

COMMANDER
MARINE FORCES RESERVE
Retention – Guidance to the Force



**Marines are and have always been the life blood of the Marine Corps;
they are not replaceable!**

In FRAGO 01-24 “Maintain Momentum”, the Commandant of the Marine Corps listed retaining Marines as one of his top priorities. To support the Commandant’s priorities and to be prepared to face off against a near peer adversary, we must continue to realign our worldview and the warfighting value we assign to each individual Marine. Leaders at every level must apply unrelenting attention on sustaining the Force to align with Force Design, Talent Management 2030, and the Marine Forces Reserve Enlisted Retention Campaign. This will allow us to fill our ranks with qualified Marines to maintain our warfighting advantage. The Marine Corps Reserve has traditionally relied on recruiting efforts to fill its ranks with the Marines needed to satisfy the obligations to the Active Forces and the nation. In recent years, the Marine Corps’ recruiting efforts have faced unprecedented challenges, causing a significant reduction in new accessions to the Reserve Component. This imminent reduction of new Marines could degrade Marine Forces Reserve’s ability to provide individual Marines and formations to the Active Forces, unless we rise to meet our retention objectives.

Creating a Culture of Retention. As the Marine Corps shifts from a “recruit and replace” model to “invest and retain,” leaders must transform unit culture to accommodate the new model. Commanders must actively work towards creating a culture that encourages and enables the retention of qualified Marines. To accomplish this, leaders must acknowledge that decades of operating under the recruit and replace model have shaped perspectives, which deemphasized the value of retaining Marines. This perspective and others like it create barriers to retention and an unwillingness to do all that is within our power to retain Marines. Furthermore, these perspectives do not acknowledge that the retention of Marines is a requirement and essential to mission accomplishment. To meet the new retention requirements and priorities, leaders must adapt and ensure all actions are viewed through the lens of retention and are in line with the invest and retain model. Commanders will apply maximum effort to mitigate the challenges created by service in the Marine Corps Reserve. Accordingly, commanders must remain abreast of Marine Corps and local policies and implement those policies to ensure retention efforts are maximized.

Train to Retain. Marines joined the Marine Corps to be Marines, and they are owed nothing less. Reserve benefits and incentives only serve to offset the hardships created by service in the Marine Corps Reserve. Reserve Marines who choose to “stay Marine” beyond the initial obligation will do so because of their experiences, personal and professional growth, and a pride of belonging. Marines need to feel valued throughout their career, not just when we need them to reenlist. The respect and value start when they join the command. To the maximum extent possible, commanders will ensure Annual Training and drill weekends are engaging, challenging, and enhance proficiency. Marines should leave Annual Training and drill weekends feeling more proficient, lethal, and motivated; knowing their time and talents were used wisely and appropriately, with special attention given to our junior Marines.

Retention Missions. Retention requires total command engagement, and commanders are expected to set the conditions for success and be in the fight. The retention missions assigned from this point forward are and will be challenging to meet the needs of the institution. Active and Reserve Command retention missions are assigned to commanders, not their Career Planners; and commanders will achieve them. The Reserve Commander and their Inspector-Instructor will create a unity of effort throughout the command and bring the full force of the command to bear in achieving the retention missions. Retention is a no fail mission. Fight’s On!

Semper Fidelis,

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Commander