

THE COMMANDANT SPEAKS TO CONGRESS

This is the
statement of
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General, United States Marine
Corps
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Washington, D. C.
before
The Armed Services Committee
of the
House of Representatives
investigating the B-36
and related matters

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Clifton B. Cates, I am a General, United States Marine Corps and the Commandant of the Corps.

At the outset let me state that I heartily endorse the case for the Naval service so ably presented here last week by Admiral Denfeld and the Naval and Marine officers who preceded him.

Having listened with particular interest to Admiral Denfeld's magnificent summation of last Thursday I feel it appropriate to enlarge upon those matters in his statement which refer specifically to the situation now confronting the Marine Corps.

MORALE

The combat morale of the Marine Corps has not been affected adversely by events associated with the adoption of the National Security Act of 1947.

We have accepted that Act as the law of our land and have set ourselves to the task of satisfying the full measure of its requirements. In general we have found it a sound law embodying the es-



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Admiral Louis Denfeld and General Clifton B. Cates pose informally on Capitol Hill, scene of Cates' dramatic statement before the House Armed Services Committee

sential lessons of the war just past and providing in advance, for the probable requirements of any future conflict.

There has been no question as to the combat morale of Marines, now or in the past. I am pleased to assure you that the Marine Corps of today has the same essential character and the same great faith in itself and in this country that it displayed at Iwo Jima and other battles of World War II.

However, there does exist, within our Corps a continuous feeling of apprehension and annoyance sometimes bordering on outright indignation. We know that we exist solely as an element of the national defense. That is our business. We understand it, and we know that there is much to be done. Yet during the past two years, the time, energy and attention of our leadership has been steadily consumed by the effort necessary to resist

the inroads and incursions of those who appear unwilling to accept the verdict of Congress. A constantly increasing effort is required to withstand those who would circumvent the plain provisions of the law or extend its terms toward ends repeatedly denied by Congress.

It follows that, at a time when the great requirement within the Services is for a continuous integrated effort, uncertainty and instability are the rule. As long as this persists and the Services are kept off balance and in a constant state of flux there can be no effective organization of this nation's military potential in the manner envisaged by the National Security Act.

In the Marine Corps there is widespread apprehension that the functions assigned our Corps by law are being usurped by others. There is likewise doubt concerning the future employment

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of Marines and a feeling among officers and non-commissioned officers alike that the value of the Marine Corps as the nation's emergency force in readiness is being overlooked to the detriment of our national security. These factors, until resolved will reflect unfavorably upon the contentment of all ranks but I wish to stress that this in no way impairs our combat morale, our efficiency or our will to fight.

Our standards of discipline and conduct are well known and well established. They were upheld throughout the difficult period of demobilization. They are too firmly founded in pride of service and love of country to be affected by a transient discouragement.

REQUIREMENT FOR A FLEET MARINE FORCE

Except in Washington, there is little controversy among the services themselves. It is only here, in the Nation's capital, that we find elements within the defense establishment still engaging in the type of activity which Congress sought to end by passage of the National Security Act.

The Congress was acting in the discharge of one of its greatest responsibilities when it enacted that law and re-established the defense structure for the post war period. The Congress acted in accordance with its best judgment, and with the full advice of the nation's civilian and military leadership.

Unfortunately, the judgment of the Congress has not been accepted by all. I believe there are those in the defense establishment who advocate quite a different system of national defense from that contemplated by the Congress. This group has used the very authority granted it under the National Security Act to evade portions of this same law of which it does not approve. In so doing it would render ineffective and meaningless the intent and purpose of the Congress. In so doing, it is striking a telling blow at our national military strength.

As Admiral Denfeld has already pointed out, the status accorded the Marine Corps, is one portion of the National Security Act which has never been accepted in all quarters. I do not question for a moment the motives or patriotism of those who deny the necessity for our continued existence. However, I do believe that they are blinding themselves to the full meaning of sea power in global warfare in their refusal to admit the necessity for land action incident to a naval campaign and to concede the position of the Fleet Marine Force as a vital part of our balanced fleet.

Historians tell us that had the British Fleet at Copenhagen in 1801 possessed an organic landing force the Napoleonic wars would have run a shorter course. In 1909 Admiral Dewey informed the Naval Affairs Committee of this House of Representatives that had he possessed a force of Marines to occupy Manila the costly and bloody Philippine Insurrection would never have occurred.

In the last war all of us recall the bitter failure of the British Navy to hold the Norwegian coast for the Allies. It was a failure stemming principally from the lack of an organic landing force within the British fleet. This lack could not be made up by the improvised, ill-trained and ill-equipped force of British infantry belatedly provided by the British War Office.

I think that these examples indicate that without a well trained landing force the fleet is not a balanced implement of warfare. In addition the forces which we maintain are possessed of great utility in augmenting the national defense—if they are permitted to do so; if they are not reduced to impotency; if they are not narrowly confined to the sea by a literal interpretation of their function. As an example of what I mean let me invite your attention to the experience of the Marine Corps since the enactment of the National Security Act.

THE MARINE CORPS UNDER THE NATIONAL SECURITY ACT

The Marine Corps emerged from the last war feeling that it had performed creditably. With the Navy it had pioneered and developed the field of amphibious warfare for the use of the entire Allied world. This new technique proved to be the key to victory on every major front in the war. It also made important contributions to the development of practical and effective methods of close air support. In addition, our own field forces played a decisive role in the reduction of the island fortresses held by the Japanese.

Thus, it came as a great surprise to find ourselves at the war's end placed almost in the capacity of a culprit or a defendant.

Three stated demands relative to the Marine Corps were made by the War Department General Staff:

First: That Marine Corps units be limited in size to the regiment and the Corps itself reduced to 50,000 to 60,000 men.

Second: That it be recognized that amphibious warfare is an Army function.

Third: That the Marine Corps not be appreciably expanded in time of war.

These proposals did not find favor with the Congress. In the National Security Act of 1947 careful provision was made to safeguard the Marine Corps, give recognition to its amphibious functions and provide for its integrated mobilization in time of war. In this way the Congress sought to nullify as specifically as words would permit each one of the General Staff's three objectives.

Yet despite the consideration extended to us by Congress I have to inform you that the Army General Staff group today stands within measurable distance of achieving each one of its three ends against the Marine Corps despite the provisions of the law.

As the new institutions authorized by Congress for the coordination of the national defense began to function, it became apparent that a statutory safeguard, such as the Congress had given us, is not a refuge at all but a battle position which must be defended in full force.

A defense is not easy when you lack voice, vote and information.

On the Joint Chiefs of Staff level, the Marine Corps is not accorded membership; moreover, it is not directly represented at the level of the operational deputies commonly termed the "little" Joint Chiefs. The making of strategic plans is carried on essentially by a system of three-member committees from which Marines again are excluded. In the numerous powerful committees set up under the Secretary of Defense to administer the new law there is likewise little or no representation for the Marine Corps.

For example, fundamental questions relating to our weapons and equipment are being passed on by an evaluation group comprising five Army, five Navy and five Air Force officers. We likewise hold no important posts or assignments under the new Department of Defense and have no general officers serving on that level in any capacity.

As to budgetary matters we have only the recourse of a formal and futile reclama.

We thus lack adequate representation in matters of vital concern both to the Corps itself and to the national Defense. Under the present system for example, matters affecting the conduct and methods of amphibious warfare may be decided out of hand by officers having no appreciable background or experience while the thoroughly grounded representatives of the Corps which fostered and developed the art are barred from expressing an opinion.

In the aggregate these are crippling handicaps. In my attempts to overcome them I have even been informed in effect that the Marine Corps is not entitled to separate recognition even in matters of vital and particular concern because it is not a Service.

The Marine Corps is a Service. Congress made it a Service in 1798, and has consistently recognized it as such. The National Security Act of 1947 definitely reaffirms this view of the Congress. To compare the Marine Corps with a Bureau of the Navy or a Corps of the Army is simply not in accordance with the law.

The Marine Corps, because of its size, does not expect the detailed inclusion and consideration extended to the larger Services. But there are times when it must be represented directly on matters vital to its function. This opportunity is being denied us.

I go into this only to show why it is that from our submerged position at the bottom of this vast administrative structure it is difficult to maintain the status accorded us by Congress.

It would not be difficult to present a bill of particulars of imposing length. I am far more interested in showing you where, through injury to the Marine Corps, substantial harm has been done to the national defense itself.

BUDGETARY REDUCTIONS IN COMBAT STRENGTH

I refer specifically to what has been happening to our Fleet Marine Forces. These are the organized combat units of the Marine Corps, including both

ground and air, which have long served as this country's emergency force in readiness. They and their forerunners are the only forces this country has ever maintained over the years in a literal state of momentary readiness for embarkation. In the past, they have been called upon time and again to intervene in situations where speed and mobility were paramount. Iceland in 1941 and Guadalcanal in 1942 are typical modern examples of the vital emergency role played by such Marine Corps forces. In view of the enormously increased scope of this nation's international responsibilities, I am convinced that there is even greater likelihood of a recurrence of need for such emergency forces, poised and ready to proceed in company with the fleet to the scene of crisis. That is the essential peacetime mission of our Fleet Marine Forces.

Each Fleet Marine Force—and there is one on each coast—is a closely integrated force now consisting of a Marine Division and a Marine Air Wing both at reduced strength. They are air-ground teams, developed during the war when we perfected the method of coordinating the striking power of air and ground forces intimately in a new form of attack. Incidentally, we think this new type organization points the way to one of the revolutionary developments in the history of warfare; that it will provide in effective measure that all-essential "aid from the sky," without which the man on the ground will be unable to move forward on the battlefield of tomorrow.

To reduce the peacetime Fleet Marine Force to elements smaller than our standard combination of divisions and wings would lower its effectiveness and striking power out of all proportion to any compensating economy of money or manpower. Yet this is precisely what is occurring through what appears to me to be a budgetary device designed to accomplish the first and most important of the Army General Staff's three objectives.

That is, that it be reduced in size to 50,000 or 60,000 men and limited to units no larger than a regiment.

When the National Security Act was passed, the Marine Corps' authorized strength was 100,000 men. In the ensuing years, our actual strength has been reduced progressively from 85,000 in fiscal year 1947 to 67,000 at the end of fiscal year 1950. This represents a net cut of one-third and we absorbed these earlier cuts by stringent interior economy. We were already assigning a remarkably high percentage of our strength as actual combat troops, and I was reluctant to cut into this bone and muscle of the Marine Corps. I insisted instead that the cuts be absorbed as far as possible by the overhead and service side of the Corps. By great effort, we continued to provide the size field force which I regarded as the bare minimum for our mission.

Hereafter, however, no such course of action will be permitted. It is not merely to be a question of cuts in men and money—although they are severe enough. We are being told in detail—and told by the Department of Defense—*where and how* those cuts are to be made—by strik-

ing into the heart of our combat forces. By specifically reducing—over my strongest objections—the number of battalions in the Fleet Marine Forces to the point where our two Marine divisions will no longer be the effective forces of the combined arms which the Congress enjoined us to maintain. By specifically and drastically reducing the number of our close support air squadrons to a figure far below what I would for a moment regard as the barest minimum requisite for our mission.

This is a severe and telling blow; a blow which can destroy a valuable and highly professional fighting force. I cannot agree that a cut so pointedly directed at reducing the combat strength of this highly effective organization is an economy. I ask the members of this committee to take note that when this is accomplished the Army General Staff's first specific objective with regard to the Marine Corps will have been accomplished to the letter and despite the express provision of the law.

I know of no similar proportionate reductions in combat units which have been proposed in the case of either the Army or the Air Force. It is therefore difficult to visualize the strategic considerations which require such a drastic reduction in the number of Marine Corps combat organizations alone. It is to be noted, however, that the same sources that compute the strategic requirements likewise compute the size and character of the forces required to fulfill them. This device is difficult to combat, particularly since war planning is necessarily a matter of the greatest secrecy and one in which the Commandant of the Marine Corps is not generally invited to participate.

I likewise entertain well warranted fears that it is planned to employ such forces as will remain to us not on their intended mission but scattered in minor units around the world assigned to duties which ignore their special training and unique offensive capabilities.

The possibilities for manipulation to the detriment of the Marine Corps by those holding the controls are obvious. In this connection I cannot refrain from the observation that any strategic thinking which so studiously eliminates the nation's only emergency force in readiness is, at the least, grossly unrealistic. We are confronted with the possibility of a war in which our opponent would hold the initiative. We must prepare to meet his moves with promptness and with whatever force we can muster. Circumstances alone will restrict us to a series of "damage control" operations against the time when we can grapple with him somewhere on the outer fringes.

Under such circumstances there is nothing clearer than this: Our plans must be flexible; our forces must be ready, mobile and assembled. Never have circumstances placed a greater premium on these very qualities which are so characteristic of our Fleet Marine Forces and our balanced Fleet.

Let us not forget that in World War II, troops from the Fleet Marine Force occupied Iceland because no others were

prepared to move and later defeated the Japanese at Guadalcanal at a time when Army divisions, although present in the Pacific, were not ready to undertake an offensive mission. The Fleet Marine Forces as elements of the balanced fleet were ready for these emergencies.

Although I am sure that the Congress expects the Marine Corps to continue its amphibious mission, I am equally certain that elsewhere there is a contrary intention. It will be recalled that the second War Department General Staff objective relative to the Marine Corps was that it be recognized that future amphibious operations be undertaken by the Army.

The Congress, in 1947, took quite a different view. They recognized the naval character of amphibious warfare and to resolve the doubt, if one existed, provided specifically for the amphibious status of Marines.

This became the law of our land but it has not been accepted. At Key West where the National Security Act was implemented there was an unremitting effort to deprive the Marine Corps of the status which the Congress had given it. This was successfully resisted at the time but the underlying effort to contravene the act of Congress has never subsided. Even today, as Admiral Denfeld pointed out last Thursday, fresh proposals to transfer and reassign our functions have been made. The proposals are not suggestions that the matter of which the Army General Staff disapproves be placed before the Congress for reconsideration. Far from it, they represent proposals that the Army, Navy and Air Force themselves enter into an agreement now, to revise functions assigned by the Congress.

One proposal would limit Marines to participation only in combat operations at sea or in what the authors refer to as a "sea" campaign. From past experience and from other indications, I can only assume that the proposal is intended to be interpreted in its literal sense. It would reduce the function assigned us by Congress to a meaningless absurdity.

This is verified by two additional matters of particular interest. The first is that the Army is maintaining specialist amphibious organizations not required in the conduct of land warfare and has directed the organization of additional units. I have no objection to make if the Army wishes to maintain forces similar to our Fleet Marine Forces. I do wish to point out, however, that if any element of duplication is involved it cannot be attributed to the Marine Corps, and cannot be advanced in the future as a reason for eliminating our Fleet Marine Forces.

I think it also pertinent to inform you that for the current fiscal year at least, there will be no opportunity for our Fleet Marine Forces to participate in Major Fleet Exercises. Substantially the entire allocation of amphibious training facilities available for training afloat has been preempted for the use of the Army to the exclusion of the Marine Corps. Our state of training and experience render this of little

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practical consequence for the time being but there is no assurance that this will not become a permanent process. It is another application of the now familiar exclusion device which is being used to our detriment and to the detriment of the national defense as well.

I am continuing my insistence that the Marine Corps be afforded reasonable priority of training opportunity in the field of its own specialty—the amphibious field assigned to us by the Congress.

In addition to the provision of Fleet Marine Forces, the Congress had made the Marine Corps responsible, in coordination with the Army and the Air Force, for the development of tactics, technique, and equipment employed by the landing forces. This provision of the National Security Act reaffirmed a function we had been conducting actively and exclusively for many years before the last war.

In accordance with the provisions of this Act, we invited both the Army and Air Force to participate with us in this development but neither Service accepted. We have therefore been continuing the work as in the past making the results of our efforts available to all who want them. In the field of equipment, for example, we often test new materiel developed by the other services to determine whether it meets the somewhat exacting requirements of landing operations. The Army General Staff proposals would transfer this Congressionally recognized function to another agency.

I submit here, that the Marine Corps can exercise this and its related functions more satisfactorily than any other agency and at less cost. Nevertheless, our next budget is now being subjected to certain arbitrary cuts which will prevent our carrying on necessary tests pursuant to a responsibility assigned us by the Congress.

The third objective relative to the Marine Corps specified by the Army General Staff is summed up in the words "Marine Forces will not be appreciably expanded in time of war."

This is a strange proposal indeed. It says in effect that the regular and reserve Marine Corps, as a reservoir of professionally skilled men, cannot be employed to impart their knowledge and training to others in time of war. In the light of the foreseeable need for the best utilization of every asset of skill and manpower available this proposal suggests an appalling waste of a great national asset.

It must have so appeared to the Congress for they specifically provided that the Marine Corps shall be expanded in time of war in accordance with integrated plans for mobilization.

I have well founded fears as to the manner in which this provision of law is being implemented. I am of the opinion that even our primary mobilization asset which lies in the organized and trained

battalions and squadrons of the Marine Corps Reserve is to be disregarded and our mobilization potential thus ignored. It would be a strange mobilization that requires us to disband existing combat organizations.

I could proceed but I believe that I have made a showing that the three General Staff objectives relative to the Marine Corps have never been relaxed and are being actively exploited today.

In the field of close air support we are likewise beginning to feel the effects of this same pressure. It is contended that we have too high a proportion of air power to ground power in our Fleet Marine Forces. We have been criticized in testimony before the Senate Appropriations Committee in this regard. I can only say that in the Marine Corps, we are thinking in terms of the next war—not the last. We know the value and meaning of close air support as practiced by Navy and Marine Corps aviation. Its effectiveness can be reckoned in a saving of human life and a vast increase in the striking power of our arms. Again we are pioneering in a field of purely prospective research that may lead to developments as significant as our efforts of twenty years ago in the unexplored field of amphibious warfare.

SUMMARY

Let me summarize the Marines' case as follows: We do not believe there has been a complete acceptance in all quarters of that part of the National Security Act relating to the Marine Corps. On the contrary, it appears to us that the power of budget, the power of coordination, and the power of strategic direction of the armed forces have been used as devices to destroy the operating forces of the Marine Corps.

This cannot have been inspired by economy because the cuts were pointed directly at the *combat power* of the Marine Corps.

This has not been in the interest of strategic direction because the manifest combat power of the Marine Corps is being destroyed and dissipated and its mobilization potential ignored.

This has not been in accordance with law because these are things specifically forbidden by the law.

This has not been in accordance with the national interest because in the light of today's realities the United States cannot afford to destroy an irreplaceable source of military strength.

These matters point to a fundamental disagreement. They suggest the sobering thought, that if this course of circumvention of the law is permitted its eventual result will be the effective denial of Congressional authority over the National Defense. It is a question that the Congress sooner or later will have to decide.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The solution does not lie in more laws but rather in a simple show of loyalty and good will in complying with the spirit of the law we have today. It is simply the need for the type of team work that the American people expect their leaders in uniform to dis-

play. The committee can render its greatest service to America by continuing to do just what it has been doing in this inquiry, by continuing its participation in the active direction of this nation's military policy and by refusing to permit the transfer of these great responsibilities elsewhere.

With respect to the Marine Corps, I feel that its combat forces should be maintained at the strength intended when the unification law was passed. Specifically, that there should be provided as our peace time force in readiness two Marine Divisions including six infantry battalions each, two aircraft wings including twelve tactical squadrons each, together with the necessary service elements. They should be maintained at strength with full complement of weapons and equipment and with full allowance of supplies required for mounting out to combat. The organization which I recommend for our peace time Fleet Marine Forces lends itself to rapid expansion in the event of mobilization. In my opinion this would represent the finest single investment in security that our country can make.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let me state again that the Marine Corps warmly supports unification of the type now prescribed by the National Security Act but it opposes the persistent attempts to circumvent the law by depriving the Corps of the functions and status intended by the Congress.

In this connection, we ask only that our future as a Service be determined by the Congress itself. We will abide loyally by any verdict of the national legislature. Beyond this the Marine Corps asks nothing for itself. It has no ambition beyond the performance of its duty to its country. Its sole honor stems from that recognition which cannot be denied to a Corps of men who have sought for themselves little more than a life of hardship and the most hazardous assignments in battle. In the past the Marine Corps has given you an exact performance of every obligation assigned it. Its only desire now is to be protected in its right to fight again in the wars of the United States.

END



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