



Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Support Battalion Readiness and Force Preservation Statement

"[Leaders must] focus on and coordinate safety, substance abuse, Combat Operational Stress Control, and suicide prevention programs and practices in order to maximize the combat readiness of Marines and Sailors."

-- LtGen Miller, CG II MEF



As explained in MCDP 1, *Warfighting*, readiness is "the key to combat effectiveness" and "the main effort of a peacetime military." I have no doubt that we will continue to work hard to achieve a high state readiness within the Battalion. Sustaining this high state of readiness can only be achieved through effective force preservation. Force preservation is a critical element of force protection. Protecting the force to preserve combat power should be inherent to leaders. Force Preservation, often referred to as "safety," is about eliminating non-hostile mishaps, injuries, equipment damage, or deaths. It is accomplished primarily by eliminating unnecessary risk, by effectively managing acceptable risk through control measures, and by employing effective personal protection tactics, techniques and procedures.

Professionalism coupled with strong leadership is the key to force protection, force preservation, and sustained combat readiness. Mishaps are almost always avoidable, and usually occur for a few primary reasons:

- Disobeying prescribed regulations, policies, procedures, instructions, directives, and publications. Failure to read, understand, follow, and enforce written documents or lawful verbal instructions that outline how we are supposed to do business efficiently, effectively, and safely is willful negligence and must not be tolerated.

- Exceeding equipment capabilities. Equipment limitations are almost always defined in writing. Safe employment of equipment requires sound knowledge, situational awareness, and discipline. The reckless use of equipment or assets on duty or on liberty, whether it is tactical equipment, a personally owned vehicle, or any other potentially dangerous apparatus is inexcusable. All members of this Battalion are responsible for using equipment in the way it was intended, and within its prescribed limitations.

- Exceeding personal capabilities. Marines are capable of accomplishing the seemingly impossible and do so quite often. However, when Marines are pushed beyond their capabilities, mission accomplishment is jeopardized. Marines must know their limitations and understand the difference between courage and recklessness. Leaders must know their people well enough to coach them to greater levels of accomplishment without exceeding their capabilities. Everyone is responsible for their own actions, but no one is perfectly self-aware. Teammates protect each other from their personal "blind spots," and intervene when required.

- Failing to identify hazards and mitigate risks. The four principles and the five steps of Operational Risk Management must become second nature to every member of this command and must be applied naturally in all that we do.

Finally, frank and open communication is essential for effective force preservation. Everyone within the Battalion is responsible for reporting unsafe conditions or practices to those at risk, as well as to their chain of command. "If there is doubt, there is no doubt" – report what doesn't seem right.

Semper Fidelis,

John R. Polidoro, Jr.
Colonel, United States Marine Corps
Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Support Battalion