Commanders,

It’s been just over a month since I assumed Command and during this short time I’ve been working to build my situational awareness of where the Division’s been, where it is now, and where its heading, and at this point I felt it was an appropriate time to follow up in writing on a few of the things I discussed with you all in NOLA on 8 Sept.

Below are lessons on Leadership & Command that I’ve observed and learned as a Marine for 31 years. I ask that you take this as my Command guidance & philosophy and that you personally reflect on these points and apply them where applicable in your own Commands, and also pass on through your chains when and where appropriate.

This isn’t meant to be an all-inclusive list by any means. There will be additional guidance in the coming months, but I wanted to get this out to you now as a foundation to build on and so you'll know how I personally view the responsibility of Command.

1. Marines are Leaders – not Managers. Insure your subordinate Leaders all the way down to the Fire Team level know the difference.

• Managers push people, Leaders pull people by respect and force of personal example

• Managers direct people to get a job done, Leaders inspire people to want to get the job done

• Managers tend to accept credit for the success of subordinates, Leaders place the spotlight on those they have the privilege to lead

• Manages ask who’s responsible when a project goes bad, Leaders say "I’m responsible"

2. Commanders set the tone and atmosphere in their Units for Ethical and Moral behavior. Your accountable for this. Always remember that your subordinates are always watching you, and they should be…

3. Commanders are responsible for the Command. The I&I’s responsibility is to advise the Commander. Listen to their Counsel, favorably view their recommended courses of action, then make your Command decision on how to proceed. I've been an I&I and know full well that your Commands would not be set up for success if it weren't for your I&I's tireless leadership and daily grind to keep the command going. It’s your responsibility to build both a professional and a trust relationship between you and your I&I. You must communicate with your I&I often and make yourself available for them to be able to reach you when needed. An I&I should never have to say I couldn’t get in touch with my Commander for them to make a decision.

4. Work on avoiding surprises up the Chain. It’s always better for your boss to find out something of a serious or critical nature about your Command from you rather than from someone else outside of your chain.

5. Your SgtMaj’s and other Senior Enlisted leadership should have the inside scoop on the heartbeat and feelings of the climate in your Commands. They should be your command eyes & ears down in the L/Cpl ranks and should always be able to provide you with how the Marines are “feeling” about an issue. Don't make the mistake of not listening to them.

6. Commanders are responsible for Safety in your Units. Insure an atmosphere of “if it doesn’t feel right then Don’t do it” is pervasive through all levels of leadership down to the lowest levels.

7. Be creative in finding ways to communicate to your Marines. Marines today need and expect communication more so than any time in our past. It’s the way it is and will only increase in need going forward so we must adjust. It’s a Commander’s responsibility to whenever possible, communicate his Intent, the Unit’s Mission, and the purpose or need to accomplish it, to their commands.

8. Find ways to reinforce to your Marines that they are Marines 24/7, and not just on Drill weekends and periods of Active Duty. Some tools to use; a. the Buddy Program - every Marine in your Command should know how to reach their Buddy if they need them, b. actively encourage your Marines to PT between drills, c. have your Chain of Command make phone calls to your Marines between drills. All of these tools to help us remind our Marines that they are Always Marines will help our in our Command efforts to eliminate Suicides, Sexual Harassment, and other degrading destructive behavior.

9. Reduced budgets, fiscal constraints, and reduced Manpower do not alleviate the responsibility we all have as Commanders to do what we can to provide the Most Capable and Most Ready Marine Reserve Force that our Nation can afford. It’s our responsibility to work the Problem with the tools we are given. The Mission has to be accomplished regardless of the constraints we may face in the future. We are called first when there's a Crisis to address because the expectation of both our Government and our Nation is that the Marine Corps will just get it done, regardless of the problems we may face.

Some other thoughts to reflect on;

• In the long run, the Best Course of Action is the one based on the most common sense and simplicity. We often tend to over think issues, so…

• Trust your Instincts. Usually if you second guess yourself or find yourself having to talk yourself into something, then it’s probably not the best thing to do at that time and situation.

• Using Maneuver warfare for problem solving is always better that using Attrition warfare… Work on solutions (maneuver) to problems, don’t overly dwell (attrition) on the past or how the problem came about or who’s to blame. Spending time on rehashing past issues/problems is not an effective or efficient use of time and energy. Use that time and energy to find solutions and provide educations, awareness, and training on how to prevent future problems.

• Flexibility is essential to success. Change will always happen so the one who learns to adjust and flex on the fly, instead of resisting change, will outmaneuver their opposition. Resetting the Total Force from our OIF/OEF posture, while also Rebalancing the Total Force for anticipated future commitments, will require great flexibility.

The responsibility we have been entrusted with as Commanders must be taken seriously and we must always remember that our Nation, our Corps, our Marines, and our Families are counting on us to always serve them and do the right thing.

Semper Fidelis,

BGen J.S. Hammer Hartsell

CG, 4th MarDiv