



SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE MARINE CORPS

MEMORANDUM



20 May 2010

SMMC MEMO 01-10

1. **Iraq:** The day is finally here when we can say the Marine Corps is out of Iraq. Actually, we still have several hundred Marines there, but their days are numbered, and our presence there will be over soon. I would just like to commend all our Marines and Sailors who made a difference in Iraq and their families who supported them. This was a much longer fight than we initially thought it would be, but as all generations of Marines have done, you endured and emerged victorious ... as the Commandant says, we've come out under a victory pennant.

The bravery and heroism Marines displayed in Iraq will forever be held as high as battles such as Belleau Wood, Iwo Jima, and Khe Sanh. The current generation of Marines has shown they possess the same esprit de corps, camaraderie, and heroism as Marines past. While we have reason to celebrate a job well done in Iraq, let us never forget our fallen Marines and Sailors, and continue to serve honorably in their memory.

2. **Afghanistan:** Marines and Sailors are doing great things in Afghanistan. They are living a true expeditionary lifestyle and loving it, taking the fight to the enemy every day. As I'm sure you've seen in the news, "Operation Moshtarak" was a success, and we are engaging the enemy every day, pushing them out of areas they have held for a long time.

Despite the austere living conditions and rough terrain, Marines will prevail as always, and one day, we will declare success like we have in Iraq. For those of you currently serving in Afghanistan and those preparing to go, keep up the great work and continue to live up to our great Marine Corps warfighting legacy.

3. **Professional Military Education:** In March 2009, I included the topic of PME on a Memo and stated that we must do better. A year ago we had 95 Sergeants Course no shows, 52 who didn't show up for the Career Course, and 35 Gunnery Sergeants who failed to show up at Advanced Course. I'm proud to inform you that for the last two iterations for all the courses throughout the Corps, we were nearly at 100 percent attendance.

I commend all of you for getting Marines to the appropriate PME. This important training not only prepares our Warriors for advancement; it also benefits the units by developing confident leaders through PME.

4. Health Care Reform: Some of you may have concern how the recent health care reform bill will affect your care. The easy answer to that is it will have no affect. The U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed HR 4887, the TRICARE Affirmation Act. This act basically states that care provided to military members and their families, and retirees under age 65 and their families, would meet the requirement for coverage, and no additional insurance will need to be purchased to meet the requirements of the new bill. The unanimous vote shows that our legislators are looking out for the welfare of our Warriors and their families.

5. Career Status Bonus: If any of you have heard me talk about this, you know I don't think it's a good idea for ANYONE to elect to take the REDUX/\$30,000 bonus at the 15 year mark. If you crunch the numbers, it just doesn't make sense. The Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) has thoroughly studied this, and has figured out that service members stand to lose at least \$300,000 in lifetime retirement earnings if they take the REDUX. And you could lose more than that depending on your choices/situation.

To help inform you of what you could potentially lose if you make the choice, CNA has created a retirement choice calculator. With minimal input, this tool can give you an estimate on how much money you will lose if you choose the REDUX payment. When using the calculator, you must estimate your rank at retirement, years of service, estimated age at death, and tax bracket. While most of this information is an estimate, it can still give you a ballpark figure of the money you deserve but won't receive. I urge everyone to use this tool, and to make the right decision on the REDUX. You can find the calculator at the following Web address:

<http://www.cna.org/NATIONALSECURITY/RAD/calculator.asp>

6. Social Networking: It is very important that you maintain and uphold the high standards of our Corps if you post pictures, videos, and comments to sites such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. Apply the Corps' highest standards and use your better judgment if you use these sites. Use of Social Networking sites is at an all-time high, and they are a valuable tool to stay in contact with family and friends. However, keep in mind that rules of operational security must always be followed to keep from putting yourself or fellow Marines/Sailors at risk.

A MARADMIN outlining the Corps' policy on acceptable use of these sites will be out soon. Ensure you know what is expected of you when using these sites, and what is acceptable to post/disseminate. You will be held accountable for inappropriate behavior and/or actions that could potentially be viewed as negative.

In regards to social networking sites and political activity, it is very important that Marines and Sailors understand that military members will properly respect the President, members of Congress, and other elected officials. Lately there have been entries made through social networking by service members that are considered disrespectful to our elected officials. Marines and Sailors have a right to vote for their elected officials and we encourage them to do so, but must show the respect our elected officials are due. I ask that you educate all Marines and Sailors on DOD Directive 1344.10, Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces, to inform them on what is acceptable.

7. Symposium: This year's Sergeants Major Symposium is scheduled for July 26-30. The Symposium is a gathering of Sergeants Major, Master Gunnery Sergeants and Command Master Chiefs, and spouses, where we discuss issues affecting Marines, Sailors, and their families, and make recommendations to our Commandant to promote changes that will enhance our warfighting capabilities and family readiness.

This is an opportunity for every Marine to make a difference. If you have an idea or concept that could better our Corps, you are encouraged to start forwarding all agenda items for this year's symposium through your chain of command.

Semper Fidelis,



CARLTON W. KENT

16th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps