



It has been two and a half years since I received the Sword of Office and took my seat as the Sergeant Major of Marine Corps Systems Command. After weeks of turnover, office calls, briefs, and meeting the Marines and Civilians, I was astounded at how much reading and learning I had to do just to understand the conversations around me. The acronyms alone were like speaking another language. At the time, I had been a Marine for over 27 years and I quickly learned that I did not know as much as I thought I did about Marine Corps Systems Command. I am not alone.

I can recall being invited to sit on a panel to speak to Senior Staff NCO's about Professional Development and Leadership. When I introduced myself to the audience, I clean asked, who knew about Marine Corps Systems Command and its impact to the Marine Corps? Very few hands were raised. As a result of the limited hands in the air, I gave a quick overview of the MCSC mission and our role in equipping our Marines. I was surprised at the amount of questions directed at me during that entire panel. It appeared to me that there was a yearning for solutions from MCSC to their equipment needs at their respective units. I remember being that Marine in the Fleet, wondering about the equipment "they" sent, not understanding who they really were. The more I spoke during that panel, the more the hands went up with additional questions. Since it was a leadership discussion, I had to redirect the questions to the original intent of the panel, but I remained behind and spent time with many Marines who wanted to continue the conversation.

The Marines I encountered that day shaped the rest of my time. They were hungry for knowledge and eager to return to their units with viable actions to aid toward solutions regarding operational capability of the equipment. In turn, I was able to take their firsthand feedback and improve in areas otherwise unknown. It was at that moment I realized how important it was for Marines to understand, at a minimum, the basic fundamentals of the acquisition process and their role in supporting and participating in that process, even at the most junior ranks. The process starts and ends with THE MARINE.

The *Commandant's Planning Guidance* and *Force Design 2030* demands revolutionary modernization and the Marines and Civilian Professionals within Marine Corps Systems Command and the Program Executive Offices are dedicated to this task. In the succeeding articles you will find the words and concepts of those Marines and Civilians dedicated to getting the best equipment into the hands of the warfighter. I am impressed every day at the magnitude of effort and the quality of results this command continues to accomplish.

Semper Fidelis,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robin Fortner".

Robin Fortner
Sergeant Major
Marine Corps Systems Command