

A Letter From The CMC



Five years have passed since the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade landed in Danang and initiated the longest, and, in many ways, the toughest war in Marine Corps history. While diminishing in intensity, the end of this war is not yet in sight and many more months of dedicated priority effort will be required of our Corps there. More than 690,000 Americans have so far worn the Marine Corps uniform during this war and many more will; only 600,000 wore our uniform in World War II. Our record in Vietnam is one in which Marines of every age can be justly proud. It is a record made even more remarkable by the fact that a sizable number of Americans have not supported the war nor the men who fight it.

Now that our forces in Vietnam are diminishing under the President's program of Vietnamization, it is time to take stock and reflect on why we have done as well as we have under the most difficult circumstances we have ever experienced.

In my view, a principal ingredient to our success was the professionalism of the Marines who were on the rolls when the war started. That professionalism was made up of many things, but it was grounded in the belief that high standards in performance and discipline are vital to battlefield success—high standards not just in military proficiency and physical fitness, but in military appearance, in military courtesy, and in the cleanliness and squared-away appearance of the area where we live, work, and train, all a reflection of individual and group discipline. The true professional is aware that these standards are not ends

in themselves, that in fact, they are the means by which we breed pride, and that pride, in turn, builds the kind of discipline that is essential to victory in combat with minimum casualties.

Because of the professionalism we had in 1965, Marines were ready—ready not only to deploy and move into combat, but ready to take on greatly increased individual responsibilities. Most privates became noncommissioned officers; many noncommissioned officers became officers; and many officers were rapidly promoted to higher grades. Under the leadership of those pre-Vietnam Marines, hundreds of thousands of young Americans entered the Corps and performed magnificently.

Austere Years Ahead

Now that the size of the Marine Corps is returning toward pre-Vietnam levels, it is our individual responsibility once again to insure that the professionalism of a smaller Corps can, if called upon, sustain us in whatever emergency the future may hold. In the austere years ahead, we, more than ever, need that fully combat-ready Marine force—high quality, high-spirited, professional, tough, lean, and highly disciplined.

It is our objective to achieve these goals during 1970, the critical year of transition, through the unrelenting personal efforts of all our officers and NCO's. We must reach this objective in addition to fighting our remaining units in Vietnam. Our principal actions, designed to tighten up and square away for the future peacetime Corps will be:

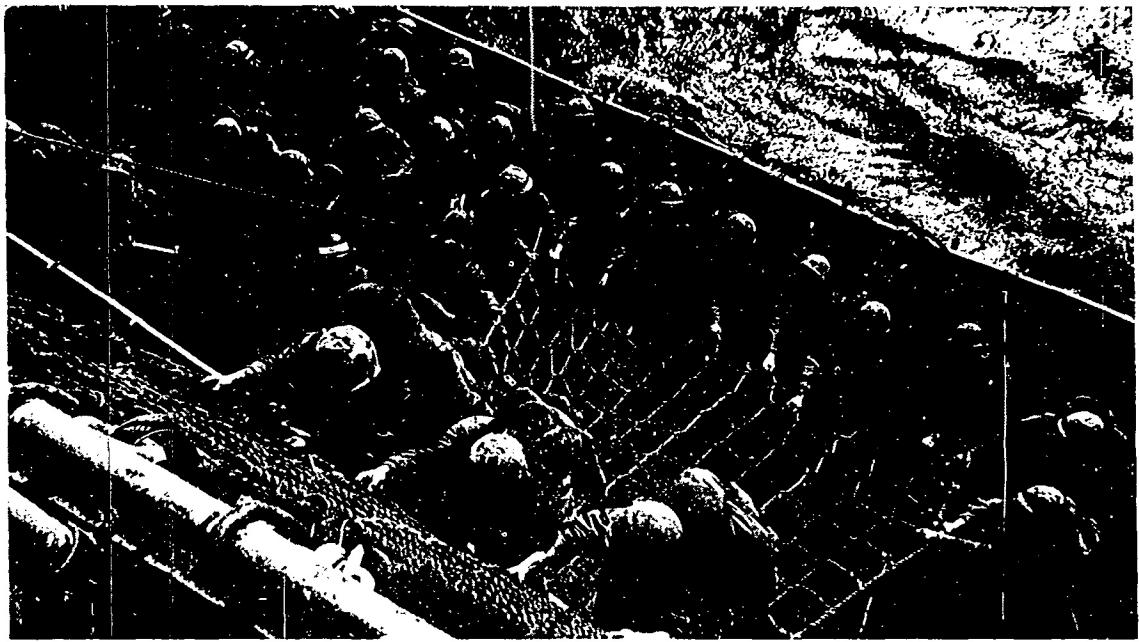


Photo by 2ndLt G. M. Smith

- To enlist or commission in the Marine Corps only those who meet the highest standards.
- To retain, to the fullest extent possible, only those who, by their performance, have demonstrated capability and dedication to the superior standards expected of them, and to separate from the Corps those who have not.
- To pursue only those essential functions contributing directly to making the Corps a superbly effective, ready, *fighting* outfit.
- To insure that the training given to each member of the Corps is designed not only for his professional development, but, more important, for the overall effectiveness of the Corps.
- To assign to officers and NCO's challenging, demanding duties of ever-increasing responsibilities to further their development and increase their potential for leadership in any future crisis.
- To evaluate objectively and professionally the performance of officer and enlisted personnel to insure that high standards are being met; to deal promptly and decisively with any deviations from these high standards.
- To insure that each new Marine understands that with his uniform goes an *esprit de corps* based on pride in his Country, his Corps, his unit, and himself.
- To bend every effort toward the improvement of living conditions of our Marines and their families, and to emphasize the importance of our responsibility to our Marine families wherever they may be.

Our success will be determined by the individual effort of each officer and NCO, and, in partic-

ular, of each commanding officer. We must renew our awareness of each Marine's importance, his performance, his conduct, his loyalty to our Corps and to our Country, his physical fitness, his appearance. Whenever degradations in any of these are observed, prompt and effective corrective action must be taken. The example set by officers and NCO's in their performance of duty, dedication, devotion to their Marines, conduct, military bearing, physical readiness, and appearance must be above reproach. We must be continually aware of the true readiness of our men and the condition of our equipment. Only in this way can we hope to maintain the dedication to our longstanding commitment to superior professionalism.

For the reasons I have mentioned I am requesting each of you to help me, each of you to dedicate yourself to this task, so that by the end of 1970 our Corps will continue to be, in the words of the 13th Commandant, General Lejeune, ". . . all that is highest in military efficiency and soldierly virtue." I know our Marines can and will meet this challenge.

All officers and NCO's are to be informed of the contents of this letter and the spirit in which it is written.

L. F. Chapman
L. F. CHAPMAN, JR.

General, United States Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps