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**Message to the Force 2018: "Execute"**

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**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**

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37<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps

Effective: 26 January 2018

## **CMC Message to the Force: “Execute”**

January 2018

Marines, I am writing at the beginning of the New Year to give you an update on where we are as a Corps and where we need to focus in the coming months. First, thanks to you, Sailors serving with Marines, Civilian Marines, and your families for your efforts to keep our Corps ready and relevant in today’s challenging world. Marines in combat in Iraq, Afghanistan, Africa, and Syria continue to distinguish themselves as professional, disciplined warriors and a critical component of the joint force. At the same time, Marines in Europe, WestPac, and South America assure our friends and deter our adversaries through their forward presence.

Here at home, we are implementing the actions of the Marine Operating Concept. Specifically, we adjusted our training to contest a peer adversary and worked to improve our readiness by adopting new processes to be more innovative, fit, educated, and resilient. We are in the midst of implementing Force 2025 structure changes; modernizing our force, recapitalizing legacy systems, and meeting mission requirements around the globe. We are making key changes in all aspects of how we make our Corps more ready to compete successfully on future battlefields. We are on track with regard to people, readiness, training, naval integration, and modernization that will make us more lethal and capable. That said, I am willing to adjust course if there is a better way. At the same time, all of us must strive to be more competent, disciplined, and safe in all things.

Most importantly, we all must be willing to embrace change...not for the sake of change, but change to make us better. The current and future operating environment is plagued with chaos and uncertainty. This uncertainty requires us to continuously look for innovative ways to increase our readiness and lethality. The battlefield is the ultimate competition and we must be ready when war comes our way. There is no runner up in combat. Thus, we can never be complacent or be satisfied with “good enough.” We must have a boresight focus on warfighting and train the way we intend to fight. We must incorporate the lessons learned from our training and experimentation, so that mistakes on the battlefield do not cost us the fight. We cannot afford to lose to learn in combat!

Therefore, in the coming year, in addition to all that is going on, I ask all Marines, Sailors, Civilian Marines, and our Families to focus on three things – live the title you’ve earned, hone your warfighter mindset, and strive to become “admirable” leaders. As Marines, we need to be ready for the next fight. We must be prepared. Now is the time for decisive action – Marines, now is the time to *Execute!*

### **Live the Title You’ve Earned Every Day:**

Earning the title Marine is not the end of the journey, it’s just the beginning. If we strive to live up to all it means to be a Marine, that journey is a challenging one – but one worth the effort. Each of us raised our right hand, swore an oath, made a commitment, and embarked on a life of service. That oath has no caveats or an expiration date.

- There is no secret for success in life or as a Marine. Those who live a measured and disciplined life, work hard, treat people with dignity and respect, set the example, take care of their families, and never quit will succeed both in the Corps and in their lives.
- Never forget, the Nation expects more from its Marines. We must always strive to be men and women of character and virtue. We take care of one another and our families.
- We must build on our warfighting legacy each and every day by working selflessly with the team to improve our units and to improve ourselves.

- When we see a problem or a discrepancy, all Marines need to act...to take the initiative. Don't wait for others to solve the challenges or problems you see day to day. I expect you to seek opportunities and claim them. That's what Marines do.
- In order to be ready for the next fight, we must prepare our bodies, our minds, and our families. Embrace our profession of arms. Assess your fitness, your self-improvement, and your social behaviors. Attitudes, conduct, and behavior that do not exemplify our core values and contribute to combat readiness and lethality need to be discarded.
- Our families have earned the respect of the Nation for their sacrifices. The demands on our lifestyle place a heavy burden upon our families. As Marines, it is our responsibility to ensure they are equally ready for the next fight.

### **Hone Your Warfighter Mindset:**

We are warfighters within a warfighting organization. Our Corps performs two important functions for our Nation – we *Make Marines* and we *Win Battles*. Every action we take must make us better at those two functions. This requires Marines who are brilliant in the fundamentals of warfighting, and physically, mentally, and spiritually prepared for the violence of combat. We must think, innovate, and prepare for the battlefields of the future. Complacency kills, both tactically and intellectually. As outlined in the MOC, we must adapt to the circumstances presented before us, anticipate changes, and evolve to stay ahead of emerging challenges.

- *Be ready – now – tonight.* Our next fight will come with little or no warning. We may not have the luxury to conduct deliberate pre-deployment planning and extensive training.
- We are going to have to fight to get to the fight. Our potential adversaries will not afford us the opportunity to simply deploy, stage, integrate, and rehearse prior to hostilities.
- The next fight will be a battle of signatures. Assume everything we do, can and will be observed. On tomorrow's battlefield, *to be seen is to be targeted, to be targeted is to be engaged, to be engaged is to be killed, at range and with precision!*
- We will train to fight and win in the high end of conflict by incorporating more force on force training. Just as iron sharpens iron, we will test our new concepts and improve our continuing actions by lining up against ourselves.
- We must continue to hone a similar mindset in our families and the families of the Marines we lead – resilient families are better able to balance life stressors and the stress of being separated while their Marines are forward deployed. To that end, we must celebrate our “Spartan Spouses” and ensure our families have the support needed to enable us to focus on our craft – warfighting.

### **Lead Like You Want to be Led:**

Marines, as good as they are, expect their leaders to inspire them – through their personal example, competence, and values. Marine leaders, at every level, are expected to teach, coach, and mentor. I expect leaders to be involved in every aspect of the lives of the Marines they lead. When we are personally invested in the success of our Marines – on the job and in life – we sustain the transformation and make better Marines!

- Good leadership takes effort, commitment, and dedication. Initiative and creativity must be encouraged. The integrity and example of each leader must be above reproach.
- We lead, on and off duty. Leadership, at every level, forms the backbone of effective Marine Corps units. Leaders foster belief – in the mission, the unit, their training, and each other. Without leadership, there is no cohesion and without cohesion, there is no will to fight.
- Challenge our Marines. Our young men and women did not join the Corps because they thought it would be easy. They joined because they knew it would be hard and they were up to the

challenge. The competence of the individual Marine will be more important than ever in future battlefields. Challenge them to think and act effectively under chaotic, uncertain, and adverse conditions. Give aspiring leaders the freedom to lead, make decisions and even fail. Mistakes will happen, and we must learn from them and move forward.

- Demand nothing less than what's expected of our Marines – leadership, attitude, warfighting competence, initiative, and unwavering discipline. Leaders, at all ranks, must live and model the behavior we want our subordinates to emulate.

### **Conclusion:**

Again, thank you, the Sailors that serve with us, our Civilian Marines, and our Families for all that you do. If the Nation ever needed its Marines to stand up and perform their duty, it is now. In the coming year, I challenge all to commit to do all we can to improve, to be more ready and more lethal, and to make ourselves and our units better. If we do this, together, we will continue to be the most ready when our Nation calls.

In combat, we will be tested in ways we cannot imagine. Yet, if we focus on our preparedness, readiness, agility, and lethality; we will prevail on the battlefield.

I don't know where or when the next fight will come, but our Corps must be ready. This next fight will likely be very different than what we have experienced over the past two decades. The potential for great power conflict means we will be contested in every domain. We must be ready to go...every day...ready individually, ready as a unit, and ready as a family.

Marines, we have the world we have, not the world we want...and this world requires that we get better. Better as *Marines*, better as *Warfighters*, and better as *Leaders*.

Our service requires us to make sacrifices and endure hardships. The sacrifices we accept in defense of our Nation move the world closer to resembling the world we want, but this requires action – it requires us to *execute!*



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