and consistency attained in our centralized buying and system modernization initiative. Second is establishing store operating and facility standards, and third is pulling all this together and gaining full acceptance of with the “MCX Core Brands, Corps Value,” “1775” and “Another Corps Value” to solidify the Marine Corps Exchange Brand. The customer response and associate endorsement to our branding initiatives has been very positive.

Merchandising System and Buying Process. The cornerstone initiative of our “MCX Brand” transformation is our centralized buying initiative that has been made possible by the implementation of a modern merchandising system. We are now more efficiently and effectively getting the right product on our shelves, in proper sizes and quantities, and with the added bonus of freeing up our local retail management so that they may better focus their attention on the customer. The implementation of this initiative has been on time and on budget for the past two years and I am happy to report that we will complete this major endeavor in October. In this regard, we have developed a professionally competent and dedicated buying staff and accompanying IT and finance/accounting support staffs that are performing magnificently. We have already realized over \$3

million in annual efficiencies due to our modernization efforts. This number will grow as we complete the implementation this year.

Exchange Operating and Facility Standards. As previously indicated, we want to distinguish the “MCX Brand.” Upon entering an MCX, our customers should be able to discern a difference and hallmarks of excellence and consistent quality. With the help of world-class architects and facility programming experts we completed the necessary framework to establish a quality shopping experience both inside and outside our MCX facilities. Starting with the exterior, we’ve established signage standards, developed options for improving the curb appeal, and generally defined how to “celebrate the entry” while reinforcing the notion that the MCX is a focal point of installation community experience. Once inside, customers will notice improved lighting, expanded aisle widths and configurations, merchandise adjacencies that facilitate the convenience or comparative shopping needs of our customers. To ensure that our facilities reinforce and reflect the “MCX Brand” and that we get the “box” in line with industry standards, we have developed a “Retail Master Plan.” Supported by Project Validation Assessments, the plan ensures that this important military benefit is not only sustained for the near term but in tune with the long-term investment strategies of the MCCS. We currently have new construction or major renovation projects programmed or in progress at eight of our main exchange stores and eight convenience stores.

MCX Core Brands, Corps Value. There is still such a thing as “honest value” at the MCX where Marines and their families can find the **Core Brands**--names they know and trust—at a **Corps Value**—a fair and honest price. We identify specified merchandise in the MCX under “Another Corps Value” signage that promises our customer that the items are being brought to them as the lowest possible price—guaranteed. All items within the “Another Corps Value” program are additionally supported with a 14-day Price Match Guarantee, meaning that we will match any competitor’s current price during the 14-day period. We facilitate our customers’ needs for competitive shopping by posting the prices of other retailers on “Core Brands, Corps Value” signs throughout the store. Finally, we also offer a wide-ranging private label that includes the “1775 Program” (previously named “4 Star Savings”) and “Exchange Select.” We’ve worked hard to ensure the “1775” private label clothing line meets our customers discerning quality and value standards. Our target consumers for “1775” are young Marine Corps families and retirees who are most likely to be financially restricted--but still desire and expect high quality merchandise from their MCX. To further illustrate the value of our “1775” line, with little more than \$60, a new parent can buy infant sleepers and other miscellaneous items sufficient to provide a supply of clothing guaranteed to last in terms of quality and thus facilitate pass down to the next child or relative. This is honest value!

National Research. Our branding strategies were formulated based upon customers’ feedback. Beyond the data realized through our merchandising and

accounting systems, the Marine Corps Exchange periodically conducts national research studies to ascertain crucial customer, associate, and pricing information. In April each year (except 2003 due to extensive deployments) the Marine Corps Exchange administers the CSI (Customer Satisfaction Index) and ASI (Associate Satisfaction Index) Surveys simultaneously across the Marine Corps. More than 4,600 CSI surveys are collected from customers and nearly 1,500 exchange associates respond to the ASI Survey. We are very pleased with the results of our CSI/ASI scores for FY04. Across the MCX, customer satisfaction scores increased 1.4 percent over the last score measured in 2002, resulting in a CSI score of 70 and a more than favorable comparison to industry averages. The associate satisfaction scores increased 3.2 percent over the 2002 measurement, resulting in a score of 65 that also tracks positively with industry averages. The CSI/ASI is a great vehicle for listening to and learning about our customers and associates. We not only use this valuable information to help develop our strategic plans, but also to develop weighted action plans to assist our installation retail heads in targeting improvements.

To assure we are offering the price and value we promise, a Price Comparison Survey was conducted in June 2004 in conjunction with the AAFES and NEXCOM to determine the cost savings realized by customers shopping military Exchanges. Eight MCX locations were selected to participate in the price survey of 350 items (i.e., audio, clothing, shoes, cosmetics, greeting cards, hardware, appliances, sunglasses, and toys). In the 33 departments surveyed, MCX savings ranged from two percent to 60 percent depending on the type of

merchandise. Looking across all 33 departments, we identified an average cost savings of 17.6 percent.

Unified Exchange Task Force (UETF). For well over a year, the Marine Corps and our Sister Services have participated in the ongoing UETF study of military Exchanges that has additionally been supported by multiple consultant vendors. As this process continues, due diligence and comprehensive analysis are essential--if a valid business case is to be developed. Unfortunately, the level of effort to date has yet to produce actionable or validated findings worthy of critical evaluation or decision-making. The exchange savings benefit and its dividend contribution to MWR are very important to the Marine Corps. As the subject matter expert on Marine Corps Exchange and MWR operations, we will continue to participate and assist in the UETF. For the sake of our Marines and their families, we must also ensure the business case analysis includes cost and risk of implementation. We cannot allow existing Marine Corps Exchange and MWR benefits to be jeopardized or diminished.

Resale and MWR FY04 Nonappropriated Fund Financial Results. As previously mentioned, the Marine Corps is a premier expeditionary force and accustomed to the impact of contingency operations. As such, we are becoming increasingly focused on ensuring the long-term viability of our programs in view of increased rotation schedules, heightened tempo, and the likelihood of a long-term Global War on Terrorism mission and increased force protection

requirements. We are fortunate to have extensive experience with expeditionary planning and program execution/lesson learned analysis. In the coming months, we will be working in conjunction with our Installation Commanders to assess MCCS requirements from a 2005 and beyond perspective. We will evaluate wear and tear on deploying equipment; fixed costs associated with maintaining the MCCS physical plant and providing home-station support; force protection costs and impacts; need and availability of resources; and how to efficiently and effectively reconstitute or recapitalize our infrastructure. We will approach this challenge with our typical can-do attitude and creative spirit

In the context of extensive deployments, we were pleased to attain an overall FY04 sales increase of 5.08%. Our merchandise sales were flat—but very commendable considering the sales impact of heavy troop deployments. Evidence of the degree of impact can be seen from the approximately \$80 million in sales realized by AAFES for Marine-operated forward exchanges in Iraq. Although we were able to maintain relatively flat merchandise sales, we did experience a reduction in profits because of normal increases in operating costs. These costs were also negatively impacted by the deployments, as the cyclic nature of the troop rotations required the exchanges to maintain nearly 100% level of services throughout the year. Over this next year we will begin to fully recognize the efficiency benefits of our buying and modernization initiatives, which we expect will enable us to retain a stable MWR dividend—even in these extraordinary times.

While our NAF financials were challenged in FY04 due to global commitments, our appropriated fund financials continued on an upward path so we could achieve OSD MWR standards. The Marine Corps committed in our FY02 Program Objective Memorandum to provide, by FY04, the necessary funding to meet DoD's 85/65 percent minimum funding metric for Category A and Category B MWR activities. From FY02 through FY04, we programmed an additional \$15 million to meet the metric requirements. Our efforts and steady progress culminated in an 88/65-percentage ratio in FY04. Barring any emergent contingencies, MWR funding for mission sustaining and community support programs will remain stable through FY06.

Over the remainder of this statement, we will address some of the significant activities ongoing in our MWR Program.

Fitness. Beginning with our 1993 Marine Corps Quality of Life Study and validated with two subsequent surveys, we know that Marines and their families are fitness enthusiasts and investments into our fitness and health programs directly contributes to the readiness of the Marine Corps. Since the mid-90's, we have invested significantly in our fitness centers, exercise equipment, fitness professionals, and to achieving DoD fitness standards. As a whole, the Marine Corps' 55 fitness facilities are 96 percent compliant with DoD standards. The standards are divided into four main categories: facilities, programs, equipment, and staff. Marine Corps compliance with the DoD standards, by category, is as

follows: facilities are 95 percent; programs are 94 percent; equipment is 100 percent; and staffing is 98 percent.

Due in large measure to the success and value of our MCX CSI/ASI survey and action planning, we elected to expand our CSI/ASI administration and planning in FY04 to include fitness centers, child care centers, and clubs with great success. In FY05 we will further expand the CSI/ASI efforts to survey Temporary Lodging Facilities, Libraries, and Golf Courses. It is our hope to continue expansion to other programs in FY06 and beyond. For Fitness specifically, our customers rated their fitness experiences very positively with an overall satisfaction score of 83. Some of our main findings indicated that our customers are very satisfied with their experiences at our fitness centers and have an extremely high loyalty rating. As for our fitness center associates, they too indicate a strong satisfaction rating of 72.

Recreation. M CCS has adopted a standardized approach to data collection for our recreational activities through the use of RecTrac, an integrated recreation system that supports effective and efficient processing of financial and programming information. Automating the management of recreation activities enables M CCS to: provide a database of demographics for marketing purposes; provide standardized usage data collection and reporting; improve service consistency; provide internal controls for inventory; track sales history for retail operations; and adapt business practices that comply with DoD guidance and directives requiring business processes and data collection integrity.

Additionally, the data provided from this system will help MCCS in justifying future appropriated and nonappropriated funding support, and track directly with the quality of life studies/results and performance measures.

Food and Hospitality Programs. Our Food and Hospitality Programs are responsible for full-service military clubs, snack bars, fast food outlets, restaurants, cafeterias, catering, other food services, and temporary lodging facilities. Our clubs are inherent to the culture of the Marine Corps and provide valuable socialization and mentoring opportunities for Marines and their families. To enhance the financial and operating aspects of our Clubs, we have completed implementation of an integrated membership program. Under this best business practice, we have standardized the membership program across the Marine Corps and provided for reciprocal benefits and a common dues structure. The new MCCS Club Membership Program provides a membership card that can be used at all Marine Corps clubs and replaces the existing club cards in use at individual installations. Under this new system, we have decreased operating expenses and enhanced club membership benefits. In addition, we are conducting membership campaigns to increase awareness of club benefits and increase membership. Lastly, with regard to clubs, I am pleased to report their CSI/ASI scores were a healthy 78 and 68, respectively.

Our temporary lodging facilities offer quality accommodations at a value price to Marines and their families and other authorized guests. We currently have 14 temporary lodging facilities with 877 rooms. Participants in the recently

completed program evaluation (using functionality assessment methodologies) of lodging facilities recommended several changes to provide consistency and ensure that guests know what to expect as to the level of value at our lodging facilities. Consequently, we have established “The Inns of the Corps” as a standardized name with a recognizable identity and are working on the creation of an exciting logo to connect with our customers. We are also developing facility, customer service, human resources, and quality assurance standards for implementation at temporary lodging facilities, Marine Corps-wide.

ITT and Leisure Activities. In our ITT and leisure travel areas, we continue to collaborate with our sister Services to develop discounted leisure time and vacation opportunities for Service members and their families. We are working with time-share properties to provide vacation condominiums from excess inventory; RV rentals; tickets to theme parks; and vacation cruises. Working with the other Services enables us to leverage our buying power and deliver exciting opportunities at the best prices. Jointly, we work closely with the vendors to form partnerships to benefit America’s fighting men and women and the families who stand by them.

Child Development. I have previously spoken of some of the important child development programs and initiatives designed to specifically support families of our deployed Marines. During the midst of deployment activities, we have also been hard at work on the development of a Multidisciplinary Inspection Tool

(MDT) to satisfy requests from installations to have a standardized self-assessment tool for Children, Youth and Teen Programs (CYT). A working group composed of installation CYT personnel and subject matter experts in the areas of fire, safety and health worked with Headquarters personnel to develop the MDT. Utilization of the MDT will help us assess the quality of the CYT throughout the Marine Corps and prepare programs for higher Headquarters inspections and the accreditation process.

As for the Child Development Center (CDC) CSI/ASI results, the CSI resulted in a very satisfied score of 82. Findings of the survey indicated that customers show a high re-enrollment rate, highly regard staff quality and quality of care of their children at the majority of CDCs, and also view the convenience of location, and the safety of being on base as key reasons why they use the program. Our CDC associates also showed a promising rating of 69.

In 2004, Headquarters Marine Corps sponsored two Regional Marine Corps Teen Summits. The West Coast Regional Teen Summit was hosted by MCB Camp Pendleton in late September, and the East Coast Regional Teen Summit was hosted by MCB Camp Lejeune in mid October. The summits gave teens the opportunity to articulate their concerns, issues, and needs from their respective installations and identify the positive aspects of current programs. Over 80 teens from across the Corps participated by attending various sessions that included discussions on ways in which Marine Corps leadership can better support them. The issues and concerns that surfaced were: programs, equipment, facilities, fundraising, transportation, and activities. They

acknowledged that not all of our CYT programs and installations are lacking in these areas, but felt they should concern the Marine Corps as they are all impacted as they PCS from one installation to another. The teens also expressed the need for standardization of programs across the Marine Corps with a Keystone Club (Teen Council) as the foundation to improve many of the issues they identified. The positive aspects identified were the staff in teen centers, finding ways to conduct programs and activities with limited resources, and that the Teen Center is a place they can go to be with friends and hang out.

Libraries. In addition to distribution of paperback book kits that I mentioned earlier, I am pleased to briefly comment on another important aspect of our library system. In February, the Commandant issued an ALMAR to increase the depth of our professional education by reinvigorating the professional reading program. In the ALMAR, the Commandant issued a new Marine Corps professional reading list consisting of 47 new titles, plus 65 titles from the former reading list. The Lifelong Learning Library Program will purchase the new titles for Naval Ships' libraries, Marine Corps General Libraries, and requested overseas deployment locations.

CONCLUSION

Over time, there have been various opinions offered suggesting MWR and Exchanges are too hard to quantify in terms of value or return on investment. The military lifestyle is challenging and the challenges intensify with increased

operational tempo. We would offer that value could be assessed and even determined to be priceless. MWR and Exchanges help to restore the strengths, spirits, and vitality of our Marines and the families of Marines. On behalf of the Marine Corps, thank you for your considerable support and the significance you place on these important, military service benefits.