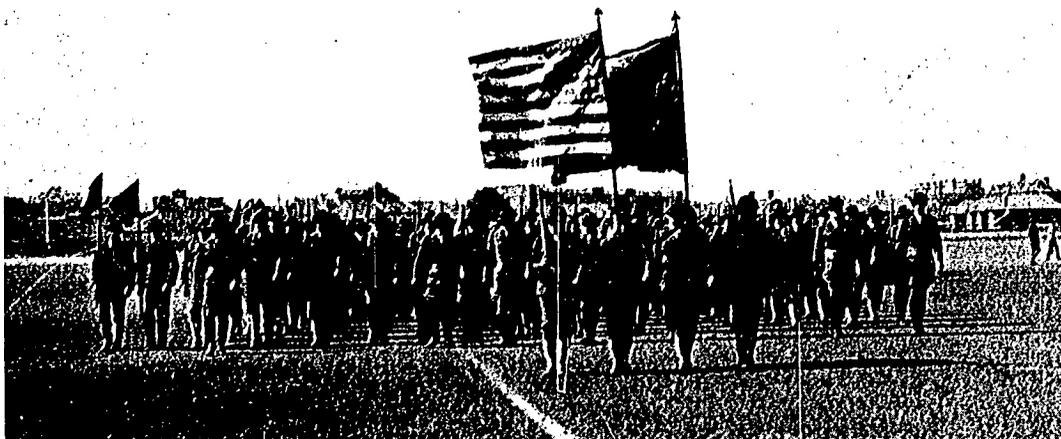


Regiments of the Corps

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Regiments of the Corps

by James S. Santelli and Gabrielle M. Neufeld

Archibald Henderson's expeditionary force against the Seminoles in 1836, was only the first of many illustrious regiments that would follow.

The Marine Corps was in existence for more than 100 years before its strength numbered 4,800 men, roughly the size of a present reinforced regiment. Basically, during this early period, the only permanent organizations in the Corps were barracks and ships' detachments. On occasions provisional battalions were formed for expeditionary service with the personnel mainly coming from the above organizations. Little thought was given to the creation of regimental size units until after the Spanish-American War except for a few isolated instances. One instant occurred in 1836 when an expeditionary regiment was formed to fight the Creeks in Georgia and the Seminoles in Florida. Under the command of Colonel Archibald Henderson, Commandant of the Marine Corps, this provisional regiment was composed of two battalions. Initially, the first battalion had five companies while the second battalion had three companies. Its size was small by today's standards—less than 500 men—yet it totalled almost half the strength of the Marine Corps. It stayed in existence for approximately a year and then was disbanded. Again, during the Mexican War, Henderson (brevetted a brigadier general for the Seminole War), set out to organize a reg-

iment. A regimental headquarters and one battalion were hastily assembled in spring 1847. The unit sailed for Mexico that May from Fort Hamilton, New York. The second battalion of the regiment was never formed since the Marines slated for service in it were needed elsewhere. Upon arriving at Vera Cruz those elements that were designated as part of the regiment were reorganized to form a battalion.

The outbreak of the Philippine Insurrection in 1899, the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, and the continuation of unsettled conditions in the Caribbean forced the United States to maintain a relatively sizable naval establishment in order to protect its overseas interests. In the above crises and in other instances the Marine Corps was used as an instrument of American foreign policy and as a result it acquired the additional responsibility of providing for expeditionary and garrison forces. This had its effect on the structure of the Corps. A number of temporary organizations which were designated as regiments and bore the titles of 1st and 2d Regiments first made their appearance shortly after the end of the War with Spain.

In European armies, a regiment, always under the command of a colonel, was the largest permanent body of troops. The regimental system existed only where standing armies were maintained. Traditionally officers and men remained with the same regiment throughout their service. The regiment's strength could vary and it could comprise any number of companies or battalions.

It was not unusual for the Marine Corps following the introduction of the regimental system at the turn of the century to have in existence two regiments with the same designation. Consequently, while a 1st Regiment and a 2d Regiment were in existence in the Far East there were regiments bearing similar designations serving in the Caribbean. These organizations were brought into being for specific purposes and were then disbanded upon completion of the assigned mission. Generally speaking such units are considered more provisional rather than permanent in nature. In no way, except perhaps sentimentally, are they connected to present organizations which bear similar designations.

Naval strategists in the early 1900's began thinking in terms of creating a well organized force that would accompany the fleet in times of trouble and that would have the capability of seizing and holding advance bases. The experience of the Marines at Guantanamo Bay and at Cavite in the Philippines had effectively demonstrated the feasibility of this concept. Regimental size units were thought to be best suited for this purpose. The first regiments created solely to capture overseas bases were the 1st and 2d Advance Base Regiments. Activation of the two reg-

iments occurred in 1913. These organizations are considered by Marine historians to be the first permanent regiments in the Marine Corps.

The United States during the next three years sent expeditionary forces to Mexico, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. The Marine Corps in all three interventions was directed to furnish the nucleus of the expeditionary unit. In addition to the employment of the two advance base regiments in these crises, provisional regiments, including a 5th Regiment, were formed from hastily assembled separate companies, ships' detachments, and barracks' personnel. The provisional regiments, as in the past, were for the most part deactivated once their expeditionary duty was ended. However, the prolonged need for the employment of Marine expeditionary forces in Latin America perpetuated the continued existence of some of these provisional regiments. This had the effect of making permanent a unit that had initially been created for a temporary expediency. For example, the deterioration of relations between Mexico and the United States was the immediate cause for the activation of the 4th Regiment in 1914. The 3d Regiment was brought into existence two years later for occupation duty in the Dominican Republic. As a result, the present 3d and 4th Marines trace their lineage to units that had been created specifically for intervention purposes in the years immediately preceding the First World War.

The Marine Corps' strength at the time of America's entry into the war on 6 April 1917 totalled less than 14,000. Major General-Commandant George Barnett, foreseeing the need for a large expeditionary force, immediately put forth the idea of sending Marine forces to the Western Front. Acceptance of his suggestion came on 16 May 1917 when the Secretary of the Army, in a letter to the Secretary of the Navy, asked for a Marine contingent to accompany the expeditionary force. This initial request expressed a desire that the unit to be sent would be a regiment organized along lines



6th Marines rest en route to Belleau Wood.

identical to a regiment in the regular Army. Such a unit contained a headquarters company and three battalions with an aggregate strength of nearly 3,000 men. On the other hand, the composition of a Marine regiment in 1917 ordinarily included a headquarters element and individual companies with no battalion structure.

Four Marine regiments were in existence when the decision was reached to send Marines to Europe. Only one—the 1st in Philadelphia—was stationed in the United States; the other three—the 2d in Haiti and the 3d and 4th in the Dominican Republic—continued to perform garrison duty. Four Marine regiments—the 5th, 6th, 11th, and 13th—were eventually deployed to France and all contained the Army's concept of a regiment with three battalions. Other Marine regiments activated during World War I retained the old structure which excluded the formal grouping of companies into battalions.

The 5th Regiment was the first of 10 regiments to be organized during the war. Immediately after its formation the regiment was sent to France during June and July 1917. The 6th Regiment which was activated a few weeks after the 5th was also ordered to France. Most of the unit arrived in October and November 1917 with the last elements disembarking in France in February 1918. The next three regiments to be brought into existence—the 7th, 8th, and 9th—never saw service in Europe. The 7th Regiment was specifically created for occupation duty in Cuba. The 8th and 9th Regiments formed part of the 3d Brigade organized to thwart any potential German attempts to seize areas in the Caribbean and Central America. The Marine Corps' first artillery regiment, the 10th, was redesignated from the Mobile Artillery Force. It has the distinction of being the only Marine regiment to function solely as an artillery organization through its entire history. This unit had originally been trained and equipped with heavy guns for service in Europe. Yet, inter-service rivalry prevented the regiment from seeing action during the war. The

Army was adamant in its opposition to using Marine artillery units in Europe but had no such objections to employing Marine infantry organizations. Gen Barnett, in April 1918, offered the 10th Regiment for service in France but was turned down by the War Department. In August, Gen Peyton C. March, Army Chief of Staff, rebuffed Barnett's offer once again by replying that the AEF no longer needed more artillery.

The 11th and 13th Regiments were the last Marine regiments to be deployed to France. The 11th was first created as an artillery unit but was reorganized in September 1918 as an infantry unit. The 14th and 15th Regiments, although formed after the Armistice, were activated for possible use in Europe in case hostilities were resumed. The final three regiments activated were organized as infantry units. In later years these regiments—the 13th, 14th, and 15th—were reactivated as artillery units.

Curiously enough no 12th Regiment was ever formed during World War I. An adequate explanation is lacking for this jump in sequence in numerical designation of regiments. The first activation of the 12th Regiment did not take place until 1927 when it was organized as an infantry unit. An internal crisis in China was the reason for its formation.

In a little over a year and a half the strength of the Corps had reached a high of 75,100. The Marine Corps adjusted to the reduction in strength of the Armed Services following the end of World War I by deactivating a number of regiments. The regiments that remained in existence were generally deployed outside the United States. The 4th Regiment was the only regiment to see continuous service during the interwar period. This unit was for the most part located in Shanghai, China. At the outbreak of World War II it was the only Marine regiment to be stationed in the Far East. Other Marine regiments on various occasions saw duty in Latin America and China during the interwar period. The 2d was in Haiti; the 1st, 3d, and 15th in the Dominican Republic; the 5th and 11th in Nicaragua; and the 6th and 12th in China. In addition, there were a few instances when battalions of other regiments were deployed in the above areas.

In 1930, the Marine Corps started designating its regiments as "Marines." It thus formalized by redesignation a colloquial term that had been used as far back as World War I to differentiate Marine regiments from Army regiments.

The redeployment of Marine forces from Nicaragua and Haiti during the early 1930's was a major factor in the deactivation of several Marine units including regimental size organizations. This withdrawal provided a sufficient number of men for the organization in January 1934 of the Fleet Marine Force, formed for the specific purpose of carrying out amphibious



28th Marines assault Iwo Jima, Feb 1945.

United States Marine Corps



HONORS

AWARDED

1st Marines	15th Marines
2nd Marines	16th Marines
3rd Marines	17th Marines
4th Marines	18th Marines
5th Marines	19th Marines
6th Marines	20th Marines
7th Marines	21st Marines
8th Marines	22nd Marines
9th Marines	23rd Marines
10th Marines	24th Marines
11th Marines	25th Marines
12th Marines	26th Marines
13th Marines	27th Marines
14th Marines	28th Marines
29th Marines	

warfare operations. The creation of the FMF, as an integral part of the U.S. Fleet, was the basis for the subsequent reactivation of the 5th and 6th Marines. The 5th Marines formed the nucleus of the 1st Marine Brigade which became the East Coast contingent to the Fleet Marine Force. Similarly, the 6th Marines formed the nucleus of the 2d Marine Brigade on the West Coast. The 1st Brigade was activated on 1 September 1935 while the 2d Brigade was not activated until 1 July 1936. No other regiments were brought back into existence following the reestablishment of the 5th and 6th Marines. The Marine Corps, as a result, had only three complete regiments—the 4th, 5th, and 6th—on active duty during the next five and a half years. It should be noted, however, that battalions of certain regiments appeared periodically but minus the headquarters element. A 1st and a 2d Battalion, 15th Marines, for example, were in existence in the late 1930's. The 1st Battalion was located at Quantico while 2/15 was at San Diego. No regimental headquarters was activated; consequently, the regiment itself cannot be regarded as being on active duty, although the designation of 15th Marines was an intrinsic part of the battalions' title.

No basic inherent changes occurred in those few regiments that were on active duty in the 1930's. But there was some thought given to the

restructuring of the regimental system prior to World War II. One of the more interesting proposals called for the elimination of the administrative duties of a regiment when it functioned under a brigade. Administrative duties would be assumed by the brigade staff. The battalions would look to the brigade rather than to the regiment for administrative support. The regimental commander, theoretically, would therefore be permitted to devote all his time and concentrate all his energies on assigned combat missions. Although this plan was considered, it was never implemented.

The Marine Corps nearly tripled in size in the two years preceding the attack on Pearl Harbor. An outgrowth of this expansion was the reactivation of the 8th and 10th Marines in 1940. Four more regiments were reborn in early 1941—the 1st, 2d, 7th, and 11th. The eruption of hostilities caused a rapid increase in the strength of the Corps. In less than four years it reached a peak of 485,053. Twenty-nine infantry, artillery, and engineer regiments saw active duty during the war, although all were not in existence at the same time. Every regiment with the exception of the 16th Marines participated in at least one World War II campaign. Additionally, a number of specialized regiments including raider, parachute, and service regiments were created. One of these organizations, the 1st Raider Regiment, was used to reform the 4th Marines when that unit was reconstituted in 1944. Two years before, the 4th Marines was forced to surrender to the Japanese on Corregidor. This was the first and only time a Marine unit of a battalion size or larger was captured by enemy troops. With the capture of the 4th Marines the only unit in the Marine Corps to have uninterrupted service since 1914 temporarily dropped from the rolls. Reactivation of the regiment came about partly as a result of fulfilling a need for more infantry regiments and partly because of the desire to preserve the lineage and honors of the 4th Marines.



11th Marines pound enemy in Korea, Jun 1951.



4th Marines depart drop zone, RVN, Jul 1966.

The Marine Corps had six divisions by late summer 1944. The first two divisions came into existence in February 1941 by the redesignation of the 1st and 2d Marine Brigades. Discussion on the formation of divisions within the Marine Corps began soon after the end of World War I. Plans varied as to the possible composition with numerous ideas being put forth. One suggestion called for the creation within the division of an anti-aircraft regiment of three battalions. This suggestion was made in 1936; however, no anti-aircraft regiment was ever activated. A more unusual proposal had occurred three years earlier. A strong recommendation was made for the inclusion of a medical regiment as one of the organic units in any future division. The composition of this medical regiment included a headquarters element and two battalions, each consisting of a headquarters company, collecting company, ambulance company, and hospital company. This proposal was never adopted. Instead, the divisions, once formed, were assigned only a single medical battalion.

The Marine divisions were patterned after the Army's triangular infantry division, basically three infantry regiments of three battalions each. The Marine Corps added to the division an artillery regiment plus various supporting elements. Six artillery regiments saw service in the second World War. All but one had been previously activated as infantry units. For a while some artillery regiments contained five battalions. This was later modified. By mid 1944, all artillery regiments had been reorganized and were then composed of only four battalions.

At one point in the war the organic structure of a division included an engineer regiment. This was the only instance in the history of the Corps when Marine engineer regiments appeared. Five such organizations—the 16th through the 20th—were brought into being. All were deactivated by September 1944 with separate engineer and pioneer battalions picking up their duties. The 6th Marine Division was the only division that never had an engineer reg-

iment assigned to it as it was activated late in the war under revised tables of organization. An interesting characteristic of the engineer regiments was that all third battalions were actually naval construction battalions composed solely of Navy personnel. Upon deactivation of the regiments these battalions acquired a Seabee designation.

When hostilities ended in August 1945, 24 infantry and artillery regiments were on active duty in the Marine Corps. Speedy demobilization commenced with the surrender of Japan. In less than a year, the size of the Marine Corps was reduced by approximately 330,000 officers and men. This decline in strength persisted through the late 1940s, but at a more gradual rate. Paralleling the reduction in personnel was the disbandment of numerous Marine Corps units including most of the regiments on active duty. Reactivations and deactivations of the same units occurred frequently. Regiments, in addition, were not only decreased in size but also altered in their intrinsic structure. For example, the number of battalions comprising a regiment tended to fluctuate. And often some regiments, in reality, existed solely on paper.

The Marine Corps despite demobilization attempted for two years to maintain a skeletonized version of the wartime Fleet Marine Force. A major reorganization in fall 1947 endeavored to correct this incongruity. Regiments were affected in so far as they were reduced to battalion size organizations. Thus, an infantry "regiment" consisted of three rifle companies plus a headquarters and service company. The so-called new "regiment" retained little resemblance to its predecessors in composition. The traditional numerical designation remained but scarcely anything else. It should be noted that although such units bore regimental titles they never were considered true regiments by the Marine Corps.

Only those regiments that, by and large, were historically significant continued in existence under the revised tables of organization. Consequently, just units bearing designations from 1st to 11th Marines were reactivated or were maintained on active duty. This had the effect of perpetuating the historical lineage and honors of the oldest regiments in the Corps.

Further reductions in strength in October 1949 brought about another restructuring and more deactivations of units bearing regimental designations. Only five such organizations, the 2d, 5th, 6th, 10th, and 11th, remained on the rolls after that year. An important alteration also took place in the composition of these units. The one-battalion size regiment was essentially scraped in favor of the traditional form. At this time the 2d Marines consisted of two battalions plus headquarters and service elements while the 5th and 6th Marines each had three battalions plus headquarters and service elements. The 10th

Marines which had its 1st and 2d Battalions reactivated in December. 1948 saw its 3d Battalion come back into being. The 11th Marines was the only one of the five regiments not to have two or more of its battalions reactivated. The 1st Battalion alone was reactivated. The other three battalions along with the 4th Battalion, 10th Marines were not reactivated until August 1950, shortly after the outbreak of the Korean War.

Less than three weeks after the North Korean Army crossed the 38th Parallel, Marine units were sailing to Korea. The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade was the first combat force to be sent from the United States. The major element in the brigade was the 5th Marines. Eventually, four regiments, all part of the 1st Marine Division, served in Korea. The Marine Corps, once again, had to quickly build up its strength to meet a wartime emergency. Eight regiments were activated during the war and all were reformed along previously accepted lines.

The 12 regiments that were on active duty at the end of the war continued in the post war period. This was unique in Marine Corps history. Korea was the only exception in which at least some regiments, that had been either activated or reactivated during a war, were not deactivated upon cessation of hostilities. Combat regiments were grouped into the present three active Marine divisions. Although the structure of the Army's division changed in the late 1950's, the Marine Corps' division stayed essentially the same, making it the largest and heaviest infantry-type division in the world. The regiment still was kept as the major combat maneuver unit in a Marine division.

The experience of the Corps since the Korean War was usually not one of deploying a regiment as a whole for contingency or emergency type operations. Instead, it has been the practice to employ a reinforced battalion or a battalion landing team in such situations. This was the case in Lebanon (1958) and in the Dominican Republic (1965). No regiment in its entirety was deployed in either landing—just elements of individual regiments. In Vietnam full regiments did deploy, although they arrived in battalion-size increments. Regiments tended not to remain as intact as in previous combat situations. Because the Vietnam War was repeatedly fought on a battalion or lower level, a curious change came in the normal Marine task organization. Previously, the organic elements of a regiment with few exceptions ordinarily remained under the operational and administrative control of the parent organization. But in Vietnam the nature of the war was such that one or more battalions of one regiment were frequently fighting under the operational control of another regiment or a task force headquarters. On the other hand, an infantry regiment could have operational control of a number of units which were not its own,

and which, in effect, could enlarge the regiment to brigade size. The 4th Marines, for instance, had operational control in summer 1965 of 1/4, 2/4, 3/3, 3/12 plus supporting elements. A more pronounced example was the 3d Marines in spring 1967 when it had operational control over 2/3, 3/3, 1/9, 2/9, 3/9, 1/26 plus supporting elements.

A total of 10 infantry and artillery regiments plus half of another regiment engaged in combat operations in Vietnam. The 1st Force Service Regiment also served in Vietnam although not as a separate regiment. Upon arriving there in February 1967, the regiment became an integral part of Force Logistic Command and carried both designations in its title. The pressing needs for more Marines in Southeast Asia had caused the reactivation of the 5th Marine Division and its major units. The 13th, 26th, and 27th Marines were reactivated in 1966 while the 28th Marines was reborn in the following year. Of these units, the 26th and 27th Marines and two battalions of the 13th Marines were sent to the war zone. However, with the redeployment of military forces from Vietnam the division and all its regiments were deactivated.

The number of infantry and artillery regiments on active duty currently remains at 12, with the 5th Marines having by far the longest span of continuous existence. Additionally, there are four regiments on duty in the Marine Corps Reserve. A major reorganization of the Reserve commencing in July 1962 led to the reformation of both the 4th Marine Division and 4th Marine Aircraft Wing. Eventually, the 14th, 23d, 24th, and 25th Marines were brought back into being on a reserve basis. Reactivation of the regiments occurred on 1 February 1966 when the headquarters of each organization was reborn. Individual battalions of the regiments however had been reactivated in 1962. Lineage and honors previously earned by earlier units with the same designation are now carried by the reserve regiments and their battalions.

Since each regiment has a unique history it can justifiably be proud of, the determination of the unit's history thus becomes extremely important. Regimental lineage however is not always easily ascertained. Difficulties with insufficient knowledge of intent, redesignations, provisional units, gaps in continuity, and fluctuations in strength are some of the problems that must be met in the compilation of a regiment's history and in the establishment of its lineage. Despite these and other obstacles every effort is made by Marine historians to give an organization as much lineage as possible within certain set limitations. All regiments whether or not they can trace their ancestry back to the inception of permanent Marine regiments have made a notable contribution to Marine Corps history in this century.

USMC