

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

27 JAN 1978

Honorable Robert Taft, Jr.  
United States Senate  
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Bob:

During my confirmation hearings before the Senate Armed Services Committee you stated that there was evidence of pending changes in the Marine Corps role and asked what my attitude would be towards any attempts to either absorb the Marine Corps or diminish its size and mission. This letter provides my response to your question.

The Department of Defense considers the Marine Corps to be a unique and valuable asset, and there are no actions underway or plans for action either to absorb the Corps or significantly diminish its size and mission. As part of the continuing analyses and evaluations of defense programs, however, we are reviewing the current composition of the Corps relative to its assigned missions and the potential threats we face. This review will allow us to determine whether or not we are planning for the proper balance among light and heavy forces and air wing elements. This assessment will also address the adequacy of U.S. sealift programs in providing the necessary amphibious support to accomplish Marine Corps missions.

Members of my staff have discussed this effort with their counterparts at Marine Corps Headquarters. Results of the evaluation could influence our Five-Year Plan starting with the FY 1978 planning cycle.

Our objectives are to maximize the deterrent and fighting capability of the Marines in support of U.S. national interests. We plan to do so within their authorized manning levels and in accordance with sound budgetary practice.

Sincerely,

Donald Rumsfeld

