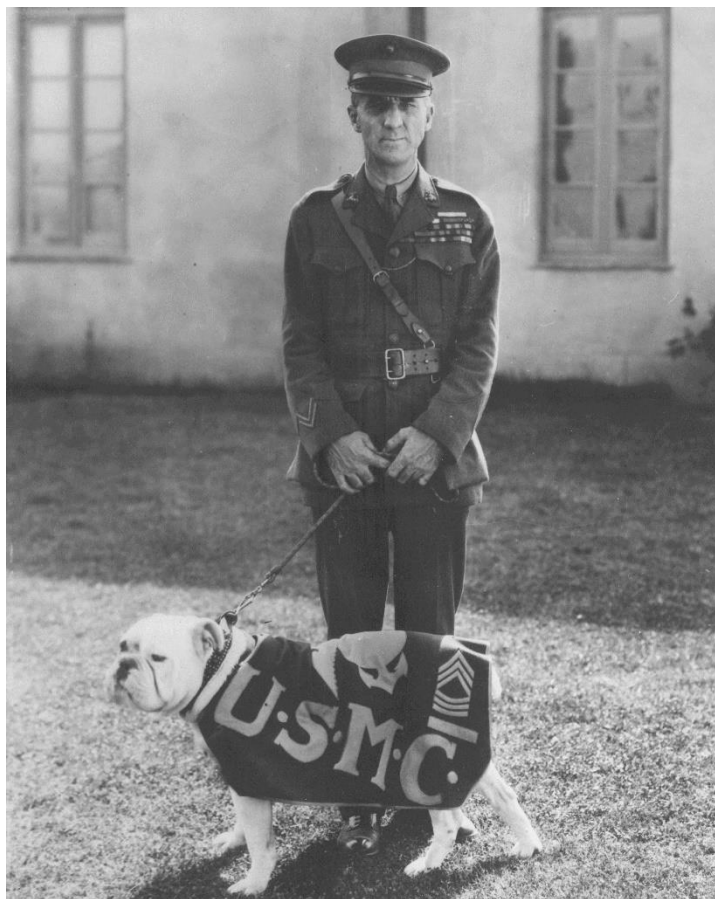




# MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

## *Major General Smedley D. Butler*

Smedley D. Butler was born on 30 July 1881 into a prominent Philadelphia family. Few Marines are as synonymous with the small wars era as Butler, who served nearly anywhere Marines landed during his more than 30-year career. After lying about his age during the Spanish-American War, Butler received an appointment as a second lieutenant in May 1898 at 17 years old. He completed a hastened training regimen at Marine Barracks Washington and served aboard ship before receiving an honorable discharge in February 1899. He commissioned as a first lieutenant two months later and received orders for the Marine Battalion at Manila, the Philippines, where he quickly earned praise as an aggressive, brave, and able leader.



*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

Butler distinguished himself amid many of the Corps' famous actions of the era, including the relief of Peking during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 and the assault against Fort Coyotepe in Nicaragua in 1912. In 1914, Butler led Marines during the landing and occupation of Vera Cruz, Mexico, for which he was awarded the Medal of Honor. Shortly thereafter, while leading an assault against Fort Riviere in Haiti, Butler and a group of Marines stormed the fort and captured the *caco* stronghold. Butler was awarded a second Medal of Honor for this action, making him and Sergeant Major Dan Daly the only Marines to receive the award twice.

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During World War I, Butler commanded the 13th Regiment, the 5th Brigade (U.S. Marines), and Camp Pontanezen in France. He returned home to become the commanding general of Marine Barracks Quantico, where he reformed the Corps' education and training policies. He also raised the Service's public profile by hosting football games and overseeing Marine-led Civil War battle reenactments. Always outspoken, Butler believed the Corps was better suited to small expeditionary operations than large-scale conventional conflicts. Major General Butler retired in 1931, becoming a prominent critic of the policies behind the small wars in which he served. He nonetheless remained proud of his service as a Marine. Smedley D. Butler died at the Naval Hospital Philadelphia on 21 June 1940.