

A Brief History Of The 12th Marines



**HISTORICAL DIVISION
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

MARINE CORPS HISTORICAL REFERENCE PAMPHLET

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 12TH MARINES

by

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Foreword

This historical reference pamphlet is the eighth in a series of regimental histories. When completed this series will cover in similar fashion each of the infantry and artillery regiments in the Fleet Marine Force, active and reserve. The present narrative not only highlights the significant actions of the 12th Marines, but also furnishes a general history of the developments in Marine Corps artillery.

Mr. Charles R. Smith has been a member of the staff of the Historical Division since July 1971. He holds Bachelor of Arts degrees in History and Political Science from the University of California, a Master of Arts degree in History from San Diego State University, and has served in Vietnam as an Army artilleryman and field historian.

In the interest of accuracy and objectivity, the Historical Division welcomes comments from key participants, Marine Corps activities, and interested individuals on this pamphlet.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. H. Simmons", is positioned above the typed name.

E. H. SIMMONS

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Preface

"A Brief History of the 12th Marines" is a concise narrative of the regiment from its initial activation close to half a century ago through its participation in the Vietnam conflict. Official records of the Marine Corps and appropriate historical works were utilized in compiling this short history.

Final editing was done by Henry I. Shaw, Jr., Chief Historian of the Historical Division. Lance Corporal Isaac C. Moon, Jr., typed the final draft, and the maps were prepared by Sergeant Jerry L. Jakes. All illustrations are official Department of Defense (Marine Corps) photographs from the files of the Combat Pictorial Branch, G-3 Division of this headquarters.


Charles R. Smith

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The Formative Years

Marine artillerymen manning their weapons have been silhouetted against the snow covered fields of revolutionary Princeton, the black sand beaches of Iwo Jima, and the red earth of Vietnam's hilltops. (1) Their mission--to provide Marine infantrymen with close and immediate fire support wherever and whenever Marines are committed to battle. The deeds of these artillery units and their men have often been overshadowed by the accomplishments of those they support. One such unit is the 12th Marines. (2) Not unlike other Marine units, the 12th Marines had its beginnings as an infantry regiment in China of the 1920s.

In the summer of 1926, the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek began their triumphal march north from Canton. Wherever the Nationalists made their appearance trained agitators soon directed popular sentiment against foreign treaties, merchants, and institutions, as well as the propertied Chinese upper classes. With a combination of military operations, bribery, and skillful propaganda, the Nationalists by late 1926 controlled the Yangtze Valley of central China and were threatening the international treaty port of Shanghai.

In response to the imminent threat, American Minister to China John Van A. MacMurray cabled the Department of State in January 1927 requesting an increase in the landing forces then stationed at Shanghai "in order to protect foreign life and property at Shanghai and prevent the seizure of the settlement... by mob violence...." (3) Not wishing to arouse American public opinion by deploying a large military force and embroiling the United States in a war with the Chinese Nationalists, President Calvin Coolidge ordered a Marine regiment to the Far East in late January 1927. This was not the first time Marines had been used. In addition to maintaining legation guard, Marines on several previous occasions had been called upon to protect American and foreign nationals and their property under attack by resentful Chinese. (4)

Gathering up Marines from Guam to Shanghai, a small provisional expeditionary battalion was organized and landed at Shanghai in February 1927. The 4th Regiment, less its 2d Battalion, sailed from San Diego on orders of the President and arrived at Shanghai, but did not disembark until 21 March when an emergency was declared by the Municipal Council of the International Settlement. Early in April, the expeditionary battalion and the 4th Regiment formed the nucleus of the newly constituted 3d Marine Brigade under the command of Brigadier General Smedley D. Butler. The new brigade was ordered specifically to protect American lives and property, and in a more general sense to prevent the warring factions from entering the international settlement. (5)

