



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
2 NAVY ANNEX
WASHINGTON, DC 20380-1775

IN REPLY REFER TO:
CMC-MM

16 DEC 2003

WHITE LETTER NO. 07-03

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps
To: All General Officers
All Commanding Officers
All Officers-in-Charge

Subj: DISABILITY RATING PROCESS AND RETENTION OF PHYSICALLY
DISABLED MARINES ON ACTIVE DUTY

1. Over the past two years, many of our Marines were engaged in combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, during which some sustained serious, possibly irreparable, injuries. Injuries, however, whether they are minor lacerations requiring only sutures or severe amputations requiring prosthetic implants, do not necessarily result in disqualification from further military service or call for immediate disability system action. If given the proper treatment, encouragement, and requisite time for rehabilitation, they can be overcome and the Marine, subsequently, returned to full duty.

2. Whenever possible, ensure your Marines are placed on temporary limited duty for appropriate periods of time in order to allow for healing and subsequent physical therapy. If a medical officer determines that an injury has had ample time to heal and the Marine is still unfit for full duty, then a medical board should be forwarded to the Physical Evaluation Board (PEB) for a determination of fitness for continued naval service. Marines found fit by the PEB may remain on active duty or request reenlistment, as appropriate. Marines found unfit by the PEB may request to be placed in a Permanent Limited Duty (PLD) status for a specified length of time to either facilitate transition, undergo further medical treatment, or to reach retirement eligibility. Requests for PLD are granted based on the needs of the service and support for the Marine's condition and personal situation.

3. Upon expiration of PLD, the Marine will be discharged with disability severance pay or retired with pay and benefits commensurate with military retirement. Though the PLD program is tracked by MMSR-4, these are your Marines. They belong to you. You must account for them. You must employ them in accordance with their skills and talents while honoring the limitations set forth by medical authority. And above all else, you must support and encourage them in their endeavors to recover. Chapter 8 of the Separation and Retirement Manual will be your reference as you assist these young men and women in their efforts to overcome adversity.

4. This process is about taking care of Marines. I ask all commanders to remain fully engaged in order to ensure all of these Marines receive prompt and full support.


M. W. Hagee