



# MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

## Chronology of Significant Events, 1775–2025

**10 November 1775:** The Continental Congress authorizes two battalions of Marines. This is the birthday the United States Marine Corps celebrates. Two weeks later, the Continental Congress commissions Samuel Nicholas as a captain of Marines.

**3 March 1776:** Capt Samuel Nicholas and a battalion of Marines and sailors lands on New Providence Island, in the Bahamas, and captures the British fort protecting Nassau.

**December 1776–January 1777:** Maj Samuel Nicholas and a Marine battalion support Gen George Washington's army in New Jersey and participate in the Battles of Trenton, Assunpink Creek, and Princeton.

**September 1783:** As the Revolutionary War formally ends, the last Marine leaves service, marking the end of the Continental Marines.

**11 July 1798:** President John Adams signs An Act for Establishing and Organizing a Marine Corps, creating the United States Marine Corps within the Department of the Navy. The following day, President Adams appoints William Ward Burrows a major and Commandant of the Marine Corps.

**31 March 1801:** President Thomas Jefferson and Commandant Burrows ride together in Washington, DC, to select a site for a Marine barracks and a house for the Commandant.

**1801–5:** Marines serve as part of the U.S. Navy's Mediterranean Squadron during the First Barbary War. From November 1804–April 1805, 1stLt Presley O'Bannon and seven Marines accompany Navy agent William Eaton and several hundred mercenaries on an overland trek from Alexandria, Egypt, to assault Derna.

**19 August 1812:** A few months after the United States declares war on Great Britain, starting the War of 1812, Marines of the frigate USS *Constitution* (1797) take part in the defeat of the British frigate HMS *Guerriere* in a sea battle near Boston, MA.

**10 September 1813:** Marines serving with Cdre Oliver Hazard Perry's fleet on Lake Erie help defeat the British naval forces, securing American control over the Great Lakes.

**24 August 1814:** Capt Samuel Miller leads a force of about 100 Marines at the Battle of Bladensburg, MD. That night, British forces occupy Washington, DC, setting fire to several government buildings, including the U.S. Capitol and the White House.

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**8 January 1815:** Marines join MajGen Andrew Jackson's forces in the Battle of New Orleans, LA. U.S. forces repulse the British assault, inflicting more than 2,000 casualties while suffering only 13.

**17 October 1820:** President James Monroe appoints Bvt Maj Archibald Henderson, commanding the Marines in New Orleans, Lieutenant Colonel Commandant.

**7 February 1832:** About 250 Marines and sailors from the frigate USS *Potomac* (1831) land at Quallah Battoo, Sumatra, in response to attacks by pirates on American ships, setting fire to two forts.

**30 June 1834:** Congress passes An Act for the Better Organization of the Marine Corps with the intent that the Marine Corps falls under the authority of the Department of the Navy unless specifically detached by the president for service with the Army.

**23 May 1836:** President Andrew Jackson accepts Commandant Henderson's offer to provide a Marine regiment for service with the Army in the campaign against the Creek and Seminole, taking more than one-half of the Corps with him.

**July 1846–January 1847:** Marines assist in the U.S. conquest of California during the Mexican War.

**6 August–14 September 1847:** The Marine regiment forms for service with Army MajGen Winfield Scott's forces in Mexico to take part in the capture of Mexico City, seizing the fortress of Chapultepec and forming a guard at the National Palace.

**14 July 1853:** More than 100 Marines under Maj Jacob Zeilin provide an honor guard for Cdre Matthew Perry when he goes ashore at Uraga, Japan, to negotiate opening the country to American commerce on behalf of President Millard Fillmore.

**16–22 November 1856:** Marines and sailors land and capture four barrier forts on the Pearl River outside Canton, China, in retaliation for the forts' firing on American ships.

**6 January 1859:** Bvt BGen Archibald Henderson dies at the Home of the Commandants in Washington, DC.

**16–18 October 1859:** After abolitionist leader John Brown's attempt to seize the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, VA, fails, 1stLt Israel Greene leads a force of 86 Marines in capturing Brown and his men barricaded in the arsenal's fire engine house.

**21 July 1861:** Maj John G. Reynolds leads a Marine battalion of 12 officers and 353 enlisted in the First Battle of Bull Run near Manassas, VA, one of the first battles of the Civil War.

**15 May 1862:** Cpl John F. Mackie becomes the first Marine awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions while manning the guns of the ironclad USS *Galena* (1862) at Drewry's Bluff, VA.



**14 March 1863:** Serving as gun crews, Marines with Adm David Farragut's fleet help push past the Confederate forts at Port Hudson, LA, as part of Union forces' efforts to secure control of the Mississippi River.

**8 September 1863:** A force of 150 Marines joins 400 sailors in a nighttime assault on Fort Sumter, SC. The assault is repulsed, and the Marines suffer 44 total casualties.

**5 August 1864:** Marines serving with Adm David Farragut man heavy guns and provide small-arms fire in a naval battle at Mobile Bay, AL. Eight Marines are awarded the Medal of Honor for their role in the victory.

**15 January 1865:** A naval brigade of 400 Marines and 1,600 sailors from the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron land and assault Fort Fisher, a Confederate position near Wilmington, NC. The brigade sustains heavy casualties but allows U.S. soldiers to capture the fort.

**19 November 1868:** The Eagle, Globe, and Anchor is first adopted as the U.S. Marine Corps' official emblem.

**10–11 June 1871:** Marines land with a naval brigade near Inchon, Korea. The Marines lead an assault on Korean forts which had previously fired on a U.S. Navy survey party that had ignored the Korean governments' restrictions on foreign activity.

**1 October 1880:** John Philip Sousa is appointed leader of the Marine Band by CMC Charles McCawley, a position he holds until 1892.

**1883:** The Marine Corps formally adopts *Semper Fidelis* (Always Faithful) as its official motto.

**15 February 1898:** Twenty-eight Marines are among the nearly 250 Americans killed after an explosion sinks the battleship USS *Maine* (1895) in the harbor at Havana, Cuba. Although later determined to be an accident, the explosion serves as the catalyst for Spanish-American War, which begins in April 1898.

**3 May 1898:** Marines land at Cavite Navy Yard in Manila Bay, the Philippines, days after participating in Cdre George Dewey's victory over the Spanish fleet.

**10–14 June 1898:** The First Marine Battalion, commanded by LtCol Robert Huntington, lands at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, to establish an advanced base for the U.S. fleet. On 14 June, two companies defeat Spanish forces at the Battle of Cuzco Well.

**May–September 1900:** Marines join forces from Great Britain, Russia, and other nations as part of the relief expedition sent to defend the International Legation in Peking, China, during the Boxer Rebellion.

**December 1901–January 1902:** During the Philippine campaign, Maj Littleton W. T. Waller leads 55 Marines as well as Filipino scouts and porters on an expedition on Samar, the Philippines. Hampered by poor conditions and tensions, 10 Marines die during the expedition.



**November–December 1903:** After Panama declares independence, Marines land to secure the isthmus from Colombian forces. Panama and the United States then sign a treaty that allows the United States to build and operate the Panama Canal, which will link the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

**August 1912–October 1912:** A Marine regiment is sent to Nicaragua amid a civil war there to restore stability and safeguard American interests in the country.

**20 August 1912:** 1stLt Alfred A. Cunningham conducts his first solo flight, becoming the first Marine aviator.

**April–November 1914:** Marines land and occupy Vera Cruz following the Tampico Affair.

**28 July 1915:** Following the assassination of Haiti’s president, Marines land in Port-au-Prince to protect American lives and property, beginning the Marine occupation of Haiti that lasts until 1934.

**5 May 1916:** A Marine battalion lands at Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, to reestablish law and order when civil war breaks out in the streets of the city. Additional Marines arrive in June to establish an effective government following years of instability, thereby beginning an eight-year occupation of the country.

**29 August 1916:** The Naval Appropriations Act of 1916 authorizes the formation of the Marine Corps Reserve.

**14 May 1917:** A month after the United States enters World War I, Marines from Annapolis, MD, become the first to relocate to the new base at Quantico, VA.

**23 October 1917:** The 4th Brigade (U.S. Marines) is formed when the 6th Regiment arrives in France and joins the 5th Regiment. The brigade is later attached to the U.S. Army’s 2d Division.

**6 June 1918:** The 4th Brigade (U.S. Marines) counterattacks against the German advance at Belleau Wood, incurring more than 1,000 killed and wounded.

**18 July 1918:** The 4th Brigade (U.S. Marines) leads the U.S. assault at the start of the Battle of Soissons.

**30 July 1918:** The 1st Aviation Force arrives in France for service on the western front.

**13 August 1918:** Opha May Johnson, a civilian clerk at Headquarters Marine Corps, takes her oath of enlistment to become the first woman to join Marine Corps.

**12–15 September 1918:** During the attack on the Saint-Mihiel salient, the 4th Brigade (U.S. Marines) suffers more than 900 casualties in three days.

**3–10 October 1918:** The 4th Brigade (U.S. Marines) captures Blanc Mont Ridge, incurring more than 2,600 casualties.



**1-11 November 1918:** The 4th Brigade (U.S. Marines) joins the Meuse-Argonne offensive, helping drive back German forces to the Meuse River. The brigade secures positions on the opposite bank by the morning of 11 November, hours before the Armistice ending the war takes effect.

**1 July 1920:** MajGen John A. Lejeune becomes the 13th Commandant of the Marine Corps.

**1 November 1921:** CMC John A. Lejeune issues Marine Corps Order No. 47, Series 1921, formally establishing 10 November as the Marine Corps' birthday.

**10 January 1927:** Marines land in Nicaragua amid renewed civil war. The Marines will occupy the country until 1934.

**21 March 1927:** The 4th Regiment lands at Shanghai, China, to help protect Americans in the International Settlement, where they will remain until 1941.

**August 1933:** CMC Ben H. Fuller formally establishes the FMF. That December, *General Order 241* incorporates the FMF into fleet operations.

**14 November 1933:** Marines at Quantico begin work on the *Tentative Landing Manual*. This manual will guide the Marine Corps' planning for amphibious assaults throughout World War II.

**1 May 1941:** Marine Barracks New River is established near Jacksonville, NC. It is renamed in honor of CMC Lejeune the following year.

**7 December 1941:** Japanese forces attack U.S. Navy forces at Pearl Harbor, HI, as well as other nearby Navy and Army installations, leading to the United States' entry into World War II. During the following days, Japanese forces will capture American possessions at Wake Island and Guam and invade the Philippines.

**April 1942:** The federal government purchases more than 120,000 acres of land north of San Diego, CA, to train and house troops for operations in the Pacific. The installation is later named Camp Pendleton.

**6 May 1942:** U.S. forces, including the 4th Marines, isolated on Corregidor, the Philippines, surrender to Japanese forces. That month, Japan will complete its conquest of the Philippines.

**1 June 1942:** The Marine Corps establishes a segregated training facility at Montford Point, Camp Lejeune. Alfred Masters and George O. Thompson become the first Black Marines since the Revolutionary War.

**7 August 1942-9 February 1943:** The 1st Marine Division lands on Guadalcanal and Tulagi. The contest for the island will last until February 1943 and become the first ground victory against the Japanese.



**31 January–4 February 1943:** MajGen Holland M. Smith's V Amphibious Corps conducts Operation Flintlock to capture Kwajalein Atoll and Majuro Island. The 4th Marine Division captures Roi and Namur Islands.

**21 June 1943:** Elements of the 4th Raider Battalion land on New Georgia in support of Operation Cartwheel, the effort to isolate the Japanese base at Rabaul and neutralize Japanese forces on New Guinea.

**1 November 1943:** The 3d Marine Division lands on Bougainville in support of Operation Cartwheel, where it remains until relieved in January 1944.

**20–23 November 1943:** The 2d Marine Division lands on Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll. Marines fight for three days against fierce Japanese resistance to capture the island.

**26 December 1943–23 April 1944:** The 1st Marine Division lands at Cape Gloucester on the island of New Britain as part of Operation Cartwheel. The division drives eastward along the island until turning over responsibility to the Army in April 1944.

**15 June–9 July 1944:** The 2d and 4th Marine Divisions land on Saipan as part of V Amphibious Corps' assault. Saipan is declared secure on 9 July.

**21 July–10 August 1944:** The 3d Marine Division and the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade of the III Amphibious Corps establish beachheads on Guam. Organized resistance ends on 10 August, though pockets of Japanese holdouts remain for the rest of the war.

**24 July–1 August 1944:** The 4th Marine Division lands on Tinian on 24 July, and the 2d Marine Division lands the following day, as part of an eight-day operation to capture the island.

**15–30 September 1944:** The 1st Marine Division lands on Peleliu, in the Palau Islands, for what becomes a savage fight to capture the island.

**19 February–26 March 1945:** V Amphibious Corps' 4th and 5th Marine Divisions land on Iwo Jima on 19 February. By 25 February, the 3d Marine Division is committed for a painstaking and bloody conquest of the island. Iwo Jima is declared secure on 26 March, but pockets of Japanese force remain active until the end of the war.

**23 February 1945:** Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal captures the famous image of six Marines raising the second American flag on Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima.

**1 April–21 June 1945:** III Amphibious Corps' 1st and 6th Marine Divisions, with the 2d Marine Division in reserve, land on Okinawa on 1 April. Japanese resistance on Okinawa proves especially fierce. After three months, organized resistance ends on 21 June.

**2 September 1945:** Japan formally surrenders, ending World War II. The 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, will become among the first U.S. occupation troops in Japan. Other Marines will land in China to ensure remaining Japanese forces comply with the surrender.



**26 July 1947:** President Harry S. Truman signs the National Security Act of 1947. The act secures the Marine Corps' status as a separate Service within the Navy Department, gives the Corps primary responsibility for developing amphibious operations capabilities, and guarantees the existence of Marine Aviation.

**1 December 1947:** The Marine Corps activates its first helicopter squadron, Marine Helicopter Squadron 1 (HMX-1), at Quantico, VA.

**2 August 1950:** The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade begins arriving at the Pusan Perimeter in South Korea to reinforce the U.S. and South Korean troops holding out against the North Korean invasion.

**15–28 September 1950:** The 1st Marine Division spearheads the amphibious assault at Inchon, South Korea. U.S. forces then drive inland, and the 1st Marine Division liberates Seoul by the end of the month.

**27 November 1950–15 December 1950:** The 1st Marine Division fights a desperate action to break out of an encirclement by Chinese Communist Forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea.

**May–November 1951:** The 1st Marine Division launches a counterattack toward an area known as “The Punchbowl,” reaching it by mid-June. After a series of offensives and counteroffensives, the frontlines stabilize into a general stalemate in the fall, which will largely hold until an armistice is reached in 1953.

**21 September 1951:** Marine Helicopter Transport Squadron 161 lifts 224 combat-loaded Marines to occupy Hill 884 in the Korean War, in one of the first examples of heliborne combat operations.

**10 November 1954:** The Marine Corps War Memorial is dedicated at Arlington, VA. The memorial consists of a statue depicting the February 1945 flag raising on Iwo Jima, with the names of every conflict in which Marines have fought and died.

**June 1956:** The Hogaboom Board convenes at Quantico, VA, to recommend changes to the FMF organization. The board's recommendations are instrumental in the development of the Marine air-ground task force and incorporation of helicopters into Marine operations.

**23 May 1957:** SgtMaj Wilbur Bestwick is appointed the first Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, the Commandant's senior enlisted advisor.

**15 July–18 October 1958:** More than 1,700 Marines from the U.S. Sixth Fleet land at Beirut, Lebanon, as part of the U.S. intervention during a political and religious crisis. Eventually, 6,000 Marines deploy to Lebanon before U.S. forces withdraw on 18 October.



**9 April 1962:** Operation Shufly begins as a Marine helicopter task unit arrives in the Republic of Vietnam, the first substantial Marine Corps contribution to assist South Vietnamese forces in the Vietnam War.

**8 March–6 May 1965:** The 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, arrives in Da Nang to defend the U.S. air base. As the United States' commitment increases, the III MAF replaces the brigade in May, which includes the 3d Marine Division, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, and supporting elements. III MAF will remain the predominant Marine Corps contribution to operations in Vietnam until 1971.

**1 August 1965:** What becomes known as the Combined Action Program begins in III MAF's area of operations. Combined action platoons will be assigned to specific South Vietnamese villages to assist local forces and develop closer relationships with the South Vietnamese population as part of III MAF's pacification program.

**18–24 August 1965:** The 7th Marines conducts an amphibious and helicopter assault to defeat the *1st Viet Cong Regiment* in Operation Starlite, inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy during substantial fighting on the Van Toung Peninsula south of Chu Lai, South Vietnam.

**24 April–11 May 1967:** The "First Battle of Khe Sanh" or "Hill Fights" takes place. Units of the 3d Marine Division clear the hills overlooking the base at Khe Sanh, a position that is to interdict North Vietnamese troops entering South Vietnam.

**29 January–28 February 1968:** Communist forces launch an offensive throughout South Vietnam during the Tet holidays, including an attack on the U.S. base at Da Nang. The 1st Marine Division, reinforced by elements of the U.S. Army 23d Infantry Division, continues operations in the Da Nang area through February.

**31 January–2 March 1968:** During the Battle of Hue City, the North Vietnamese capture most of the old imperial capital except for small pockets of resistance. Elements of the 1st Marine Division's Task Force X-Ray, the 1st ARVN Division, and the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) retake the city with significant losses.

**22 January–18 March 1969:** The 9th Marines and the 2d Battalion, 12th Marines, conduct Operation Dewey Canyon in the Da Krong Valley, South Vietnam, to disrupt enemy base areas along the border with Laos.

**27 June 1971:** The 3d Marine Amphibious Brigade is deactivated, and the last Marine combat units depart South Vietnam. More than 500 Marines continue to serve as advisors and in noncombat roles alongside the remaining 240,000 troops.

**29 April 1975:** The 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade conducts Operation Frequent Wind, the evacuation of Americans, third-country nationals, and some South Vietnamese officials and civilians from Saigon. The capital will fall to North Vietnamese forces the next day.



**14–15 May 1975:** Marines recapture the U.S. merchant ship SS *Mayaguez* after Cambodian Communists, the Khmer Rouge, seize the vessel and its crew on 12 May. In the operation, Marine forces engage in a fierce battle with a Khmer Rouge force on Koh Tang Island, which leaves 11 Marines and 2 Navy corpsmen being killed in action and 3 Marines missing in action.

**1979:** CMC Louis H. Wilson becomes the first Commandant to serve as a full and equal member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

**23 October 1983:** In Beirut, Lebanon, a suicide bombing at a barracks housing Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, kills 220 Marines and wounds 70.

**25 October 1983:** The 22d Marine Amphibious Unit takes part in Operation Urgent Fury to restore Grenada's government following a Communist coup and to ensure the safety of Americans in the country.

**1 July 1987:** Gen Alfred M. Gray Jr. becomes the 29th CMC. He will issue *Warfighting* (FMFM-1) in 1989, establishing maneuver warfare as the official Marine Corps doctrine.

**20 December 1989:** Marines of the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, and the 2d Light Armored Infantry Battalion participate in Operation Just Cause, the invasion of Panama.

**15 August 1990–15 January 1991:** After Iraq invades Kuwait and threatens its neighbors, Marines from I and II MEF flow into Saudi Arabia as part of Operation Desert Shield, a build-up of U.S. and Coalition forces to deter Iraqi aggression and prepare for the potential liberation of Kuwait.

**17–23 January 1991:** Marine aircraft participate in the allied air campaign against targets in Iraq and Kuwait.

**24–28 February 1991:** After an intense bombing campaign, Operation Desert Storm's ground campaign begins. The 1st and 2d Marine Divisions advance through the Kuwaiti border toward Kuwait City, while the main Coalition force attacks Iraqi forces from behind through Iraq. Marines lead the liberation of Kuwait in a stunning victory that lasts only 100 hours.

**12 September 2001:** Marine McDonnell Douglas F/A-18 Hornets from VMFA-321 fly air patrols over Washington, DC, following the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001.

**25 November 2001:** The 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit lands by air in Afghanistan and sets up Camp Rhino at an airfield near Kandahar. The Marines begin air and ground operations in search of al-Qaeda and Taliban members in the area.

**20–21 March 2003:** Operation Iraqi Freedom commences, and I MEF crosses into Iraq. The 1st Marine Division seizes key facilities in the al-Rumaylah oil fields, preventing the Iraqi Army from sabotaging the nearly 500 wells.

**23 March 2003:** Task Force Tarawa (2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade) becomes engaged in fierce fighting in an-Nasiriyah in its attempts to seize key bridges over the Euphrates River.



**4–9 April 2003:** I MEF forces participate in isolating Baghdad and occupy the capital as Iraqi resistance collapses.

**5 April 2004:** Operation Vigilant Resolve begins as the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, and the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, surround the insurgent-controlled city of Fallujah. Marines face intense resistance and withdraw by the end of the month, leaving Fallujah under enemy control.

**7 November–20 December 2004:** Operation Phantom Fury, also known as the Second Battle of Fallujah, begins when elements of the 1st Marine Division participate in efforts to surround and kill or capture all insurgents in the city.

**30 September 2005:** Gen Peter Pace becomes the first Marine to serve as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

**28 October 2005:** Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC) is established.

**23 January 2010:** II MEF (Fwd) turns over responsibility to the U.S. Army's 1st Armored Division in ar-Ramadi, as the last major Marine headquarters departs Iraq.

**February–December 2010:** The 2d MEB participates in the Battle of Marjah in Afghanistan with the objective of eliminating the last Taliban stronghold in Helmand Province. Officially, the battle lasts until December, but the Taliban fighters remain active for years afterward.

**14 September 2012:** Taliban fighters wearing U.S. Army uniforms breach the defenses at Camp Bastion in Helmand Province. For the first time since the defense of Wake Island in 1942, aviation Marines fight as infantry while repulsing the attack.

**1 October 2014:** Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Crisis Response–Central Command deploys in support of operations against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Iraq, the first Marine deployment in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

**March 2020:** CMC David H. Berger promulgates *Force Design 2030* to prepare the Marine Corps for future conflict. It is the most ambitious restructuring of the Marine Corps in decades.

**26 August 2021:** Amid the U.S. evacuation from Afghanistan at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, a suicide bomber detonates at Abbey Gate, killing 11 Marines, 1 sailor, 1 soldier, and an estimated 170 Afghan civilians.

**3 March 2022:** The 3rd Marines is redesignated as the 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, becoming the first operational unit established under the Force Design 2030 initiative.