



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

MARINE FIGHTER ATTACK SQUADRON 251
MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP 31
2D MARINE AIRCRAFT WING
U. S. MARINE CORPS FORCES COMMAND
POST OFFICE BOX 66127
MARINE CORPS AIR STATION, BEAUFORT, SOUTH CAROLINA 29904-6127

20 December 2010

Dear Thunderbolt Family Member,

As we approach the holidays and deployment, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your contributions to the Thunderbolt team. It has been an extremely busy year for this squadron, including seven demanding detachments for training. The Marines and Sailors of VMFA-251 have risen to every challenge we have faced and responded with professionalism and success in kind. To quote the Commander of Carrier Air Wing One: "The performance of the Thunderbolts during work-ups has been spectacular". As a family member of a Thunderbolt, you have positively contributed to this team's success and deserve to share your Marine's pride in his or her accomplishments. Whether consciously or not, the sacrifices you make as a spouse, parent or relative of an active duty Marine or Sailor significantly aid the readiness of this unit. Thank you for your efforts supporting your Thunderbolt – this has been a demanding year for our families, and I am very proud of and grateful for what we have all accomplished together.

I must assure you that all the hard work of your Marine or Sailor and the sacrifices made at home have made a significant difference. The Strike Fighter Advanced Readiness Program in December 2009 and January 2010 prepared the squadron for high tempo operations focusing on our basic mission sets. The Air Wing Fallon Detachment in March readied our integration with the CVW-1 team for large force exercises. Carrier operations in May, August, October and December honed our skills at conducting our missions from the decks of an aircraft carrier. In between those busy detachments, your Marine has conducted physical fitness tests, medical tests, maintenance inspections, commanding general's inspections, swim qualifications, administrative requirements, and shipboard firefighting training. All of these events have prepared this squadron to safely and successfully execute our missions while deployed in support of Marines who are nobly serving our country in distant lands in harm's way – I can say wholeheartedly that our Marines and Sailors are ready to serve them on deployment, and we could not have reached this point without the overwhelming support of our families.

The final and perhaps most important part of our unit's readiness occurs at the home front. We covered many contingencies and items to prepare for at the Family Readiness Pre-deployment Brief in November, and have been working with base legal this month to prepare all the necessary documentation for each family. The final step in our readiness is for sound communication – please take the time over this break to discuss with your Thunderbolt how your family will tackle the responsibilities and challenges of life while we are deployed. A few simple actions now can prevent significant headaches for your family, such as ensuring your ID cards, emergency contact information, vehicle registration, and insurance are current. Finally, please ensure your family has a good game plan for communication on deployment. There are many ways to communicate in this day and age, to include good old "snail mail" to the below address.

Rank and Name
VMFA-251 (Shop name)
Unit 78535
FPO AE 09502-8535

Questions will come up during deployment. As always, our Family Readiness hotline (1-866-242-0064, Press 7 then 8) and the unit website www.marines.mil/unit/2ndMAW/mag31/vmfa251/Pages/default.aspx will remain updated weekly with the latest squadron information and a host of helpful information while we are deployed. Our Family Readiness Officer, Mrs. Monica C. Greer, will be in Beaufort working full time to support us and can be reached at Monica.greer@usmc.mil, (843) 228-9518 or (843) 321-6733. She and the rest of the Thunderbolt Family Readiness team are here to help.

Most of all, please enjoy the winter holidays. Both to celebrate the achievements of the last several months, and to relax before deployment, this is a well deserved period to enjoy with your family. Alyssa and I wish you and yours nothing but the best, and look forward to seeing everyone back safe and sound in January.

Semper Fidelis,
Mike Sobkowski