

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 19, 2007

General James T. Conway
Commandant, United States Marine Corps
3000 Marine Corps Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350-3000

Dear General Conway:

The battlefield is not the only place where courage takes place. Indeed, sometimes it takes as much courage to stand up to friends as our enemies. There is at least one example of life-saving courage within your own offices that deserves commendation, not the condemnation, from the Marine Corps.

Mr. Franz Gayl, G-15, Science and Technology Advisor to the Deputy Commandant for Plans, Policies, and Operations, has been instrumental in bringing to light delays preventing Marines from getting Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles in time to save their lives. MRAPs can prevent up to eighty percent of fatalities from improvised explosive devices. Hundreds of Marines today would be alive, or without serious injury, if they were riding MRAPs into battle over the last couple of years. While urgently requested by Marine field commanders in Iraq in February 2005, no action was taken until another urgent request was made over one year later in May 2006.


Serious flaws and gross mismanagement in the acquisition process were responsible in part for the delay of MRAPs and other technology our warfighters need to defeat the enemy and protect their own lives. Mr. Gayl helped disclose these life-threatening procurement problems from his position in the Pentagon. Eliminating these problems and ensuring they do not happen in the future will save hundreds, perhaps thousands, of lives. Instead of commendation, Mr. Gayl is the target of an adverse personnel action against him by his superiors. Such action by the Corps may be a violation of federal "whistleblower" statutes. It would certainly bring dishonor to those who instead should be embracing this hero.

We expect much better from our Marines, particularly the leadership. The Corps' apparent retaliation against a conscientious whistleblower is reprehensible. It also creates a chilling effect that could deter others from stepping forward with alternative views. Therefore, we urge you to protect Mr. Gayl from further retaliation, and allow him to communicate with candor in an effort to help improve our processes for the sake of future Marines. We look forward to your prompt response to this request.

Sincerely,



Christopher S. Bond



Joseph R. Biden