

MARINE ON MARINE

The Marine Corps takes great pride in its ability to transform young men and women into United States Marines. There is a special bond that unites us, a unique spirit that makes us a family, and a fierce love of our fellow Marine that defines us. These are the characteristics of United States Marines. It has always been so. It will always be so. Such characteristics explain why Marines are willing to risk death or injury in order to take care of each other. Our finest moments have reflected this mutual esteem. Marines, in units small and large, have accomplished truly extraordinary deeds, fighting side by side, motivated by the determination to win and to never let each other down. Every Marine should, therefore, be appalled to encounter anyone who thinks there can be any place in our Corps for the hazing of Marines, the creation of ad hoc rites of passage, the condoning of physical punishment as a leadership technique, or the promotion of hate-group philosophies. Marine Corps policy on this type of behavior is perfectly clear—it is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Marines who join a unit or are promoted will be welcomed and congratulated, not mistreated and degraded. Marines earn their title upon graduation from boot camp or when they are commissioned—not before, not after. Recruit Training and Officer Candidates School are the *only* rites of passage authorized to be conducted by Marines. The act of reaffirming the enlistment or commissioning oath and congratulating Marines on their promotion by shaking their hand will not be augmented by “pinning on” chevrons or “nailing blood stripes.” Hazing leads to abusiveness, brutality, and humiliation. No Marine should expect or accept such an attitude or treatment from fellow Marines.

Marines are known throughout the world for iron discipline instilled and maintained through positive leadership. Those who would consider the use of physical punishment to instill or reinforce discipline do not understand who we are and what we owe our Marines. Leaders who resort to physical violence against other Marines forfeit their moral authority. From that moment on, leadership is defined physically, and authority reaches no further than the arm can reach and the Marines’ willingness to tolerate mistreatment. Neither the reach nor the tolerance will last long. It is that simple. Anyone who thinks the threat of pain or indignity will somehow cause someone to toe the line is not really thinking about what *leadership* means or about the leadership challenge in combat. Does a leader who thrashes or thumps people to get them to perform really believe that they are somehow made more likely to lay their lives on the line? Is the threat of a punch in the jaw going to make someone charge a machine-gun nest or give 110 percent in preparing for an inspection? Hardly. This type of behavior is a clear violation of our special trust and confidence.



My desire to reduce unprogrammed personnel attrition does not mean we will tolerate nonperformers. Marine Corps standards are high and will remain so. For those who do not respond to positive leadership, there is machinery in place to remove them. While I am looking at ways to reduce the number of Marines unable to complete their enlistments (non-EAS attrition), it is not my intent to preclude commanders from expeditiously discharging those not fit for service in our Corps.

Marines exist to defend the Constitution against *all* enemies, foreign and domestic. The racist or violently militant causes advocated by some groups run directly against the core values that guide every Marine. On the battlefield, every Marine’s blood is red. Fair and equitable treatment is the standard for all Marines. As we all know, gangs and

hate groups prosper when sound, active leadership does not exist. Indeed, it is well established that these are often substitute “families” for people who feel rejected and alienated by parents, teachers, and those who should be mentors.

The Marine Corps knows exactly where to draw the line on hazing, physical punishment, and hate groups. No Marine should ever be subjected to such behavior. No Marine should ever participate in such activities. Every Marine must strive to maintain our core values of courage, honor, and commitment. Every leader must ensure Marines are treated with dignity, care, and concern. Marines treat each other as Marines. If not, once this line is crossed, the climate throughout the unit is affected—esprit, motivation, teamwork, trust, and confidence all suffer.

Treating Marines with dignity has always been a fundamental part of our Corps. In the *Marine Corps Manual* of 1921, MajGen John A. Lejeune, the 13th Commandant, used such words as “comradeship” and “brotherhood” to describe how Marines should treat each other. Gen Lejeune said that the relationship between senior and junior Marines should be the same as that between teacher and scholar and that “it should partake of the nature of the relation between father and son.” While the Corps of 1996 and beyond is, in many ways, different from Gen Lejeune’s, his concept of leadership is as applicable today as it was then. For more than 220 years, the strength of our Corps has been that bond of trust between Marines whose lives depend upon each other. There is no more important task for any Marine than living up to this sacred trust embodied in our motto, *Semper Fidelis*.

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