
MARINE CORPS HISTORICAL REFERENCE SERIES

NO. 16

CERTAIN ASPECTS OF MANPOWER UTILIZATION IN THE
MARINE CORPS: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

by

Bernard C. Nalty

Historical Branch, G-3
Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps
Washington, D. C.

November 1959

CERTAIN ASPECTS OF MANPOWER UTILIZATION IN THE
MARINE CORPS: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Orderlies

The employment of Marines as general handymen and orderlies for flag officers of the Navy is no innovation. So ingrained had this idea become by 1881 that a naval encyclopedia of that year defined "orderly" as "a Marine private detailed as messenger for the commanding officer."¹ The orderly, then, had to be a Leatherneck; a bluejacket wouldn't do. Reasons for the use of Marines at such tasks were purely practical at the outset, but over the years the Marine orderly has become almost a part of Naval tradition.

To trace the growth of this custom, it is necessary to go back beyond the formation of the Continental Marines in 1775 and to examine for a moment the duties of Great Britain's Marine Regiments, models for their American counterpart. Aboard His Majesty's ships, there were a great many country lads, many of them cursed with two left feet--in short, men who knew nothing of the sea or of ships. Considered sea-going infantry, the British Marines were not required to exhibit any skill in seamanship. Should their vessel become engaged with the enemy, they formed in a prescribed manner on the poop deck and tried to clear the enemy's decks with a heavy volume of musket fire.

On a peaceful cruise or in port, His Britannic Majesty expected the Marines to preserve order aboard ship. Sentinels were carefully posted when in port to prevent desertion, and at all times an ear was cocked for the faintest rumblings of mutiny.²

The British heritage was evident in the duties of the Continental Marines and its successor, the United States Marine Corps. During the Naval War with France, for example, the Leatherneck detachment was paraded at sunrise and sunset --maneuvers well calculated to remind the sailors to obey orders. Nor did the Marines take part in the routine chores necessary to sailing a ship. They were exempt from going aloft to handle the canvas unless they volunteered for such duty. In fact, the only menial task they could be called upon to perform was to "pull, hawl, and heave" at the capstan.³

Because the detachment did so little, it was expected to be neat at all times. Thomas Truxton, Captain of the frigate Constitution, was especially interested in the condition of the clothing of his Marine guard. "Cleanliness, Order, and Neatness in this Corps is expected," Truxton maintained, "the Marines do no Duty that cause any Excuse for their not being kept so..."⁴

The reasons, then, for detailing a Marine as Captain's orderly were practical enough. First, the Leatherneck wore a uniform that was not only more colorful but cleaner than

a sailor's. Second, a private could be spared, since he was not vital to the normal handling of the ship, while a seaman had an important assignment of his own.

The idea that a flag officer of the Navy rated a Marine orderly became fixed in the traditions of the Navy. Nor did these traditions work a hardship on the Corps as a whole. Thanks to precedents dating from the days of sailing ships, Leathernecks were spared from some of the more unpleasant duties which came into existence with the steam warship.

Save in extreme circumstances, Marines could not be detailed as firemen or coal heavers. Indeed, the employment of soldiers of the sea at such tasks aboard USS Hancock in 1916 led to the passage of a law specifying extra pay for Marines pressed into service at the boilers.⁵

Shortly after World War I, the practice of assigning Marine orderlies to flag officers was challenged. The Commandant, U. S. Naval Station, New Orleans, Louisiana, had been relieved, but his designated successor had not yet arrived on the scene. During the interim, the Acting Commandant continued to insist that an orderly be detailed in the usual fashion. At this point the Commanding Officer, Marine Barracks objected. He complained that since the Acting Commandant was not a flag officer, he rated no orderly. Both officers whipped out their copies of Navy Regulations, but neither could find an article which would resolve the problem.

When the Acting Commandant pointed out that the orderly was needed to protect the vacant Commandant's house at night in the absence of servants, his point of view was upheld. He further stated that he was not "using the orderly for his personal use and the orderly is carrying on as though the permanent Commandant were here."⁶ Tradition, although not supported by regulations, emerged victorious.

Thus, Marines continued to be detailed as orderlies. Sometimes, they would be detailed to a social affair given by a high ranking Naval officer or even the Secretary of the Navy himself. In addition, orderlies were provided for flag officers who were sitting on selection boards. Nor were Naval Officers the only ones who were thought to deserve the services of an orderly, for two noncommissioned officers and three sailors were dispatched to the White House on 30 December 1929 "for duty at the coming series...of receptions."⁷

Besides acting as orderlies within the Naval Service or at the White House, Leathernecks often were detailed to act as ushers at civic and patriotic affairs. A trumpeter, for example, added a bit of solemnity to a meeting of the Daughters of the American Revolution; while two dozen Marines, splendid in their blue uniforms, protected the reserved seats at an American Legion Armistice Day program.⁸

Closely related to the orderly was the chauffeur. Immediately following World War I, drivers were so scarce as

to be considered specialists.⁹ As the ability to drive an automobile became a common trait, it appears that the duties of orderly and chauffeur became, to some extent, interchangeable. A chauffeur and an orderly, or a combination of both, were now the badge of flag rank.

Servants

Ever since the re-establishment of the Marine Corps in 1798, it has been the custom of high ranking officers to employ servants. In 1818, for example, 1st Lieutenant Charles R. Broom penned a plaintive note to the acting Secretary of the Navy requesting that he be allowed additional money for the hire of a servant. "The different Marine Stations," he wrote, "are generally so bare of men that it will not admit of an officer's taking a soldier from the line..."¹⁰ Since it was impractical to detail a private for the job, a practice which has since come to be held illegal, he felt compelled to hire a civilian.

For that matter, Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Gale, Commandant of the Corps in 1820, saw nothing unusual in requesting an allowance for "the passage of my waiter from Philadelphia to New Orleans, and thence back to Head Quarters."¹¹

These were the halcyon days. The Secretary of the Navy was empowered to grant or reject requests for cash allowances as he saw fit. There was no specific law governing his actions.

Like all good things, this era of financial liberality soon came to an end. On 3 March 1835 a law was enacted forbidding the Secretary of the Navy to make any allowances in addition to prescribed pay for any purpose whatsoever. Fortunately this law was repealed on 17 April 1866; but within five years Congress had adopted a policy of stipulating just what allowances could be paid.

Beginning with the Navy appropriations act of 3 March 1899, flag officers in the Naval establishment were granted the same allowances as general officers of the Army. Generous as the War Department might be, the unhappy fact remained that it refused to earmark funds for the salaries of civilian servants. Indicative of the attitude toward the servant problem was the Army's prohibition against allowances for quarters for servants.¹²

Following World War I, the War Department encountered a problem with which the Navy already had collided. This was the outraged eye which Congress fixed upon the spending of public funds to entertain foreign military leaders. As early as 1907, a decision of the Comptroller had prevented the Navy Department from using contingent funds for such a purpose. More specific was the act of 7 June 1924 which appropriated \$50,000 to finance an around the world flight by Army aviators. Not one penny of this sum, Congress decreed, could be spent to entertain foreign officials.¹³

A means of allowing certain Army, Navy, and Marine Corps officers to entertain on a fairly lavish scale and to employ as many civilian servants as necessary was at last hit upon in 1949. According to the act of 12 October of that year, Marine Corps Lieutenant Generals would be permitted a \$500 "personal money allowance"--in effect a trifling contribution toward meeting their entertainment expenses. Generals received the more substantial sum of \$2,200, while the Commandant was given \$4,000.¹⁴

In some cases, an orderly was not enough, and civilian help was hard to obtain. If a flag officer needed extra help, he could arrive at some sort of cumshaw arrangement whereby enlisted men would, in effect, become his employees. This system, naturally enough, caused no end of trouble; but not because the men objected to such part time employment. The problem lay in the fact that there was not work enough for everyone. The few who were able to supplement their pay--especially during the depression racked 1930's--earned not only dollars but also the envy and hatred of their comrades. At one post, the "unemployed" enlisted men banded together to dispatch an anonymous postcard to the Commandant of the Marine Corps calling his attention to the situation.¹⁵

The employment or detail of enlisted men to supplement the work of orderlies is a risky venture certain to stir up

the wrath of some segment or other of the American public. As a matter of fact, some complain even when enlisted Marines are performing their normal duties. As early as 1917, Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor, objected because Marines were painting buildings at Parris Island. Proof that the recruits were not working in competition with union men was enough to turn aside Gompers' wrath; but in some cases, no amount of proof is sufficient.¹⁶

Take, for example, the storm of indignation stirred up by recent reports that Marines were renovating the quarters of a general officer. The truth--that the Leathernecks were members of the post maintenance crew performing its routine duties, made no impression on the general public.¹⁷ Everyone, in the last analysis, reads the headlines; few people read a well reasoned reply buried halfway down the page.

Crux of the entire problem is the question of a violation, even in the case of orderlies, of the time-honored rule that no enlisted man shall be detailed as a servant for an officer. As early as 1814, Army officers were forbidden by law to "employ as a servant any soldier from the line of the army."¹⁸ This same prohibition eventually was made applicable to the Marine Corps;¹⁹ but to make assurance doubly sure, Congress made a habit of inserting a clause into Naval appropriations bills to the effect that none of the money made available therein could be used for the pay of enlisted men detailed as servants.

Typical of this attitude were the Naval appropriations and supplementary appropriations bills for the fiscal year 1943. The former, Public Law 441, authorized a total of 300 messmen to be employed at the discretion of the Secretary of the Navy but forbade the use of appropriated funds for the payment of enlisted men performing the duties of household servants in officers' quarters. The latter, Public Law 763, simply stated that Navy messmen might be employed in bachelor officers' quarters and messes specifically designated by the Secretary of the Navy.²⁰

Since it had become extremely difficult to obtain civilians to act as servants, the Marine Corps began toying with the idea of obtaining permission to establish its own messman's branch similar to the Navy's. The Division of Plans and Policies suggested that a small number of Negroes be enlisted as messmen but quickly reversed itself by pointing out that the creation of a messman's branch would leave the Corps open to public criticism. The Adjutant and Inspector, ignoring the public relations aspect of the proposition, merely stated that the enlistment of messmen would not be illegal.²¹

Ignoring the lack of enthusiasm displayed by his staff, the Commandant in December 1942 approached the Secretary of the Navy and gained an allotment to the Marine Corps of 30 messmen.²² It would seem that the Commandant acted because President Franklin D. Roosevelt was determined that an

increasing number of Negroes be inducted into the Navy and Marine Corps through Selective Service. The Chief Executive felt that the Navy could find room for these inductees without resorting to "mixed crews" on vessels of war.²³ A messman's branch, along with all-Negro support units, must have seemed like the most logical way for the Corps to carry out the President's wishes.

For reasons obscure, the messman's branch was slow in getting underway. The Commandant, in January 1943, announced his intention of forming such an organization,²⁴ but as late as March of that year the details were still to be worked out.²⁵ Principal difficulty probably lay in determining whether the 30 messmen promised the Corps would be Marines or bluejackets attached, like Hospital Corpsmen, to a certain command. A policy for the allocation of members of the Stewards Branch, U. S. Marine Corps, as the proposed messman's branch had come to be called, was finally promulgated in February 1944. Under this system, one steward and one cook from the branch would be assigned to each general officer occupying public quarters.²⁶

Following World War II, the restriction appended to appropriations was changed by Public Law 202 of the 80th Congress to forbid the payment of enlisted men employed as servants unless they had been accepted by the Corps for just that type of

duty. This slight change of wording resulted in a long-overdue definition of "service of a character performed by a household servant."

Classed among the servants were attendants, busboys, chief attendants, chief stewards, room orderlies, waiters, and bakers, cooks, chief cooks, and meat cutters--these last only if their duties were performed in officers' messes or public quarters. Exempted from the servant category were assistants to mess officers, bartenders, bookkeepers, cashiers, office clerks, commissary noncommissioned officers, janitors, maintenance men, room clerks, and subsistence clerks.²⁷

A definition would have been enough, except for one lamentable fact--the Stewards Branch was no more. In 1946 the Marine Corps rank and specialty structure, a system which called for warrants in specified branches, had been junked. Thus it became necessary in 1948 to track down all the enlisted men serving in "servant" billets and modify their enlistment contracts to read "For Steward Duty Only."²⁸ This explains the authorization in the Marine Corps Manual, 1949 to enlist men exclusively for steward duty.²⁹

Security Guards

A type of Marine detachment that has fulfilled a role quite different from that for which it was intended is the

guard posted at most naval stations. No sooner had the Navy decided to begin constructing warships than the need for Marine Guards became manifest.

In February 1800, even before work on the Washington Navy Yard was fully underway, Captain Thomas Tingley, USN, requested that adequate protection be provided by the Secretary of the Navy. First, Tingley wanted a wall thrown up around the site of the yard. Second, he asked for a company of Marines "to guard and protect the materials--wanting these the losses by pillage will no doubt be extreme."³⁰

The defense of the yard was not the main concern of these detachments. They could be, and were, called upon in an emergency; but an enemy thrust would be thwarted by fixed coastal defenses. Whether or not the Marine Corps could be called upon to help man these fortifications was left to the discretion of the President, who could order the organization to serve in the forts and garrisons of the United States, along the seacoast, or in any type of shore duty which he might direct.³¹

In deciding to employ Marines as a police force at the yards, the Navy Department was moved by two considerations. First, these Navy Yards were logical places for Marine Barracks, since the ships under construction or being refitted would require Marine guards when they put to sea. Second, in 1800 none of our cities, not even the largest, had

adequate fire fighting equipment or round-the-clock police protection.

That these detachments were important in an emergency was proved beyond a doubt during the War of 1812. Leather-necks at the Gosport Navy Yard, Norfolk, Virginia, helped man the defenses on Craney Island to halt a British attack on the Navy Yard. Again, Marines from the Washington Navy Yard took their place in the American line at Bladensburg, Maryland, in an ill-fated attempt to save the nation's capital from the oncoming Red Coats.³²

Yet, the times that Barracks detachments have taken an active part in the defense of a naval installation are few indeed. The vital and continuing importance of such units has been their availability in times of crisis. Whenever the nation has been plunged suddenly into war, the guards at naval installations have been absorbed into combat units and dispatched against the enemy. Protection of the Navy Yards has been the work of men recruited after the outbreak of hostilities, or, in the case of World War I, of reservists.

Typical of the mobilization of men from the various barracks was the assembling of an expeditionary battalion for service in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. On 16 April 1898, almost a full week before war was declared, Colonel Commandant Charles Heywood had received from the Secretary of the Navy verbal orders to organize an expeditionary force.

Within two days, the Commandant had issued the necessary orders to assemble such a battalion at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The Marines were drawn from every post along the East Coast of the United States. Twenty three officers, 623 enlisted men, and 1 Navy surgeon converged on Brooklyn, were issued the necessary equipment, and on 22 April boarded USS Panther to begin the first leg of the voyage southward.³³

Other examples of the use of security detachments as a vast manpower pool are: the Creek-Seminole Wars, 1836-1842; The Mexican War, 1846-1848; The Panama Expedition, 1903-1904; the Pacification of Cuba, 1906; the suppression of the Cuban Negro Rebellion, 1912; World War I, 1917-1918; and the expedition to Shanghai, China, 1927.

Because the reserve had been mobilized prior to the attack upon Pearl Harbor, the existence of this "force in readiness within a force in readiness" was not of vital importance in World War II. Yet, when the 1st Marine Division was being brought to wartime strength at the outset of the Korean conflict, a total of 3,630 Marines were dredged up from 105 different posts and stations. In an emergency, situation the security detachments at naval installations can play an important role. As was the case in World War I, a great many reservists were detailed to these guards during the Korean fighting. Between July 1950 and June 1951, 2,945 reservists were assigned this type of duty.³⁴

In spite of the fact that Leathernecks posted at Naval Stations frequently have been called upon for expeditionary duty, the Marine Corps has clung to the notion that these men are first and foremost security guards. As recently as 1921, with the memory of World War I fresh in his mind, the Commandant stated that "the sole purpose of stationing Marines at navy yards is to provide for the security and safety of the yard."³⁵

In specifying the duties of these detachments, the Corps has continually urged that they be employed at strictly military tasks. In 1923, for example, the Commandant, Mare Island Navy Yard, California, recommended that his civilian fire fighters be replaced by Marines under a civilian fire chief. General John A. Lejeune, then Commandant of the Marine Corps, objected that fire fighting was not a military duty, and his view was upheld.³⁶

Strange to relate, the Corps raised no objection the following year when Marines were detailed to replace civilians on the Puget Sound Navy Yard's fire department. Possibly this was an oversight, but more than likely no complaint was raised because so few men were involved--9 at Puget Sound as opposed to 30 at Mare Island.³⁷

That these security detachments could be maintained even though the Corps was dispatching peacetime expeditionary forces to the Far East and Central America was due to its own

ingenuity. During the 1920's and early 1930's, the Navy Yards became the habitat of the "short timer." Men returning from expeditionary or sea duty, whose enlistments were about to expire, were assigned to the various yards. This practice resulted in an almost continuous turnover of security personnel, thus imposing a heavy burden upon barracks commanders.³⁸ The Corps' adherence to such a policy indicates that mounting expeditionary forces was then its primary work; providing security detachments at naval installations was less important.

The withdrawal of Marines from Central America permitted the assignment of men fresh from recruit training to East Coast security detachments. In an inspection tour conducted in the summer of 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt noted the youth of the average security guard. He was not pleased, for he felt that these younger and more active Marines should be placed in combat units.³⁹ In short, he wanted a return to the old policy of utilizing "short timers" at Navy Yards.

Following World War II, the Commandant of the Marine Corps recommended that a general, vague clause be included in the Navy's statement of general policy--a sentence or two that would allow the Marine Corps to retain all its prewar missions. The Navy Department would "maintain the Marine Corps in sufficient strength and composition necessary to provide ground-air amphibious expeditionary troops requisite in a balanced fleet, as well as advance naval base defense forces, and detachments for other naval purposes."⁴⁰

Unification, the National Security Act of 1947, reaffirmed the Marine Corps mission of providing security detachments for the protection of property at naval stations and bases. This, however, was a secondary task which was not to interfere with the primary mission: providing Fleet Marine Forces for the seizure of advance naval bases and such land operations as are necessary to a successful naval campaign; and developing amphibious techniques, tactics, and equipment.⁴¹

Further recognition of the secondary importance of security detachments came in 1952 with the amendment of the National Security Act. By placing a three division-three wing "floor" beneath the Marine Corps, the nation's lawmakers again emphasized the amphibious mission.⁴²

Today, the status of the old Navy Yard guards is somewhat uncertain. No longer do our cities depend on volunteers for police and fire protection. Given adequate equipment and proper training, a civilian force can insure the internal security of most installations. Yet, there are some facilities which, either because of the secret nature of their activities or the remote areas in which they are located, must be guarded by military personnel. Protection of these places is the task of Marines. Chances are it will remain so unless the maintenance of these guards interferes with the manning of the three divisions and three wings required by law.

